

# Current Affairs

## MADE EASY

" A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION "

## JUDICIAL REFORMS

Impeachment

Contempt of Court

Foreign Law Firms in India



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# Current Affairs

## MADE EASY

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## **Era of Engineering Optional Subjects (CE/EE/ME) is back in Civil Services Examination !!!**

On doing a detailed analysis, it is found that there was a trend from 1995-2005 when engineers preferred to stick to Engineering Optional Subjects in CSE, but reverse was observed in the period between 2005-2015 when engineers made a cross-domain shift while choosing optional subjects; considering engineering optional subjects as low scoring subjects thereby reducing the success rate in CSE. The low scores in engineering optional subjects were not because of difficult concepts, but lack of quality study material and proper guidance were the stumbling blocks.

Again a trend reversal is observed after 2015, with success rates of 6% to 12% in engineering optionals, which were equal and even better than other optional subjects.

### **Reasons for the increasing trend of engineering optional subjects :**

- High scores in CSE -2016 and CSE- 2017 compared to other optional subjects.
- Conceptual and analytical nature of subject makes it more interesting.
- By reading and solving concept based numerical problems of Engineering optional subject, breaks monotony of reading theory subjects of GS and Essay papers.
- Well defined syllabus and objectivity in evaluation.
- One can still score good marks even if his/her writing skills are not very impressive because engineering subjects are scientific, conceptual and numerical with minimum theory section.
- Well defined, structured and comprehensive study material with previous years' solved papers is made available by NEXT IAS.
- Engineers with their domain subject have ease in answering interview questions and are awarded more marks.
- Quality coaching guidance by best faculty, optional test series for complete preparation and interview guidance for answering practical application questions of engineering is exclusively provided by NEXT IAS.
- Choosing engineering optional subject makes plan – B of career like IFOs, ESE(IES), PSUs, State Engineering Services and plan – C of higher studies a cake walk.

To validate the above stated points, have a look at the marks of toppers in optional subjects and also the marks of students who took guidance at NEXT IAS and appeared in CSE-2017 with Engineering Optional Subjects.

It is clearly observed that students have scored way better in engineering subjects when compared to toppers of both CSE-2017 and CSE-2016. In CSE-2017 Durishetty Anudeep (AIR-1) scored 318 marks in optional subject Anthropology, whereas S.R.R Reddy scored 347 marks with Electrical Engineering Optional, Gaush Alam scored 330 marks with Mechanical Engineering optional, Shubhanshu Jain scored 294 marks with Civil Engineering Optional subject. This clearly shows with proper guidance an engineering graduate can excel equally with engineering domain optional subject.

Similar situation was observed in CSE-2016 as well. Avdesh Meena scored 356 marks with Civil Engineering Optional, Jivitesh Anand scored 245 marks with Mechanical Engineering Optional which are quite better scores when compared to topper of CSE-2016.

### Marks scored by toppers in various optional subjects

Name	CSE-2017/16 Rank	Optional Subject	Marks		Total	Year
			Paper-1	Paper-2		
Nandini KR	1	Lit. of Kannda language	164	167	331	2016
Durishetty Anudeep	1	Anthropology	171	147	318	2017
Anu Kumari	2	Sociology	163	155	318	2017
Saumya Pandey	4	Geography	156	158	314	2016

### Marks scored by engineers with engineering optional subjects

Name	CSE-2017/16 Rank	Optional Subject	Marks		Total	Year
			Paper-1	Paper-2		
Avdesh Meena	32	Civil Engineering	213	143	356	2016
Singa Rushikesh Reddy	374	Electrical Engineering	178	169	347	2017
Jivitesh Anand	259	Mechanical Engineering	173	172	345	2016
Gaush Alam	485	Mechanical Engineering	162	168	330	2017
Jivitesh Anand	351	Mechanical Engineering	156	171	327	2017
Ajay Choudhary	640	Mechanical Engineering	166	151	317	2017
Sanjay Kumar Meena	279	Electrical Engineering	162	155	317	2017
Surabhi Adarsh	393	Mechanical Engineering	171	145	316	2017
Taranjot Singh	70	Mechanical Engineering	177	138	315	2016
Naveen Choudhary	186	Electrical Engineering	158	155	313	2017
Saurabh Pratap Singh	295	Electrical Engineering	158	145	303	2017
Akshay Budania	127	Mechanical Engineering	NA	NA	301	2017
Jag Pravesh	483	Electrical Engineering	157	143	300	2017
Shubham Gupta	N/A	Electrical Engineering	153	147	300	2016
Shrinivas Vyankatrao	275	Mechanical Engineering	147	150	297	2017
Rishi Raj	27	Electrical Engineering	141	155	296	2017
Rahul Gupta	20	Electrical Engineering	147	149	296	2016
Manish Gupta	232	Electrical Engineering	124	170	294	2016
Shubhanshu Jain	507	Civil Engineering	158	135	293	2017
Vaibhava Srivastava	98	Mechanical Engineering	154	138	292	2017
Samir Kumar Jena	684	Civil Engineering	157	133	290	2017
Abhishek Saraf	402	Civil Engineering	143	139	282	2017
Surabhi Gautam	50	Elect. Engineering	129	150	279	2016
Vivek Kumar	278	Mechanical Engineering	144	135	279	2016
Devesh Kumar Dhruv	47	Elect. Engineering	159	119	278	2017

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(2017)



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(2017)



Rank(1)  
**Nandini K.R**  
(2016)



Rank(4)  
**Artika Shukla**  
(2015)

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## REMOVAL OF JUDGES

A motion for removal of the CJI Deepak Mishra was moved on 20th April 2018, by members of opposition in the Rajya Sabha. The motion was rejected by the Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on 23rd April.

### About:

On 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2018, four senior-most judges of the SC held a press conference raising concern about the actions of the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The charges against the CJI are as following:

- **Prasad Education Trust Case:** Medical Council of India (MCI) found Prasad Education trust without fulfilling the requisite criteria and the Union Government barred it from admitting new medical students. The Trust challenged this decision in the Supreme Court and Allahabad High Court. There are allegations of CJI acting in a biased manner and some quid-pro-quo.
- **Recusal:** Means that a judge (or any officer for that matter) abstains themselves from presiding or participating in any proceedings of a case in which they are a party or have some conflict of interest. Present CJI dealt with Prasad Education Trust case on the administrative as well as judicial side.
- **The CJI acquired land** when he was an advocate by giving an affidavit which was found to be false.
- **Master of Roster issue:** It is alleged that the CJI has allocated sensitive matters to particular benches by misusing his authority as Master of the Roster allegedly in:
  - The case of the Late Judge Loya.
  - In the case of Prasad Education Trust.

### Procedure for Removal of Judges:

Article 124(4) of the Constitution contains the guidelines for the Impeachment of Judges of SC and HC. The grounds for removal are proved misbehaviour and incapacity. Procedure is as follows:

- Initiation of the motion either by 100 members of Lok Sabha or 50 members of Rajya Sabha.
- If motion is admitted, then Speaker (LS) or Chairman (RS) will constitute an inquiry committee consisting of a Supreme Court judge, a High Court Chief justice and an eminent jurist.
- The committee will frame charges and ask the judge to give a written response. If committee finds the Judge guilty then that house (LS/RS) will take up the motion. It will be debated and voted upon.
- If passed with special majority of 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of members present and voting and 50% of the total strength of the house, then it is passed to the other house where it again needs to be passed with special majority. If passed by both the houses, the President of India will be requested to remove the Judge from Office.

### Do You Know?

This entire procedure must be completed in the same session of the Parliament; the word impeachment is used only in the case of removal of the President (mentioned in Article 61 of the Constitution). In case of Judges, it is termed as removal.



### DEBATE

Is the procedure of removing the judges of the SC and HC sufficient to ensure accountability of Judiciary?

#### Arguments in Favour:

- Article 50 of the constitution mentions separation of powers as a Directive Principle of State Policy.
- If removal of Judges is made easy then independence of Judiciary may be jeopardised.
- Government is the litigant in many of the cases. Excessive government control over Judiciary may be counterproductive.
- Judiciary is the custodian of the Fundamental Rights of the Citizens. Disturbing the balance of power between the Executive and Judiciary may be harmful for citizen's rights.
- Judicial process inevitably leads to some winner and some losers in a case. The losing party may lodge case against the Judge for revenge purpose.

#### No, the procedure is inadequate:

- India does not follow strict compartmentalisation of powers like the USA. There are checks and balances of powers of each organ of the state. The checks on Judiciary are proving to be ineffective and need revision.
- India is a democratic state – power rests with the people. But Judiciary is not accountable to the people directly.
- Judiciary also enjoys contempt of court powers and any criticism may be silenced. The people have little opportunity for raising their grievances.
- The procedure for removal is long drawn and elaborate.
- No Judge has ever been removed via this process in India. V. Ramaswami – proceedings initiated in 1993 but motion failed; Justice Soumitra Sen – resigned in 2011 while proceedings were underway; Justice Dinakaran – resigned in 2011 while proceedings were underway.





## MASTER OF ROSTER

### Meaning of 'Master of the Roster':

- 'Master of the Roster' refers to the privilege of the Chief Justice to constitute Benches to hear cases.
- This privilege was emphasised in January 2017, when a Constitution Bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra, declared that:
  - the Chief Justice is the master of the roster and he alone has the prerogative to constitute the Benches of the Court and allocate cases to the Benches so constituted.
  - no Judge can take up the matter on this own, unless allocated by the Chief Justice of India, as he is the master of the roster.

### Reason for this Declaration:

- The immediate trigger for this was a direction by a two-judge Bench (led by Justice Chelameswar) that a petition regarding a medical college corruption case, involving an alleged conspiracy to bribe Supreme Court judges, be heard by a Bench of the five senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.



*Supreme Court Judges (L-R) Kurien Joseph, Chelameswar, Ranjan Gogoi and Madan B Lokur addressing the Media in January 2018.*

### Opposition by other Judges:

- On January 12, 2018, four Supreme Court Justices - Justice J. Chelameswar, Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Justice Madan B. Lokur and Justice Kurian Joseph - held a press conference to register their differences with the Chief Justice of India in matters related to court administration.
- One of the key issues raised, revolved around the term 'master of the roster.'
- They regard 'master of the roster' as "one of the well-settled principles" and a convention that is important for an orderly transaction of business.

- But they argued that it isn't a recognition of superior authority of the Chief Justice over his colleagues. Chief Justice is only the "first among equals," a phrase that Chief Justice Misra himself had used in the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms vs. Union of India order.
- Further they said that there are "well-settled and time honoured conventions guiding the Chief Justice" in the determination of the roster, including those about the strength of the Bench to deal with a particular case. But of late these rules haven't been strictly adhered to.
- There have been instances where cases having far-reaching consequences for the nation and the institution had been assigned by the Chief Justice of this Court selectively to the Benches "of their preferences" without any rational basis for such assignment.

### Comment:

- The debate is not simply about the personalities involved. It represents the culmination of the gradual deepening of a number of faultlines in the Indian judicial system and highlight the urgency with which they need to be addressed.
- First, the Supreme Court now consists of 26 judges, who predominantly sit in benches of two. Compare this with the US Supreme Court, for example, where all its nine judges sit together to hear cases.
  - The Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, therefore, has no choice in the question of which judges will hear a case.
  - By comparison, the Chief Justice of India has significantly more discretion in determining which judges will hear and decide a case.
- And unfortunately, this progressive centralisation of power within the office of the Chief Justice has not been accompanied by a parallel strengthening of the accountability of this office.
  - The office of the chief justice remains answerable to none, a situation that was highlighted recently when, in a case that potentially involved the chief justice, the chief justice himself constituted a bench to hear it.
  - Thus the principle "no person shall be a judge in their own cause" simply didn't apply to the office of the chief justice.
- In short, power is increasingly being centralised with the CJI. If India wants to prevent the decay in one of the most vital institutions of our democracy, the only way out is to bring accountability and transparency to the office of the chief justice, without compromising on judicial independence.

# APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES

Controversy surrounding the elevation of K.M. Joseph to Supreme Court has raised bigger questions on appointment of judges and executive-judiciary relations.

## Controversy on Appointment of K.M. Joseph:

### January 2018:

- On January 10, the Supreme Court Collegium, led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, recommended Uttarakhand High Court Chief Justice, Kuttijil Mathew Joseph, for appointment as judge of the Supreme Court.
- The Collegium's January 10 resolution describes Justice Joseph as "more deserving and suitable in all respects" to be appointed as Supreme Court judge than other judges in the High Courts.
- His name was paired with Indu Malhotra, the first woman lawyer to be recommended directly to the court.

### April 2018:

- After three months, the government cleared Ms. Malhotra's name and returned Justice Joseph's name.
- His elevation was halted by NDA Government on the ground that he was too junior among High Court judges to be elevated to the Supreme Court and his State — Kerala — is over-represented.

### What Next?

- Thereafter, the Collegium has met thrice to discuss Justice Joseph and agreed "in principle" that his name be reiterated and his elevation made binding on the government. But it has actually not gone about doing it.
- Legal experts have raised a question that if the Collegium unanimously agrees that Justice Joseph's file needs to be returned to the government, why is it delaying its response?
- On May 16, the Collegium deferred its decision, saying it intends to send his name along with other names.
- For now, the Collegium has to reiterate its recommendation. But the court has closed for summer vacation. A Collegium may convene after the court reopens on July 2 with a new member, Justice A.K. Sikri.



## ANALYSIS

### Criticism:

- The Centre's objections to the elevation of K.M. Joseph to the Supreme Court are unpersuasive because:
  - First, Seniority is not the sole consideration while elevating a High Court judge to the apex court. Inter se seniority is a consideration when a puisne judge is made a Chief Justice, but it is not sacrosanct in elevation to the Supreme Court. Merit is and has been a key factor.
  - Second, while it is desirable that regional imbalances and under-representation are not glaring, this cannot be cited as a factor to shoot down the candidature of a person otherwise qualified and validly recommended.
- It is alleged that Justice Joseph is being targeted for his 2016 judgment quashing the proclamation of President's rule in Uttarakhand, paving the way for the restoration of the Congress government.
- In 2014, faced with a similar situation in senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam's case, the then Chief Justice, R.M. Lodha, stated "In future, such a procedure of unilateral segregation should not be adopted by the Executive."
- Further, there is a strong perception that the government is too slow when it comes to approving judicial appointments. A conflict between the judiciary and the executive over particular appointments is not in the public interest.

### Way Ahead:

- In the light of its strong recommendation that Justice Joseph is "more deserving and suitable in all respects than other High Court Chief Justices and senior puisne judges", it will be no surprise if collegium reiterates the recommendation. Then the government is bound to abide by the collegium's decision. In that event, the Centre should not prolong the controversy further by seeking to block his elevation again.
- Besides allowing Justice Joseph's appointment to go through, efforts must be made to finalise a revised memorandum of procedure for appointments so that the case of one judge does not turn into a flashpoint for a sustained conflict between the two branches.

## Fact Sheet

### Procedure for appointment of Judges in India:

- Article 124(3) of the constitution mentions the following people as eligible to become a Supreme Court Judge:
  - A HC judge who has held that post for 5 years or more.
  - An advocate who has practiced in the HC/SC for 10 years or more.
  - A distinguished Jurist (no judge appointed on this basis till date).
- Article 124(2) says that the President of India Shall appoint the judges after consultation with such no. of Judges of the SC/HC as he deems necessary. For appointment of any Judge of SC (other than CJI), the CJI must be consulted.
- The three Judges cases of 1981, 1993 and 1998 has formalised the collegium system for the purpose of consultation. The collegium consists of the CJI and 4 senior-most judges of the SC.
- The President of India can either accept the recommendation or send it back for reconsideration.
- The reconsidered advice must be accepted by the President.

### Recent Developments:

#### • National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC):

- National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was a proposed body which would have been responsible for the appointment and transfer of judges to the higher judiciary in India.
- The Commission was established by amending the Constitution of India through the 99<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014.
- The NJAC would have replaced the collegium system for the appointment of judges as invoked by the Supreme court via judicial fiat by a new system.

- Along with the Constitution Amendment Act, the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014, was also passed by the Parliament of India to regulate the functions of the NJAC.
- The NJAC Act and the Constitutional Amendment Act came into force from April 2015.
- In October 2015 the Constitution Bench of Supreme Court by 4:1 Majority upheld the collegium system and struck down the NJAC as unconstitutional after hearing the petitions filed by several persons and bodies.
- Justices J S Khehar, MB Lokur, Kurian Joseph and Adarsh Kumar Goel had declared the 99<sup>th</sup> Amendment and NJAC Act unconstitutional while Justice Chelameswar upheld it.

#### • Memorandum of Procedure (MoP):

- It was set up after the Third Judge Case of 1998 to provide the process of how the Collegium would recommend names to the Executive.
- The government proposed to amend the MoP which allowed the executive to reject the names of the candidates recommended by the collegium for national security reasons.
- The Collegium rejected this proposal of the government on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017.
- Thus, Judiciary still has the final say in the case of judicial appointments but there is a caveat that neither the Constitution nor the MoP set out any time limit for the executive to approve the Collegium's recommendation.

### Recommendations of Committees:

Different committees have recommended that independent body be set up to make recommendations for appointments of Judges. They have suggested different composition for the same, as follows:

Committees/ Commission	Recommendation for composition of the independent body: Representation from...			
	Judiciary	Executive	Legislature	Other Section
<b>The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007)</b>	CJI; (For HC judges: Chief Justice of the relevant High Court of that state)	Vice-President (Chairperson), PM, Law Minister (For HC judges: Includes CM of the State)	Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leaders of Opposition from both Houses of Parliament.	No representative.
<b>National Advisory Council (2005)</b>	CJI; (For HC judges: Chief Justice of the relevant High Court of that state)	Vice-President (Chairman), PM (or nominee), Law Minister, (For HC judges: Includes CM of the State)	Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition from both Houses of Parliament.	No representative.
<b>NCRWC (2002)</b>	CJI (Chairman), two senior most SC judges	Union Law Minister	No representative	One eminent person

# CONTEMPT OF COURT

In April 2018, The Law Commission of India (Chaired by Justice B.S. Chauhan) submitted its Report No. 274 on the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971.

## Terminologies:

- 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 refers to the wilful disobedience of an order of any court.

- Criminal contempt includes any act or publication which: (i) 'scandalises' the court, or (ii) prejudices any judicial proceeding, or (iii) interferes with the administration of justice in any other manner. 'Scandalising the Court' broadly refers to statements or publications which have the effect of undermining public confidence in the judiciary.



## SHOULD CRIMINAL CONTEMPT BE REMOVED?

The report examined whether the definition of contempt in the Act should be restricted to civil contempt, i.e., wilful disobedience of judgments of court. The Commission concluded that there was no requirement to amend the Act because of following reasons:

### High Number of Contempt Cases:

- There were a high number of civil (96,993) and criminal (583) contempt cases pending in various High Courts and the Supreme Court which justifies the relevance of the Act.
- Amending the definition of contempt may reduce the overall impact of the law and lessen the respect that people have for courts and their authority and functioning.

### International Comparison:

- In relation to the offence of 'scandalising the Court', the United Kingdom had abolished the offence in its contempt laws. However, there were two differences in circumstances in India and the United Kingdom.
- First, India continues to have a high number of criminal contempt cases, while the last offence of Scandalising the Court in the UK was in 1931.
- Second, the offence of Scandalising the Court continues to be punishable in UK under other laws. Abolishing the offence in India would leave a legislative gap.

### Source of Contempt Power:

- The Commission observed that the superior courts (Supreme Court and High Courts) derive their contempt powers from the Constitution.
- The 1971 Act only outlines the procedure in relation to investigation and punishment for contempt. Therefore,

deletion of the offence from the Act will not impact the inherent constitutional powers of the superior courts to punish anyone for their contempt.

### Impact on Subordinate Courts:

- The Constitution allows superior courts to punish for their contempt. The Act additionally allows the High Court to punish for contempt of subordinate courts.
- If the definition of contempt is narrowed, subordinate courts will suffer as there will be no remedy to address cases of their contempt.

### Ambiguity:

- Amending the definition of contempt will lead to ambiguity because the superior courts will continue to exercise contempt powers under the Constitution.
- If there is no definition for criminal contempt in the Act, superior courts may give multiple definitions and interpretations to what constitutes contempt.
- The Commission suggested retaining the definition for the purpose of ensuring clarity.

### Adequate Safeguards:

- There are several safeguards built into the Act to protect against its misuse.
- For instance, the Act contains provisions which lays down cases that do not amount to contempt and cases where contempt is not punishable. These provisions suggest that the courts will not prosecute all cases of contempt.
- Also the Act has withstood judicial scrutiny, and therefore, there was no reason to amend it.

## FOREIGN LAW FIRMS IN INDIA

**In March 2018, Supreme Court ruled that foreign law firms or foreign lawyers cannot practise law in the country either on the litigation or non-litigation side. However, there is no bar on a "fly in and fly out" basis.**

### Advocates Act, 1961:

- Advocates Act of 1961 allows foreign firms/lawyers to practice in India only in cases of reciprocity under Section 47 of the act. However, Indian advocates aren't allowed to practise in the UK, the US, Australia and other nations, except on fulfilling onerous restriction like qualifying tests, experience and work permit.

### Supreme Court Judgment: March 2018

- The Supreme Court has ruled that foreign law firms or foreign lawyers can't set up offices in India or practice in Indian courts either on the litigation (appear in courts) or non-litigation side (such as giving opinions or drafting documents)

- However, they are permitted on a "fly in and fly out" basis (i.e. a casual visit) for giving legal advice to their clients on foreign law or on international legal issues.
- They don't have an 'absolute right' to conduct arbitration proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration and would be regulated by the code of conduct applicable to the legal profession in India.
- Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies providing a range of services to customers like word processing, secretarial support etc. would not come under the Advocates Act.
- It also directed the government and Bar Council of India to frame rules in this regard.



### DEBATE ON ALLOWING FOREIGN FIRMS IN INDIA

#### Arguments in Favour:

- It would enable exchange of knowledge, expertise and skill between Indian and foreign firms.
- Permitting foreign law firms in India on a reciprocal basis will provide Indian firms and lawyers the opportunity to practice abroad.
- Foreign law firm in India will require manpower who are well versed with the local laws. This will provide employment opportunities for Indian lawyers.
- Presence of foreign law firms will lead to competition and improve present quality of legal service and enabling better access to legal aid for client/people.
- The rise in trade and commerce requires increased legal service support for domestic and foreign law, a part of which can be met by permitting foreign law firms.
- India being a signatory to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (an organ of the World Trade Organization (WTO)) is under an obligation to open up the service sector to member nations.
- India is keen to provide an expeditious dispute resolution system to investors and aims to become a global arbitration centre which requires liberalising entry of foreign legal firms.

#### Arguments Against:

- The primary concern is the loss of opportunities for local law firms and Indian lawyers. It is because apart from substantial

gap in legal training and education, Foreign law firms are generally endowed with huge infrastructure and international clout as compared to their Indian counterparts.

- Issues with reciprocity: Law graduates from India are allowed to practice in foreign countries like USA, UK etc. only after following their cumbersome and costly procedure. Therefore, allowing entry of foreign law firms without any reciprocal arrangements would keep Indian firms/lawyers at a disadvantage.
- The increasing trends in de-globalization in the world makes it a safe bet to bar the entry of foreign entities in India.
- Permitting foreign law firms may lead to a situation where there is a breakdown in the structure of professional ethics mainly due to the conflicting practices in vogue in the foreign countries.

#### Concluding Remarks:

- There is no doubt that the benefits of allowing foreign lawyers and firms in India far outweigh the negatives especially in the long term. However, as former Chief Justice of India JS Khehar suggested, reciprocity is the solution to this problem. It is also in spirit of the Advocates Act, 1961.
- The need of the hour is the entry of foreign lawyers in India in a phased manner.
- Thus, the recent ruling brings much needed clarity on the status of foreign law firms/lawyers in Indian.

## Law Commission of India Report No. 275 BCCI vis-a-vis RTI

In April 2018, The Law Commission of India submitted its 275<sup>th</sup> Report titled  
"Legal framework: BCCI vis-a-vis Right to Information Act, 2005".

### About:

- **Background:** The report follows the Supreme directive in 2016 where the Court noted that the BCCI discharges public functions and asked the Commission to examine whether the BCCI would fall within the ambit of the Act.
- **Terms of reference:** The report examined whether
  - BCCI was a public authority falling under the Act, and
  - high tax exemptions and provision of land at subsidised rates by the government, amounted to 'indirect substantial financing' by the government.

### Recommendations:

- **Public Body:** BCCI ought to be viewed as 'State' under Article 12 of the Constitution, thereby making it amenable to the writ jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 32.
- **RTI applicability:** RTI Act, 2005 be made applicable to BCCI along with all of its constituent member cricketing associations (such as state boards) which discharge similar functions as the BCCI.
- **Conforming to Human Rights:** BCCI, which performs public functions, should be held accountable under all circumstances for violation of basic human rights. (Certain human rights violations – such as violence, discrimination, and human trafficking – have been identified in sporting events).

### Recommendations of Lodha Committee (2016)?

- Bring BCCI under the purview of the RTI Act.
- The tenure of an office bearer of BCCI shall not be of more than 3 years.
- An office bearer can have a maximum of three terms in all.
- Also, no office bearer shall have consecutive terms. There shall be a cooling-off period at the end of each term.
- There should be a separate governing body for the IPL.
- Players and BCCI officials should disclose their assets to the Board as a measure to ensure they do not bet.
- In the interest of democratic representations of states, it proposed 'One State – One Member – One Vote'. Also, no proxy voting of individuals should be permitted.
- No BCCI office-bearer should be Minister or government servant.



### DECLARING BCCI AS A PUBLIC AUTHORITY

#### Arguments against:

- BCCI has been registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, it claims itself to be a private body.
- BCCI argues that its accounts are being regularly audited, so there is no question of corruption and malpractices.
- BCCI argued that its autonomy would suffer as a result of being brought under the RTI.

#### Arguments in Favour:

- BCCI virtually acts as a National Sports Federation (NSF).
- BCCI received thousands of crores towards tax concessions and land grants.
- The uniform of the players of the Indian team (as selected by BCCI) contains the national colours and their helmets display the Ashoka Chakra.
- RTI Act will enhance transparency in the functioning of BCCI and will act as a check on enormous amount of public money earned by BCCI.
- The officials and players should be made accountable to their actions and should get penalized too in case of misdeeds.
- In June 2017, the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) favoured bringing BCCI under RTI act. Lodha committee has also favoured bringing BCCI under the RTI Act.

#### Way Forward:

- It is high time that Parliament pass a law to implement the recommendation of law commission and explicitly cover BCCI under RTI.
- Overall culture of transparency and accountability should be nurtured and promoted by the government. This can be done by bringing political parties and judiciary under RTI.

### Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)?

The BCCI is registered as a society under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975. It was established in 1928 as the central governing body regulating cricket in India.



# CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL - 2016

In recent weeks, Assam and Meghalaya have seen protests over the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

## Timeline:

- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had promised to grant citizenship to Hindus persecuted in the neighbouring countries during the 2014 General Election.
- After coming to power, it introduced the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha in 2016.
- Subsequently the bill was referred to a Joint select committee.
- During and after the visit of a Joint Parliamentary Committee to Assam and Meghalaya (May 7-10, 2018) to collect feedback on the bill, the Brahmaputra Valley saw protests opposing the Bill while the Barak Valley saw counter-protests in the Bill's support.

## Features:

- The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship.
- Under the Act, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years. The Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to 6 years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries.
- The Bill also provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.

## Do You Know?

- **Illegal Migrants:** Under the Citizenship Act, 1955, illegal migrants are prohibited from acquiring Indian citizenship. An illegal migrant is a foreigner who: (i) enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, or (ii) enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.
- **Citizenship by Naturalisation:** The Citizenship Act, 1955 allows a person to apply for citizenship by naturalisation if he meets certain qualifications. One of these is that the person must have resided in India or served the central government for a certain period of time: (i) for the 12 months immediately preceding the application for citizenship, and (ii) for 11 of the 14 years preceding the 12-month period.



## OPPOSITION TO BILL

The bill has been opposed on following grounds:

- **Religious Discrimination:**
  - The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This violates Article 14 of the Constitution of India.
  - The Union government's claim that the bill seeks to protect minorities facing religious persecution doesn't hold true. If that was the case, then why keep out Muslim Rohingyas seeking shelter in India?
- **Legal challenge:** According to Section 5 of the Citizenship Act 1955, people of undivided India are prohibited from acquiring citizenship in India. Then how can the very same Act have a provision that grants citizenship (to them)?
- **Regional divide:** Ironically, the proposed amendment has also revived an old divide between:
  - **Assamese-dominated Brahmaputra valley**, which opposes the bill arguing that it may change the ethnic demography of the region by making Assam a dumping ground of Hindu Bangladeshis.
  - **Bengali-dominated Barak Valley** – many of them refugees from districts which are now part of Bangladesh – which has welcomed the bill.
- **Against Assam accord:** The Bill breach the clauses of the historic Assam Accord of 1985, which states that all illegal foreigners who came to the state after 1971 from Bangladesh, irrespective of their religion, have to be deported.
- **Nullifies NRC:** The Bill, if made into an Act, will nullify the process of updating the National Registration of Citizenship (NRC) is currently underway in Assam to detect Bangladeshi nationals who have entered the State illegally after the midnight of March 24, 1971.
- **OCI provision:** The Bill allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (e.g. parking in a no parking zone).

India's citizenship provisions are derived from the perception of the country as a secular republic. Thus India needs a rational citizenship programme for refugees that operates on a case by case basis irrespective of religious denomination.



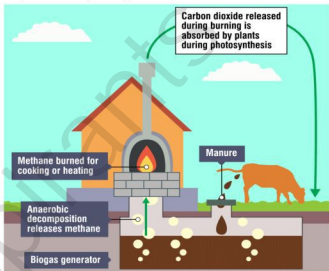
## GOBAR-DHAN

In April 2018, Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation launched the GOBAR - DHAN (Galvanising Organic Bio-Agro Resources-Dhan) programme. It was first announced in Union Budget of 2018.

### About:

- **What is it?** GOBAR-Dhan is a scheme for management and conversion of cattle dung and solid waste in farms to compost, fertilizer, bio-gas and bio-CNG.
- **Objectives:**
  1. To make villages clean.
  2. To generate wealth and energy from cattle and other organic waste.
- **Target:** Under it, government has planned to set up 700 biogas plants across the country by 2018-19 at the level of individual, Self Help Groups (SHGs), community and even NGOs like Gaushalas.
- **Funding:**
  - Gram panchayats, SHGs and gaushalas, will receive performance-based incentives from the government for setting these plants.
  - Funds would be provided in ratio of 60:40 by central and state governments.

- **Online Trading Platform:** It will be created to connect farmers to buyers of agricultural waste so that they can get the right price for dung and agricultural waste.



### Basic Terminologies

#### Biogas:

- Biogas is a gaseous fuel generated from biological decomposition of organic waste such as cattle dung.
- **Composition:** It consists of 55-65% of methane, 30-40% of carbon dioxide and small quantities of Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Carbon Monoxide and Hydrogen Sulphide.
- **Wastes considered for biogas:** Cattle dung, poultry wastes and agricultural residues/food waste from village industries.

#### Bio CNG:

- Bio CNG is the purified form of Biogas in which all the unwanted gases are removed to produce >95% pure methane gas.

#### Biogas Plant:

- When microbial degradation of organic matters takes place in the absence of air, the process is known as anaerobic digestion and results in the production of biogas.
- The general process for making an anaerobic digester for cow dung starts with placing dung and water in an airtight container.

- The container must be kept warm and left undisturbed so that bacteria can do their work.
- The gas that is produced is withdrawn through a tube and stored. Once a biogas has formed, it can be reacted with oxygen to produce energy.
- This energy can be used to cook food, heat water in a boiler, produce electricity and can also replace conventional fuel in motor vehicles.

#### National Biogas and Manure Management Programme (NBMMMP):

- It is a central sector scheme which provides for setting up of household biogas plants mainly for rural and semi-urban households.
- It is implemented by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Biogas Development and Training Centers (BDTCs) and State Nodal Departments/Agencies.
- As of January 2018, around 50 lakh household size biogas plants have been installed under NBMMMP.
- Under it, new biogas plant designs such as floating design Shakti Surabhi Model have been introduced.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance of Gobar-Dhan Scheme:

- **Availability of raw material:**
  - According to the 19th Livestock Census (2012), India's cattle population is at 300 million, putting the '**Production of dung at about 3 million tonnes per day**'.
  - But India is yet to tap the full economic potential of huge quantities of Gobar.
- **Application:**
  - The methane gas produced can be used for variety of purposes such as cooking, lighting and driving machinery such as water pumps.
  - Also, the slurry, produced from biogas plants as a by-product, is an organic fertilizer which is rich in minerals, and thus can be used for enhancing crop yield.
- **Key element of ODF-plus strategy:**
  - While the core mission of Swachh Bharat Mission is to make India open defecation free (ODF), it also aims to promote general cleanliness and effective waste management in rural India which comes under ODF plus strategy.
  - Thus Gobar-Dhan scheme is an important element of ODF-plus strategy.

### ODF-Plus Strategy?

ODF plus refers to following activities in addition to open defecation free status thereby ensuring total sanitation:

- Cleanliness of water sources and public water bodies,
  - Decentralized solid and liquid waste management,
  - 3Rs (Reduce, Recycle and Reuse),
  - hand-washing and personal hygiene and
  - maintenance of schools and anganwadi toilets.
- **Employment generation:** According to a 2014 ILO study
    - the productive use of dung could support 1.5 million jobs in rural India linked to waste collection, transportation, biogas sales etc.
    - The value of one kg of cow dung multiplies over 10 times, depending on whether the end product is fresh dung (sale price of Rs 0.13) or input for a one megawatt biogas plant along with compost output (Rs 1.6).
  - **Health:**
    - As per Census 2011, about 65.9% of households depend on solid biomass, including firewood, crop residue and cow dung as primary fuel for cooking in India.
    - And acc. to WHO about 5 lakh deaths in India alone are due to indoor air pollution caused by impure cooking fuel.

- This can be averted by generating cooking gas from biogas power plants.
- **Energy security:** According to the International Energy Agency, bioenergy (biogas and biomass) has the potential to meet more than a quarter of world demand of transportation fuels by 2050.
- **Environment friendly:**
  - **Climate change mitigation:** The biogas technology dissemination prevents the emissions of Green House Gases (GHGs) such as Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and Methane into the atmosphere.
  - **Deforestation:** Availability of biogas would reduce the use of firewood and hence trees could be saved as there would not be any need to cut down.
- **Contribution to SDG:** According to United nations, Biogas is one of the only sustainable energy sources which can directly satisfy as many as 9 of the United Nations' 17 SDGs' by recycling waste and delivering vital energy and food security.
- **Inexpensive:** Biogas power is cheap to produce as compared to electricity produced from other source.

### Challenges:

- Rate of adoption of Biogas plants among small and marginal farmers is very low who can't afford large capacity gas plants.
- Then there is challenge of adding value to the utilisation of Gobar and incentivising farmers to think of their cattle waste as a source of income and, in the process, also keep their communities Swachh.
- Another challenge is aggregation of cattle waste and maintaining a regular supply to plant operators.

### Way Ahead:

- **Need of Coordinated approach:** Making the scheme a success will require the involvement of all actors i.e. ensuring private sector investment, getting support of Panchayats, training the Informal sanitation service providers and incentivizing Citizens to create self-help groups to make contribution to the "clean energy and green jobs" initiative.
- **Lessons from rural India:** Government can learn from rural communities such as **Lambra Kangri Multipurpose Cooperative Service Society (Hoshiarpur, Punjab)** and **Gram Vikas Trust (Surat, Gujarat)** who
  - aggregate cattle dung to operate biogas plants and
  - supply cooking gas at a cost lower than the conventional LPG gas cylinder.

# NATIONAL POLICY ON BIOFUELS - 2018

In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved a National Policy on Biofuels - 2018. It replaces the earlier policy made by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in 2009.

## Salient Features:

- **Categorisation of Biofuels:** Biofuels have been categorised into following three categories to extend appropriate fiscal incentives –
  - **First Generation (1G):** Bio-Ethanol produced from molasses and bio-diesel from non-edible oilseeds (a.k.a Basic Biofuels).
  - **Second Generation (2G):** Bio-ethanol produced from municipal solid waste (a.k.a Advanced Biofuels).
  - **Third Generation (3G):** Fuels like bio-CNG.
- **Expansion of Scope of raw material for ethanol production:** Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption can be used for ethanol production.
- **Surplus food grains can be used for ethanol production:** It allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- **Viability gap funding:** With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries.



## ANALYSIS

### Expected Benefits:

- With crude oil prices moving around the \$80/barrel mark, India's new National Policy on Biofuel comes at the right time.
- **Reduced Import Dependency:** The ethanol supply year 2017-18 is likely to see a supply of around 150 crore litres of ethanol which will result in savings of over Rs.4000 crore of forex.
- **Reduced Air Pollution:** By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.
- **Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Management:** There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW for fuel use.
- **Infrastructural Investment and employment in Rural Areas:** setting up of bio refineries across the Country will spur infrastructural investment in the rural areas apart from generating jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.
- **Benefits for Farmers:** This will benefit Farmers who are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase.
- **Supply-chain challenges:** Creating the requisite supply chain infrastructure to source and efficiently transport low value biomass to the refineries is another challenge.
- **Investment:** Huge investments is required for creating bio refinery capacity.
  - While state-owned oil marketing companies are in the process of setting up 12 bio-refineries, this needs to be supplemented by Private Sector.
  - But private sector investment in this sector has been hampered by financial constraints and lack of cohesive support from the Central to the local level.
- **Misuse:** There are chances of misuse by diverting utilisable agro-products into biofuels or by using arable land specifically to grow energy crops.
- **Ecological impact:** When sugar production is un-remunerative due to low prices, the sugar-based ethanol industry may prefer to convert cane juice directly into ethanol without making sugar. This would become an ecological disaster as sugarcane is a cost-intensive crop.

### Way Ahead:

### Implementation Challenges:

- **Technology constraints:** The technology for manufacturing biofuel from cellulosic and lignocellulosic biomass and solid litter is still in the evolving stage.
- Government should avoid micromanaging the supply chain. Instead it should actively involve the private sector for functions like procurement, storage and distribution.
- The policy's implementation would also need to be monitored closely to thwart its misuse.

# 100% VILLAGE ELECTRIFICATION

In April 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that all of India's 597,464 census villages in India have finally got electricity.

## Timeline:

- Only around 1,500 villages had been electrified at the time of independence. 579,012 villages, or 97% of India's villages, were electrified by 31 March 2015.
- In August 2015, PM Modi launched **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)**.
- In April 2018, Leisang in Manipur's Senapati district became the last village to be connected to the national grid.

## Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana?

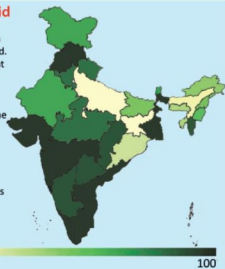
- DDUGJY is the flagship programme of the Ministry of Power to provide continuous power supply to rural India.
- It focuses on feeder separation (rural households & agricultural) and strengthening of sub-transmission & distribution infrastructure including metering at all levels in rural areas.

## Next Step: Household Electrification

- The government is now pushing for household electrification under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) initiative, which finances the cost of last-mile connectivity to willing households.

## Still off the grid

'Electrified' implies that village has been connected to the grid. It does not imply that all households have access to electricity. Data as on April 30, 2018 show that of the 22.44 crore village households, 18.91 crore have been electrified (84.29%). Map shows the percentage of houses electrified in each State.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance:

- Poverty eradication:** There is an undeniable link between poverty eradication and the spread of electricity use. Census 2011 showed that Bihar, which posted extraordinary growth in electrification, saw a rapid fall in official poverty levels.
- Reduced indoor pollution:** Access to electricity would substitute use of Kerosene for lighting purposes resulting in reduction in indoor pollution thereby saving people from health hazards.
- Improved Health services:** It would help in establishing efficient and modern health services in all parts of the country.
- Women safety:** Lighting after the sunset also provide a sense of enhanced personal safety especially for women
- Educational for all:** It would facilitate children to spend more time on studies and move ahead further in prospective careers.
- Energy security:** Substituting Kerosene with electricity for lighting purposes would reduce annual subsidy on Kerosene and would also help reduce the import of petroleum products.
- It would ensure enhanced access to communications like Radio, Television, Internet, mobile etc. which would help people to **access important information**. E.g. Farmers can access information about new agriculture techniques, agro-machinery, quality seeds etc.

### Debate on definition of village electrification:

- According to definition of village electrification "A village is declared electrified even if 10% of its households get power, apart from public institutions".
- But the government argues that
  - Definition of village electrification does not imply restricting household electrification only to 10%.
  - Since the launch of Saubhagya in September 2017, household electrification level in rural areas is more than 82%, ranging from 47-100% across various states and seven states—Punjab, Gujarat, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry—have achieved 100% household electrification.

## SURGE IN OIL PRICES

**In May 2018, Brent, the international benchmark for oil prices, crossed \$80 a barrel, touching the highest level since November 2014.**

### Outlook for 2018:

- The current price is almost three times the cost in early 2016 when it was \$29 a barrel.
- The trend may continue in the coming months. According to the World Bank's April 2018 Commodity Market Outlook, average crude oil prices are expected to rise by 22.6 per cent to \$65 per barrel in 2018 compared to \$53 per barrel in 2017.



### ANALYSIS

#### Reasons:

1. The major trigger that sent crude prices north was U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the country from the Iran nuclear deal on May 8.
2. The heightened instability in West Asia in the form of Saudi Arabia-Iran rivalry and the looming possibility of new military conflicts add to this.
3. Another factor is political and economic instability in Venezuela, another major petroleum exporting country. Further aggravating the situation, the Trump administration is threatening Venezuela with new sanctions.
4. Oil prices are also driven up by coordinated action by Russia and Saudi Arabia to keep supply on a tight leash. The curbs on crude oil production by OPEC countries have been extended up to December 2018.
5. Production of US shale oil is yet to make an impact in boosting global crude oil stocks.

#### Impact on India:

- According to a May 2018 report titled The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and The Pacific 2018 released by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), an increase in the oil price by \$10 per barrel would
  - bring down GDP growth by 0.2-0.3 percentage point
  - quicken inflation by about 1.7 percentage points
  - worsen the current account balance (CAD) by about \$9-10 billion

- put pressure on the margins of oil marketing companies and depress their dividend payments to the government as well as their corporate tax outgo.
- But the oil shock has a silver lining
- With more robust fiscal balances in the Gulf, investment and jobs will increase for Indian workers, who generously remit all their earnings. Inward remittances, higher than \$69 billion last year, will dilute the impact on CAD.
- More petro-dollars to spend will boost our exports to the Gulf.

#### Way Ahead:

- Pending government decision to bring petrol and diesel under GST, a downward adjustment of petrol/diesel taxes is overdue, failing which India's macro stability may be jeopardised on the eve of an election year.
- But it is not desirable to entirely sanitise customers from the oil shock.
  - This will kill the liberalised "marked to market" regime for retail prices of oil products, introduced last year.
  - It is also environmentally irresponsible not to have a price signal to induce lower consumption and incentivise users to switch to more efficient end-use equipment — cars, motorcycles, water pump and generators.
- In short, any calibration of taxes on petroleum products should be done in such a manner that consumers are protected to a certain extent without impairing the government's revenue target.

# RUPEE DEPRECIATION

Since the beginning of 2018, the value of the rupee against the dollar has witnessed a significant fall.

## About:

### Indian Scenario:

- The value of the rupee against the dollar has fallen by more than 5% since the beginning of 2018, and the fall has gained further momentum in the last few weeks.



## ANALYSIS

### Reasons:

- The U.S. Federal Reserve is expected to tighten its monetary policy stance further in the coming months for slowing down the growth in U.S. money supply. A slowdown in U.S. money supply growth affects the value of other currencies in two ways.
- For one, interest rates in the U.S. will begin to rise as the Fed's demand for various assets begins to drop. This causes a rush among foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to sell their assets in other parts of the world and invest the money in the U.S., where they could earn higher returns. This increases buying pressure on the dollar.
- Secondly, as the Fed begins to tighten money supply, the availability of dollars in the global market is likely to turn scarce, compared to other currencies.
- Both these factors affect the price at which traders, who try to speculate on future retail demand, are willing to buy the dollar using other currencies.

### Impact:

#### On Exports:

- Exporters, especially software exporters, stand to benefit, as they get more rupees while converting dollar export earnings into Indian currency.
- But those exports with significant import content as in the case of gems and jewellery will not do well as their cost will go up. India imports its huge gold requirements (700 to 800 tons) and raw semi-precious stones and pearls for its jewellery trade.
- On imports:** When the rupee weakens, importers, especially oil companies and other import-intensive companies, have to

- The rupee has fallen 5.2% in the current financial year, from close to 65 on March 28 to an 18-month low of 68.42 against the dollar in Late May 23, 2018. The currency now trades at its lowest in more than a year.
- Global Scenario:** The rupee, however, is not the only currency to face depreciation. Other emerging economies like Indonesia, Argentina, Mexico and Turkey have seen a fall in their currencies.

shell out more rupees to buy an equivalent amount of dollars. In this sense, a weak rupee can act as a kind of import tax.

- On remittances:** But these are good times for those receiving remittances from abroad. Acc. to the World Bank, the Indian diaspora remitted about \$69 billion in 2017, the most in the world. The value of these remittances in bank accounts in India rises as the rupee depreciates against the dollar.
- On tourists:** A weak rupee is making overseas travel costlier this holiday season — a traveller will have to shell out more rupees to buy dollars.
- On students studying abroad:** Students studying abroad too will see their costs rise.
- In short, the currency's fall and rise can be both negative and positive, depending on the macroeconomic situation, inflows, crude prices, strength against other currencies, real effective exchange value, etc.

### Way Ahead:

- One major factor determining a currency's exchange rate is its relative scarcity vis-a-vis other currencies. Since central banks are the sole suppliers of national currencies, they can influence the value of their currencies by appropriately regulating their supply.
- Another factor that determines a currency's exchange rate is the benchmark interest rate, which can be used as a tool to directly attract capital into the country and prop up the value of its currency.
- The Reserve Bank of India can affect both the money supply and domestic interest rates simultaneously through its monetary policy stance.
- Yet another common way to prop up a currency is through the direct intervention of the central bank in the forex market.

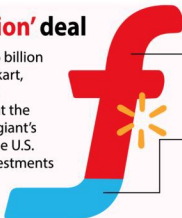


# WALMART-FLIPKART DEAL

In a battle for dominance of India's online marketplace, in May 2018, Walmart agreed to pay \$16 billion for about 77% stake in Flipkart.

## The 'big billion' deal

Walmart will pay \$16 billion for 77% stake in Flipkart, making it the largest shareholder. A look at the Indian e-commerce giant's past investors and the U.S. behemoth's past investments



**New equation:** Who owns what after the deal

**77%**

to be owned by **Walmart**. With this deal the U.S. retail giant has a vantage position in e-commerce space in India

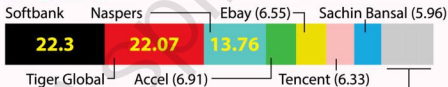
**23%**

owned by **existing shareholders** which includes Binny Bansal, co-founder | China's Tencent Holding Ltd | Tiger Global Management LLC | Microsoft Corp

### Flipkart's range

The first billion-dollar Indian e-commerce company sells everything from soaps to smartphones and from books to clothes

**Past equation:** Pre-acquisition percentage of past investors



DST Global (2.68) | Iconiq (2.32) | INQ Holding (1.84) | Microsoft (1.81) | Singapore GIC (1.55) | Sofina SA (1.4) | Others (4.52)



**80 million** products



**80+** categories



**100 million** registered users



**1,00,000** sellers users



**21** warehouses



**10 million** daily page visits

**Biggest buy:** The deal is Walmart's biggest ever buy. A look at its big acquisitions in the past (unknown deals are ignored)



## Who may remain in the fold



**BINNY BANSAL**  
Co-founder of Flipkart



**KALYAN KRISHNA-MURTHY**  
CEO of Flipkart



**ANANTH NARAYANAN**  
CEO of Myntra and Jabong



**SAMEER NIGAM**  
CEO of PhonePe

*Myntra, Jabong and PhonePe are units of Flipkart*





## ANALYSIS

### Background:

- Indian retail market is estimated to be 672 billion USD in 2017 and is one of top 5 retail markets globally by economic value. It is expected to reach 1 trillion USD by 2020. In addition, India has recently been ranked One in the Global Retail Development Index, 2017 published by London-based business consultancy A T Kearney.
- However, the star performer in India's retail sector has been e-commerce which is currently valued at 38.5 billion USD in 2017 and expected to 200 billion USD. This jump is expected on account of:
  - Large population base which young, upwardly-mobile and affluent middle class
  - Gradual easing of FDI policy in retail
  - Rapid urbanization
  - Increasing financial inclusion and digital penetration

### FDI in Retail:

- FDI policy in retail sector has been characterized by cautious optimism. Each of the different sub-sector of retail sector has different limits and conditions for FDI.
  - FDI in Single-brand retail is allowed upto 100% through automatic route.
  - FDI in multi-brand retail trading is capped at 51%.
  - FDI in e-commerce for B2B (Business to Business) is permitted upto 100%.
  - FDI in e-commerce for B2C (Business to Consumer) is permitted upto 100% in marketplace model. However, FDI isn't permitted in inventory based model of e-commerce.

### Flipkart-Walmart Deal: Significance

- Win-Win situation:**
  - Flipkart has been witnessing rising losses and had to reduce its working costs. On the other hand, Walmart has been unable to penetrate India's retail sector in spite of breaking into Indian market in 2007.
  - This deal will provide Flipkart with the much needed capital and Walmart with the much needed credible entry into India's e-commerce.
- Boost to Consumers:**
  - The deal will enhance the competition in the retail sector with Walmart-Flipkart partnership not only challenging Amazon and other e-tailers, but also physical brick-and-mortar retailers like Reliance, Future Group etc.
  - The deal will also aid in streamlining the supply chain management (logistics) sector as Walmart will bring in its efficient logistics expertise to Flipkart thus ensuring lower prices and better service.

### • Boost to Indian traders and manufacturers:

- The deal will enable e-tailer companies to venture for even remote traders and manufacturers in order to enhance their consumer base. For e.g. Amazon is venturing into remote areas of Gujarat to bring endangered arts within the purview of e-commerce.
- In addition, it will enable Indian traders, manufacturers and employees to be part of the international supply chain as Walmart will also source a number of goods for its stores outside India from India.
- Multiplier impact:** The deal is one of the biggest FDI in Indian market. It is bound to corroborate India's huge market potential, generate employment and boost digital sector.
- Boost to govt. initiatives:** Government's flagship schemes such as Startup India and Make in India, doubling of farmer incomes, and employed creation can get a big boost from a modern, organised, vibrant retail sector.

### Concerns:

- Loss for Indigenous manufacturers, Kirana stores and e-tailers:**
  - The deal may lead to loss for indigenous manufacturers, retailers, vendors if Walmart sources its good from foreign countries in order to reduce costs and stay competitive. For e.g. From China, Bangladesh etc.
  - Also, home grown companies and retailers like Snapdeal, Shopclues etc. may not be able to compete as these MNCs have deep pockets and can incur losses for a long period of time.
- Dream of an Indian Alibaba:** The deal also brings closure to the dream of an Indian Alibaba - Making Flipkart as an 100 billion USD company.
- Other concerns:**
  - Many experts have argued that the deal can be seen as a backdoor entry for FDI in multi-brand retail in India as FDI in multi-brand retail is restricted to 51% only.
  - In addition, Walmart has expertised itself in automation for reducing costs and enhancing efficiency thus accelerating the problem of unemployment in India.
  - Also, absence of any policy for e-commerce may lead to misuse/violation of Indian laws without any recourse. e.g. e-commerce is yet to have a customer protection law or any policy on predatory-pricing.

### Concluding Remark:

- This deal must enable the government to take note of the tremendous FDI potential in India in retail sector as well as in cold chains, food processing etc. and review its FDI Policy and strengthen regulatory framework for e-commerce accordingly.

## NEW PAYROLL DATA

Union Government released first ever estimate of payroll data based on the number of accounts in key social security schemes such as EPFO, NPS Etc.

### About:

- Union Government released first ever estimate of payroll data based on the number of accounts in key social security schemes such as the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO), the National Pension Scheme (NPS) and the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC).
- According to the data captured by the EPFO, 31.1 lakh new jobs were added in the formal economy between September 2017 and February 2018.

- This report will be released **every month** from now on, to help track jobs added in the formal sector.
- Government is also considering discontinuing enterprise based quarterly job surveys.

### Other employment related existing data sets?

- Employment-Unemployment Survey:** It is conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).
- Quarterly Employment Survey:** It is conducted by the Labour Bureau.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance of Job Data:

- Estimate of Job creation:** Such payroll data could eventually give us a good idea about job creation in the Indian economy.
- Formulating Monetary Policy:** Unemployment rate is among the key data points used by central banks in formulating monetary policies.
- It will assist Government in framing Appropriate Policies.

### Difficulties in analysis of Indian Labour market data:

- Large part of the labour force is in the informal sector, where information is very difficult to collect on a monthly basis.
- Formalization of the Indian economy i.e. profound structural shifts taking place in the composition of the labour force.
- Employment numbers for the young need to be handled with care since more children are staying back in college rather than seeking work.

### Criticism of Present Job Data based on Payrolls:

- It tracks the growth in payrolls rather than actual job creation.
- It is possible that job growth there could be balanced by job losses in the unorganized parts of the economy.
- The numbers do not capture employment generation among professionals, in the informal sector, agriculture and micro enterprises.
- Possibility of duplication:** e.g. when a firm employing 19 workers adds the 20<sup>th</sup> and gets registered on the EPFO database, the economy gains only one job, even though the payroll will show 20 additions.

- Possibility of inactive accounts:** When an employee loses his job or stops working, his membership from the EPFO database is not removed automatically.
- EPFO based data show large number of Job creation during September 2017 to February 2018, but figures of GDP growth, saving rate, sale of two-wheeler vehicle data do not corroborate the same.

### Way Forward:

- Use of Big Data analytics:** Release of monthly payroll data is a big step in the right direction. The next step should be a greater use of Big Data analytics to understand job creation in India.
- The new goods and services tax network (GSTN) offers an excellent opportunity to use Big Data analytics to extract employment data for all enterprises covered by the new tax.
- Employment generation in the informal sector, in agriculture and in micro enterprises can be captured with the help of periodic surveys.
- The NITI Aayog could additionally source numbers from the ICAI, bar council, medical council and other professional bodies to account for other avenues of employment.
- Reality tests:** EPFO data must be subjected to a reality test to prove authenticity and its usefulness for planning.
- There is need of multiple sources of data on formal employment to be able to properly judge its significance and growth.

# SUGAR CESS

Recently, Union Government announced various proposals to help the ailing sugar industry.

## About:

- The Union cabinet approved financial assistance of Rs 5.50 for every quintal of cane crushed during the 2017-18 sugar season (October-September), to enable mills discharge arrears to growers against the "fair and remunerative price" (FRP) payable to them. The total assistance would be about Rs. 1540 crore.
- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, too, met to discuss the levy of a special **Rs 3-per-kg cess on sugar** (whose proceeds would go to pay cane farmers) and **lowering the 18% rate on ethanol** (produced by distilleries attached to mills).

## Problems of Sugar Industry:

- Due to higher sugar production during the sugar season 2017-18, the domestic sugar prices have remained depressed. As a result, accumulated dues of farmers have reached to over Rs. 20,000 crores.
- Realisation price from export of sugar is just around Rs. 20 per kg, far below domestic sales price realisation.
- Raw material (sugarcane) prices are highly regulated whereas sugar prices are vulnerable to market dynamics.
- Cost of sugar has risen beyond Rs 35 per kg while the market price still range between Rs 26 and 28 per kg. This has led to sugar mill's payment arrears to cane farmers at over Rs 20,000 crore.
- Political fixation of cane prices:** Cane growers are seen as vote bank. Present crisis owes its origin to politically motivated high state-advised prices.
- Cyclical pattern of Production:** India's sugar industry has been historically subject to see-sawing fortunes, with three or four years of bumper cane harvests usually followed by two years of severe shortfall.

## Criticism of Present Proposals

- Rs 5.50/quintal support appears very little compared to estimated cane arrears of Rs 20,000 crore.
- The proposed Rs 3/kg cess on sugar, over and above the GST rate would **defeat GST's goal** of abolishing cascading of tax.
- Proposal to levy a nationwide extra tax to help farmers of just one crop, who are limited to a few states will **spur similar demands** eg. on cloth for supporting cotton farmers, on tyres for rubber growers, and so on.

- Against Co-operative federalism:** Collections from imposition of cess go only to central kitty, and not shared with states, hence against the ideal of Co-operative federalism.

## Way Forward/Possible Solutions:

- Adopt Rangarajan Committee recommendation:** Centre Should adopt the Rangarajan committee's recommendations on linking the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane to yearly realisations from sugar and its by-products, through a fixed formula.
- Changing cropping pattern:** Realistic procurement prices will also send the right sowing signals to the farmers to shift out of this water-guzzling crop into those that are in short supply.
- The Centre and states should **stop fixing cane prices**, besides **"reserving" areas for mills**.
- All controls** on movement of molasses must be **removed**.
- Bagasse-based power plants** be given the same **incentives** as those for solar, wind and other renewable sources.
- This is also the right time to make **10 per cent ethanol blending** of petrol mandatory.
- With petrol retailing at Rs 75 per litre, there is need to **revise upwards the Rs 40.85/litre rate for ethanol** that mills are now getting — which should help sugarcane farmers as well.

## Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)?

- Price of sugarcane is fixed by the centre/State, while the price of sugar is market determined.
- The industry has cyclical nature, with extreme shortage of sugarcane/sugar and extreme over supply alternative.
- The Centre fixes Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers.
- FRP is decided on the recommendations of the commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), and after consulting State government and industry associations.
- It assures margins to farmers, irrespective of whether sugar mills generate a profit or not. It is also not dependent on the performance of any individual sugar mills.
- Besides FRP, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhnad, UP and TN announce a State Advised Price, which is generally higher than the FRP.

June, 2018

# ICICI - VIDEOCON CONTROVERSY

**Allegations have emerged against Chanda Kochhar, the MD and CEO of the bank, of having personal interest and making gains in loans worth Rs 3,250 crore sanctioned to Videocon Industries.**

## Facts of the Case:

- Ms. Chanda Kochhar, MD & CEO of ICICI bank, was part of Credit committee meeting that sanctioned loans to the Videocon group in 2012.
- Her husband, Deepak Kochhar and Venugopal Dhoot had jointly promoted renewable firm 'Nupower' in 2008, which got loan of Rs. 64 crore in 2010 from 'Supreme Energy' owned by Mr. Dhoot.
- Through a series of complex deals thereafter, the company that extended the loan i.e. 'Supreme Energy' got wholly acquired by a trust controlled by Deepak Kochhar in 2013.
- Of the Rs. 3250 Crore loan granted by ICICI to Videocon Group, Rs 2810 crore was declared Non-performing asset in year 2017.



- ICICI bank board has defended Ms. Kochhar stating that ICICI was only part of a consortium of 20 lenders and the bank lent on the same terms as the other banks in the consortium. Further Ms. Kochhar was not chairperson of the credit committee when the loan was sanctioned.

## Conflict of Interest?

- Conflict of Interest situation arises when Public officer's own private interests come into conflict with his public/official duty to put the public/organisational interest first.
- Conflict of Interest is not wrong in itself, but it should be properly identified and declared, and effectively and transparently managed.
- It is when a conflict of Interest has been ignored, improperly acted on, or has influenced actions or decision making, that the conduct (not the conflict itself) could be seen as misconduct, abuse of office or even corruption.



## ANALYSIS

### Ethical and Other Dimensions involved:

- Potential Conflict of Interest:** There is no rule which prevents a top banker's relative from doing business. But a potential conflict of interest situation arises when that relative's dealings are with someone having significant commercial transactions with the bank concerned.
- Nepotism:** Videocon loan became a non-performing asset (NPA), but that, by itself, cannot have been ascribed to any nepotism. A detailed investigation is required to establish, whether or not Deepak Kochhar's business relations with Dhoot helped facilitate ICICI Bank's loan to Videocon.
- Disclosure requirement for Related Party transactions:** As per RBI guidelines, Chairman, Managing Director or other Director who is directly or indirectly concerned with or interested in any proposal should disclose his or her interest to the Board when the proposal is discussed. That person should not be present at the meeting unless his or her presence is required by other Directors for the purpose of eliciting information, but even then, he or she shall not vote on the proposal.
- Corporate Governance:** It is about promoting corporate fairness, transparency and accountability and ensuring that company is governed in the best interest of all stakeholders. Appropriate disclosure of Related Party transactions is integral requirement of strong corporate governance.
- Failure of Regulatory and Bank Supervision:** Regulatory and supervision system of RBI and ICICI bank's Internal Control system failed to flag the potential Conflict of Interest in timely manner.

### Concluding Remarks:

- ICICI is India's third largest bank by assets. At a time when state-owned banks are facing an unprecedented NPA and corporate governance crisis, the country cannot afford any public mistrust in important private sector banks.
- Detailed external investigation should be established to look into the precise nature of the deals between Mr Kochhar and Mr Dhoot, in India and overseas.
- Regulatory and supervision framework of banks should be strengthened to deal with PNB-Nirav Modi like cases and this kind of corporate governance issues.

# WUHAN MEETING

PM of India, Narendra Modi and President of China, Xi Jinping held their first Informal Summit in Wuhan on April 27-28, 2018.

## Key Highlights:

- **Afghanistan:** It was agreed to work together jointly on an economic project in Afghanistan, with details to be worked out through diplomatic channels.
- **Border management:**
  - Both have agreed on the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in all areas of the India-China border.
  - They decided to "issue strategic guidance to their militaries to strengthen communication", essentially to avoid another Doklam-like confrontation.
  - There was indication towards establishing a 'hot line' between the two militaries to quickly diffuse the crisis at the border.
- **Trade imbalance:** Trade deficit of about \$52 billion (of about \$84 billion bilateral trade) to be reduced, mostly by encouraging agricultural and pharmaceutical exports to China.
- **Regular communication:**
  - The two sides agreed to have more such summits.
  - The two leaders acknowledged that India and China "have wider and overlapping regional and global interests," meriting sharper "strategic communication".
- **PM Modi's Panchsheel:** PM Modi provided his vision of the Five Principles defining the relationship: Soch (thought), Sampark (contact), Sahyog (cooperation), Sankalp (determination) and Sapne (dreams).
- **Terrorism:** Additionally, it was noted that the two sides also recognize the common threat posed by terrorism and the need to oppose it in all its forms and manifestations.

## Wuhan?

- Wuhan is the capital of Hubei province, People's Republic of China.
- It lies on the middle reaches of the Yangtze River's intersection with the Han river.
- Wuhan is known as 'China's Thoroughfare'. Because of its key role in domestic transportation, Wuhan is sometimes referred to as 'the Chicago of China' by foreign sources.

Wuhan's Location in China Map



## INFORMAL SUMMIT

Informal summit is new diplomatic buzzword. The term is in the news of late with PM Narendra Modi embarking on two of them back to back, with President Xi Jinping in Wuhan, China, on April 27-28, and with President Putin in Sochi, Russia, on May 21.

### Earlier Informal Summit:

- Officials insist this is a part of PM Modi's attempts to go beyond traditional diplomatic outreach.
- It began with his invitation to all SAARC heads of state and government to attend his swearing-in as Prime Minister in 2014.
- Some other examples of such personal outreach are meeting the then Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif on December 25, 2015 to wish him on his birthday and his unscheduled stopover in Germany to meet Angela Merkel on his way back from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

### Meaning:

- An 'informal summit' is different from a regular formal summits which involve months of minute diplomatic planning.
- By definition, informal summits lack the pomp, protocol and ceremony of formal ones, including delegation-level talks and a pre-set agenda for discussions.
- No agreements are signed, and there is no joint statement or press conference. The two leaders involved hold one-to-one discussions, sometimes with only translators present.

### Benefits:

- Informal summits allow for quietly discussing contentious issues away from media glare and publicity.
- Absence of any formal joint communiqué also enables each side to spell out its own impressions of any outcomes.
- It allows leaders to meet 'informally' in order to know and understand each other better.
- By not setting expectations or deliverables, there is that much less pressure on the leaders.
- According to foreign analysts, PM Modi's informal summits appear to be in response to the Trump administration's more aggressive strategy for Asia. It reasserts the tradition of independent Indian diplomacy while avoiding a formal strategic tilt toward America's adversaries.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance:

- While meetings between officials of the two countries take place regularly, the Wuhan summit has inaugurated a new era of diplomacy where the top leaders of India and China meet more frequently and find time to take up issues in much greater detail.
- The message from Wuhan is an overarching one: that despite bilateral and geopolitical differences, India and China are mature enough to resolve differences peacefully and through prolonged dialogue.
- At the same time, they would not like to have their bilateral relationship be mediated by third countries like the US and neither would they like to have their relations with other countries — whether it is the US or Pakistan — negatively impact.
- They are also living in a period when the world's greatest power, the US, has a leader who is unpredictable and erratic. The Sino-Indian meeting is of importance to the developing world as well which increasingly looks to them for guidance and example.
- Setting up of a joint economic project in Afghanistan is a welcome step as that would:
  - not only contribute to the economy of Afghanistan but it could also be a forerunner for many more such joint projects.
  - be a recognition of India's developmental activities in Afghanistan. Possibly, this could also moderate Pakistan's opposition to anything Indian in Afghanistan.

- On the border issue, the summit appears to have reinforced the validity of the April 2005 Document on 'Principles for the Settlement of the Boundary Question'.
  - If it materializes then it marks an important milestone in the settlement of the border issue.
  - It is because this document is one of the very few that implicitly acknowledges India's claims to certain 'disputed' areas in the Arunachal sector of the India-China border.

### Post-Wuhan: How to Improve Sino-Indian Ties?

1. Resolve the disputed border issues. Unless the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is clarified, it is difficult not to have periodic incidents like in Depsang in 2014 and Chumar in 2015.
2. China needs to open up its markets to Indian goods to correct the trade imbalance. Many Indian products like pharmaceuticals, Information Technology products and non-basmati rice are blocked from the Chinese market.
3. Terrorism emanating from Pakistan remains a problem for India. As a friend of Pakistan and an important military partner, India feels that China should do more to restrain Pakistan.
4. Establish a diplomatic mechanism through which they can discuss regional issues. Also, building on the idea of a joint project in Afghanistan, the two sides should explore joint third-country projects in some of other countries.
5. Top leaderships should sensitise lower level officials and military personnel about what they are trying to achieve. Unless the lower level officials implement the ideas, the high level meeting will be of no value.

## PM MODI HAS HIS OWN 'PANCHSHEEL'

Jawaharlal Nehru's five principles of Panchsheel have long been the guiding principle of Indo-China relations.

- (1) Respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
- (2) Non-aggression
- (3) Non-interference in each other's internal affairs
- (4) Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit
- (5) Peaceful co-existence



PM Modi has laid out his own 'five principles' or the new Panchsheel that will define the relationship between the two countries.

His five 'positives' are

- (1) Soch (thought)
- (2) Sampark (contact)
- (3) Sahyog (cooperation)
- (4) Sankalp (determination)
- (5) Sapne (dreams)





# CHINA'S 'DEBT-TRAP DIPLOMACY'

In May 2018, scholars of the Harvard Kennedy School released a report written for the U.S. State Department on China's 'Debt-trap Diplomacy'.

## Working of its debt-trap diplomacy:

- It is all part of Beijing's "Belt and Road" initiative – also known as "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) – a US\$8 trillion plan to create a new Silk Road with sea and land links across Asia and Africa to Europe.
- Projects costing around \$900 billion are currently underway or in the planning stage, paid for with billion-dollar loans from Beijing. Loans that cannot be serviced leave governments in the debt trap.
- Rather than offering grants or concessionary loans, China provides huge project-related loans at market-based rates, without transparency, much less environmental- or social-impact assessments.
- To strengthen its position further, China has encouraged its companies to bid for outright purchase of strategic ports, where possible.
- The easy loans China offers are addictive. And, because China chooses its projects according to their long-term strategic value, they may yield short-term returns that are insufficient for countries to repay their debts.

## Comparison with IMF and World Bank:

- Unlike International Monetary Fund and World Bank lending, Chinese loans are collateralized by strategically important natural assets with high long-term value (even if they lack short-term commercial viability).
- i.e. In exchange for financing and building the infrastructure that poorer countries need, China demands favourable access to their natural assets, from mineral resources to ports.

## Benefits for China:

- This gives China added leverage, which it can use, say, to force borrowers to swap debt for equity, thereby expanding China's global footprint by trapping a growing number of countries in debt servitude.
- It hopes to advance its strategic interests, including expanding its diplomatic influence, securing natural resources, promoting the international use of its currency, and gaining a relative advantage over other powers.
- It also wants to address overcapacity at home by boosting exports. Thus China uses sovereign debt to bend other states to its will, without having to fire a single shot.

## Countries vulnerable to debt-trap:

- Sri Lanka:** In 2017, struggling to pay its \$8bn debt to Chinese state-controlled companies, Sri Lanka leased its strategic port of Hambantota to China for 99 years, raising fears it could become a military base.
- Djibouti:** In Djibouti, Beijing's state-owned enterprises have taken over Doraleh Container Terminal in exchange for debt.
- Pakistan:** Pakistan is adding \$62 billion of Chinese loans on top of external debt standing at \$82 billion.
- Vanuatu:** Vanuatu has taken at least \$270 million in Chinese loans. In April 2018 China held discussions with Vanuatu about building a People's Liberation Army naval base.



## Lesson for Countries:

- These experiences should serve as a warning that the BRI is essentially an imperial project.
- States caught in debt bondage to China risk losing both their most valuable natural assets and their very sovereignty.



## INTER-KOREA SUMMIT

Kim Jong-un became the first North Korean leader to set foot in South Korea when he met South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27.

### Panmunjom Summit: Key Highlights

- **Ending the Korean war:**
  - The two leaders pledged to officially end the Korean War (1950-53) which has technically still not concluded.
  - Announcing the beginning of a 'new age of peace', the two sides declared that there will be no more wars on the Korean peninsula.
  - Mechanisms will also be put in place to hold frequent defence ministerial and working level meetings in a bid to immediately resolve military issues.
- **Denuclearisation:** To realise the above mentioned goal, both sides agreed to pursue complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.
- **Border dispute:** Both the leaders agreed to transform the fortified border into a peace zone. Steps would be taken to transform the current 'Northern Limit Line' in the West Sea into a 'maritime peace zone'.
- **Regular Bilateral Interaction:**
  - Measures are to be instituted to encourage more active cooperation, exchanges, visits and contacts between the two sides.
  - They also committed to jointly participate in international sports events and resolve the humanitarian issues resulting from the nation's division.
- **Resuming multi-party talks:** It envisages complete cessation of all hostile acts against each other and multilateral talks with other countries including the US.



### ANALYSIS

#### Reasons for Summit:

- The hyper paced developments which brought Kim to the negotiation table without preconditions could be attributed to number of factors.
- These could include biting pressure due to fresh US sanctions, China tightening curbs on trade with the unruly neighbour and a desire to end the state of international isolation and gain recognition in the global polity.
- It could also be a well calculated strategic move by north Korea (cycle of provocation and reconciliation) to weaken US-South Korea alliance.
- Mr. Moon, who took over as President of South Korea in May 2017, has been a proponent of engagement between the Koreas. Since then, there have been several high-level diplomatic meetings leading to the setting up of the summit.

#### Challenges:

- The meeting will go down as a watershed moment in the destiny of Korean Peninsula.
- Despite these positive developments, given the conflicting interests of the key stakeholders, there are number of imponderables which need to be addressed.
- Peace prospects will largely depend on the outcome of the Trump-Kim meeting, tripartite talks between US and two Koreas and 'four party' talks involving China.
- To make any tangible progress, US will have to allay Pyongyang's security concerns. However, US will always be wary of losing its influence in the region, esp. the future of 28,500 American troops stationed in South Korea.
- China is an important stake holder in the region. In case its interests are not well served, Beijing can well block the peace deal by not being an honest broker.
- For North Korea, the key concern is the survival of its authoritarian regime. Going by the past record, it is no naive player. Post the inter-Korean summit in 2007, the joint declaration had almost identical goals as the recent one. Yet the international peace process failed to make any progress.



## Lessons from... KOREA TO INDO-PAK

### Similarities:

- There are some common features between the conflicts in the Korean Peninsula and the Indian Subcontinent.
- For one, both the regions were partitioned after the Second World War. For another, nuclear weapons loom large over them.
- That is probably where the similarity ends. The differences between the two regions, however, are far more striking.

### Differences:

- The religious and voluntary basis of the South Asian partition stands in contrast to the primacy of the geopolitical concerns in the division of the Korean Peninsula.
- **Views on unification:**
  - Both the North and South Korea are formally committed to the idea of unification (the idea that Korean people are one). Even the most optimistic scenario does not envisage the disappearance of North Korea as a state. What is being considered is a peace treaty, an open border, greater economic and commercial cooperation.
  - In the Subcontinent, the idea of unification is taboo. The idea of a shared identity, of course, faces much resistance from the deep state in Pakistan.
- **Views on denuclearisation:**
  - In Korea, the entire focus is on the "denuclearisation" of the Peninsula (which is seen as a precondition for peace). While the North that has its own nuclear weapons, the South depends on the extended deterrence offered by the US nuclear arsenal.
  - In South Asia, political reconciliation between India and Pakistan, many argue, will help reduce the salience of nuclear weapons.

### • Strategic value of Nuclear Weapons for North Korea and Pakistan:

- Kim Jong-Un sees nuclear weapons as a deterrent and key for starting peace negotiations with the South Korea and the US.
- Unlike Kim, Pakistan army saw them as providing the impunity to conduct a low intensity conflict against its neighbours — India and Afghanistan — through cross-border terrorism.
- **Role of Great Powers:**

- Since the end of the Cold War, the US, China, Russia and Japan have played an active role in promoting peace in the Peninsula through the framework of six-party dialogue.
- India took the Kashmir question to the United Nations Security Council. It accepted American and Soviet mediation with Pakistan during the 1960s. After 1971, India insisted on the bilateral approach with Pakistan and fended off frequent efforts by the major powers to butt in.

### Lessons for India and Pakistan:

- India, Pakistan could take a cue from peace talks in the Peninsula.
- If there is one lesson for India from the current political dynamism in Korea, it is this: For the strong-willed, there is always room for creative diplomacy.
- For Pakistan too, Kim offers a lesson — that nuclear weapons are not an end in themselves. And that the leverage offered by nuclear weapons could be traded for economic benefit and normalisation of relations with adversaries.
- But Pakistan army is a long way from that recognition. The South Asian stalemate, then, is likely to endure even as South and North Korea appear poised to turn the page.

## Past Summits : Two meets were held in 2000 and 2007

**June 13-15, 2000**

South Korea's Kim Dae-jung met Kim Jong-il. A joint declaration was signed addressing following points

- Resolution of the reunification question



- Greater exchanges in areas like economy, culture, sports, health and environment

**Oct. 2-4, 2007**

S. Korea's Roh Moo-hyun met Kim Jong-il. The two sides

- Reaffirmed the spirit of the earlier declaration



- Called for international talks to replace the armistice signed in 1953 with a permanent peace treaty

# INDIA'S NORTH KOREA OUTREACH

In May 2018, India's Minister of State for External Affairs, General VK Singh, paid a two-day visit to North Korea.

## Key Highlights of the Visit:

- It was the first ministerial visit from India to North Korea in nearly two decades.
- The two sides identified vocational education, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and promotion of Yoga as areas for future collaboration.
- North Korea reassured India that it would never take any action that would affect India's security (this was stated in the context of the North Korea's proliferation and linkages with India's neighbour Pakistan).

## Present Status of Relations:

- Trade:**
  - Though India has been North Korea's second-largest trading partner after China, bilateral trade came down to around \$130 million in 2016-17 from around 209 million in 2014-15.
  - In April 2017, India had banned all trade with North Korea, except for food and medicines, in line with the United Nations sanctions provisions.
- Humanitarian assistance:** India has been sending humanitarian assistance to North Korea, which has faced food shortages because of famine and natural calamities.
- Diplomatic ties:**
  - India has a '**Policy of diplomatic equality**' between the two Koreas and had established full diplomatic relations in 1972 with both the Koreas simultaneously.
  - The two sides have maintained regular Foreign Office consultations even during the period of relative isolation of North Korea.
- Technological cooperation:**
  - India annually offers 15 scholarships to North Korea under India's Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program.
  - Acc. To some reports, Center for Space Science and Technology in Asia and the Pacific (CSSTEAP), Dehradun provides technical education to North Korean scientists.
- Cultural relations:**
  - There have regular cultural exchanges under the 1976 Cultural Agreement.
  - The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) periodically sends cultural troupes to North Korea.
  - India has also been participating in the biennial Pyongyang International Film Festival.



## ANALYSIS

### Strained Relations:

Although, both the countries are active members of the Non-Aligned Movement and established full diplomatic ties way back in 1972, the bilateral relations remained lukewarm due to various reasons:

- For starting the Korean War in 1950, India had voted for the UN Security Council resolutions declaring North Korea as the aggressor.
- North-Korea transferred missile technology to Pakistan in exchange of Uranium enrichment technology (*Pakistani missiles Gauri and Shaheen are based on North Korean prototypes*).
- India's ties with U.S, Japan and South Korea also meant that it couldn't turn a blind eye to North-Korea's nuclear and missile provocations.

### Towards Expanding Ties:

- MoS V.K. Singh's recent visit was preceded by a cooling of temperatures on Korean Peninsula (In April 2017, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un held a historic summit with the South Korean President Moon Jae-in).
- If North Korea comes out of its self-imposed isolation, India would be willing to forge a deeper political, strategic and economic relationship.
- Apart from being a key to peripheral diplomacy, North Korea is also estimated to have one of the largest global deposits of minerals and rare earth metals necessary for India's IT industry and electronic majors.
- Unlike in Iran, where India had waited far too long to register its presence after the nuclear deal of 2015, this time it wanted to get things just right.

### Reaching out too early?

- But North Korea can be highly unpredictable. E.g. Just as General Singh was in the country, North Korea called off high-level talks (scheduled on May 16) with South Korea to protest US-South Korean military exercises (Max Thunder drills).
- So, was it a premature outreach? Not really. If talks break down and North Korea again goes into seclusion, it would be nothing more than a wasted effort. But if the talks take place, then New Delhi and Indian companies may be on a good wicket.

# IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

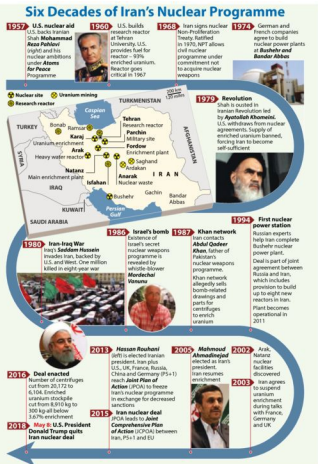
In May 2018, US President Donald Trump announced that US will withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran.

## JCPOA:

- In 2015, China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, the US and the European Union (EU) inked the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran.
- Under it, Iran agreed to make certain changes to its nuclear programme to ensure that it would be peaceful, in return for the UN, the EU and the US diluting their sanctions against it.
- Nuclear related sanctions on Iran were lifted by the US effective January 1, 2016.

## Withdrawal from Deal:

- Trump's decision:** In May 2018, US President Donald Trump announced that the US will withdraw from the JCPOA and that US sanctions will be re-imposed on Iran.
- Reason for withdrawal:** Trump has three problems with JCPOA:
  - The deal does not have binding restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile programme;
  - Many of the restrictions have sunset clauses (i.e. provisions of the JCPOA will become less strict over the years enabling Iran to move towards nuclear-weapon capability); and
  - The deal does nothing to prevent Iranian sponsorship of terrorism in its region.
- Reaction of other countries:** The other signatories to the deal—the UK, France, Germany, Russia and China—have expressed disappointment over the move and have stated their intention of staying in the deal.



## AFTER TRUMP DECISION : WHAT CHANGES, WHAT REMAINS

	BEFORE 2015 DEAL	UNDER THE ACCORD	AFTER US PULLOUT
<p><b>US sanctions</b></p>	No Iranian goods and services imports, virtually no trade and investment by Americans in Iran	Billions of dollars of Iran funds held in foreign banks unfrozen, nuclear-related sanction lifted	Nuclear-related punitive sanctions will be restored, President Donald Trump has announced
<p><b>N-programme</b></p>	Iran had capability to build weapons; may have needed only a few months to make bomb fuel	Iran's ability to secretly build nuclear weapons was severely compromised or eliminated	All restrictions remain in place
<p><b>Inspections</b></p>	Some monitoring under NPT requirements, but it was far less intrusive than under the deal	International monitoring of uranium mines, centrifuge production	For now, inspections will continue
<p><b>Eu sanctions</b></p>	Extensive international sanctions, including oil embargo and limits on banking, isolated Iran	Un sanctions tied to Iran's nuclear work terminated, EU ended an oil embargo	EU sanction remain suspended or terminated

June, 2018



## ANALYSIS

### Counter-arguments to Objections:

Trump's decision is unreasonable for several reasons.

1. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has consistently maintained that Iran has complied with the strictures of the JCPOA without fail.
2. If indeed there are concerns about sunset clause, then efforts should be made to engage Iran in negotiations rather than undo what has already been achieved.
3. With regard to Iran's involvement in the various West Asian conflicts and "promotion of terrorism", Iran is not the only country engaging in them. And in any case the way out, again, is diplomatic engagement rather than further unsettle an already volatile region.

If the JCPOA unravels, it will have consequences for the entire world, including India.

### Geopolitical Impact:

- **Iran:**
  - **Nuclearisation:** If Iran too withdraws from JCPOA, it may well return to its uranium enrichment programme, a precursor to acquiring nuclear weapons.
  - **Impact on domestic polity:** Trump's decision could also give hardliners who opposed the deal an edge over Hassan Rouhani, the moderate President of Iran.
  - **Regime change?** The Trump administration may be secretly hoping that sanctions will lead to a regime collapse in Iran. This idea is fraught with danger as a regime collapse involves risk of a more hardline section in Iran gaining power.
- **West Asia:** Trump's move to target Iran, and side with its regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Israel, is likely to set off a period of uncertainty in West Asian geopolitics.
- **EU-US Relations:** US withdrawal from the deal would create deep fissures in the trans-Atlantic security partnership because it implies potential secondary sanctions against those European companies which are engaged in business deals with Iran.
- **North Korea:** It is equally possible that the North Koreans will think twice before entering into any agreement with the untrustworthy Trump administration.
- **US:** Rather than isolate Iran diplomatically, Trump's decision may end up diminishing the US's stature as a global leader. Unlike in the Cold War era, The West is not currently united behind America.

### Threat to Multilateralism:

- Trump's Iran decision follows a pattern of similar unilateral steps — such as the withdrawal from the Paris climate accord and formal recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.
- This US unilateralism has deep-running implications for the global governance architecture and other multilateral arrangements and regimes.

### Impact on India:

- **Indian diaspora:** More conflict in the region would adversely impact the welfare and safety of Indian expatriates in West Asia, leading to a sharp decline in the remittances they send home.
- **Crude oil:**
  - India has increased its oil imports from Iran ever since the sanctions on the country were removed in 2015. Scaling down its purchases from Iran, means looking towards Saudi Arabia and Iraq, for supplies.
  - The even greater concern is the effect on fuel imports and pricing in India. If oil prices surge further, that can make imports more expensive and can widen India's current account deficit, increase inflation and weaken the Rupee further.
- **Chabahar:** The setback on Chabahar—India's entry to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia—is a bigger concern. But connectivity through Chabahar was not flourishing anyway as fear of impending sanctions had mostly kept private firms away.

### Way Ahead for India:

- Government's efforts to maintain a fine balance between India's relations with Iran on the one hand and with the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia on the other will be seriously tested in the days ahead.
- India will have to make greater use of Euro-denominated transactions for its oil trade to mitigate the impact of the extra-territorial application of US sanctions provisions. Mechanisms like the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) will have to be revitalised.

### Concluding Remark:

- JCPOA may have had its flaws but a better deal seems far away at the moment.
- Trump has decided what he has. There is no point lamenting now. It is time for the international community to think of how to limit the damage i.e. preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran, and, not allowing the hardline sections in the country to have a greater say in its future.

# IMMIGRATION POLITICS

Immigration politics is again in news due to crackdown on H-1B visa by Trump Administration and Windrush Scandal in UK.

## H-1B VISA CRACKDOWN

### H-1B visa:

- H-1B visas are a category of temporary visas issued by the US government to corporations that hire foreign workers for so-called specialized roles and skills.
- The H-1B programme began with the Immigration Act of 1990. A lottery system has been put in place by the official immigration agency in the US to randomly choose petitions for processing.

### H4 Visa (Dependent Visa):

- A H4 visa is issued to dependent family members (spouse and children) of H1 visa holders who would like to accompany the H1B visa holder to the U.S. during their stay.

### Debate:

- Opponents of H-1B programme:**
  - Since the 2016 presidential election campaign, Donald Trump is arguing for a Buy American, Hire American' political platform.
  - Critics of the H-1B programme argue that it discriminates against American workers.
  - Companies have deliberately hired more foreign workers at far lower salaries than what they would have had to pay out to local American workers.
- Proponents of H-1B programme:**
  - Proponents argue it is essential to preserve a culture of innovation, as it allows companies to hire talent they say is not available in the country.
  - American corporations have argued that the H-1B programme only looks to address the talent shortage in the US.

### Recent Controversy:

- Scrapping H-4 visas:**
  - Recently, a top US federal official informed lawmakers that the Trump administration plans to scrap a critical provision that allows spouses of H-1B visa holders to work legally in the US.
  - The move is expected to impact over 70,000 spouses who currently hold H-4 visas.

- The clampdown is essentially aimed at discouraging applicants from countries such as India and China, which account for a majority of the 85,000 H-1B visas issued every year.
- If the H-4 visa programme for spouses is scrapped, it would also dissuade current H-1B visa holders and future H-1B applicants from seeking long-term employment in the US.
- Tighter screening process for H-1B visas:**
  - Besides, the Trump administration has also tightened the screening process for H-1B visas.
  - The immigration agency in the US is conducting more severe background checks for H-1B workers, scrutinizing firms that hire large number of H-1B employees and has also started delaying and denying visas to more applicants.
  - If the H-1B programme is scrapped, it would disrupt the traditional business model of Indian software services exporters and increase their cost of doing business in the US.

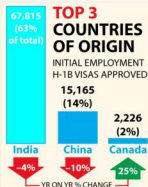
### What Next?

- The H-1B visa programme is mandated by legislation, therefore, any structural change is possible only through a legislative process. In a highly fractious U.S. Congress, passing any legislation is difficult, and changes to immigration and visa rules even more so.

### Do You Know?

Despite a 4% dip, Indians got 63% of 1.08 Lakh H-1B visas issued for initial employment in fiscal 2017.

The 4% drop indicates (1) higher rejection rate during processing, reflecting the protectionist policies under President Trump and (2) higher local hiring by large Indian IT players such as TCS, Infosys and Wipro.





# WINDRUSH SCANDAL

## Why in News?

- In April 2018, UK Prime Minister Theresa May apologised to 12 Caribbean nations for the treatment of people from the so-called "Windrush generation".

## Windrush Generation:

- The Windrush generation refers to the immigrants who were invited to the UK between 1948 and 1971 from Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.
- The name derives from the ship MV Empire Windrush, which on June 22, 1948, docked in Tilbury, Essex, bringing nearly 500 Jamaicans to the UK.
- The immigrants came at the invitation of the British government, which was facing a labour shortage due to the destruction caused by World War II.
- The 1971 Immigration Act gave Commonwealth citizens who were already living in the UK indefinite leave to remain.

## Windrush Scandal:

- A scandal over the treatment of members of the Windrush generation has been mounting in recent months.
- When May was home secretary in 2012, she set out to create strict new rules which required employers, health services and landlords to demand evidence of people's immigration status.
- Inability to furnish such evidence has been met with job losses, threat of deportation, withdrawal of welfare benefits and even denial of critical medical care.

- Amid the tightening of the immigration rules, an estimated 50,000 long-term UK residents could now be facing problems.

## Comment:

- The Windrush scandal marks another episode in Europe's hardening politics on immigration, denting the continent's image as being open, liberal and tolerant.
- The development comes at an awkward moment for London, which hopes to negotiate trade agreements with the countries of the British Commonwealth as it withdraws from the European Union.
- Coming of cheap immigrant labour has also given a fillip to xenophobic parties of the extreme right across the region, threatening to halt immigration.

## Sajid Javid?

- In April 2018, Sajid Javid was appointed as the Britain's New Home Secretary. He is a Person of Pakistani Origin.
- He is first person of South Asian origin to head Britain's Home Office.
- He is also the first South Asian to head one of the "Great Offices of State", i.e. the four most senior positions in the government (including the Prime Minister, head of the Treasury and head of the Foreign office).



## Policy Backlash

Amber Rudd, Home Secretary and one of the most 'pro-Remain' voices in Theresa May's Cabinet, resigned over the question of whether she knew of the immigration targets in her Ministry

- The U.K. kept its doors open to people from the Commonwealth nations till 1971. About 57,000 of them face deportation now

Migrants who came before 1971

Non-U.K. nationals  
**57,000**

Among the non-U.K. nationals

15,000 are Jamaicans | 13,000 are Indians | 29,000\* others



\* Includes Kenyans, South Africans and Pakistanis

## Lack of Documentation

- Some children, travelling on their parents' passports, were never formally naturalised
- Some of them moved to the U.K. before the countries in which they were born became independent, so they assumed they were British
- The Home Office did not keep a record
- In 2010, landing cards belonging to the Windrush migrants were destroyed

## Revelations by The Guardian

- Documents show that there was communication between Rudd and her officials and also Rudd and the Prime Minister on increasing the number of enforced deportations by 10% over the next few years

## Hostile approach

- Theresa May as Home Secretary had vowed to create a 'very hostile environment' for immigrants, setting an annual migration target of 1,00,000

## The Windrush generation

- Their members came from Caribbean countries at Britain's invitation between 1948 and 1971
- The influx of migrants from the Commonwealth nations ended with the 1971 Immigration Act
- Her policy forces people living in the country to prove their right to reside there at every turn, including while renting a home and while availing health care. This makes them vulnerable to abuse at the hands of employers, government personnel and other officials

# CHEMICAL WEAPONS

In April 2018, the US, UK and France launched strikes on Syria for the apparent use of chemical weapons by President Bashar al-Assad's forces in the town of Douma.

## Douma Chemical Attack:

- On 7 April 2018, an alleged chemical attack in the Syrian city of Douma reportedly killed at least 70 people.
- Some on-site medics said a mixture of chlorine gas and sarin was used in the attack. Sarin is a nerve agent that spreads quickly through the air, causing convulsions, coma and respiratory arrest.
- Who Carried Out the Attack?** The attack was attributed to the Syrian Army by rebel forces in Douma, and a number of western countries. Syria however denied the allegation arguing that the attack did not happen.

- Reaction:** On 14 April 2018, the United States, France and the UK carried out a series of military strikes against alleged 'chemical weapons infrastructure' sites in Syria.



## Fact Sheet

### Chemical Weapons:

- Generally Speaking, chemical weapon is a toxic chemical in a delivery system such as bomb or artillery.
- The Chemical Weapons Convention defines a chemical weapon as anything specifically designed or intended for use in direct connection with the release of a chemical agent to cause death or harm is itself a chemical weapon.
- All 192 states of the Chemical Weapons Convention have the right to use some of these for peaceful purposes. Teargas shells, for example, are frequently used for riot control.

### Nerve Gas:

- It is a compound that acts by incapacitating the mechanism within the body responsible for the conduction of nerve impulses.
- This is usually done by blocking the action of acetylcholinesterase — a compound that catalyses the breakdown of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine.
- Nerve gas are among the most lethal chemical weapons.

### OPCW:

- The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is a Hague-based intergovernmental body that works for the elimination of chemical weapons.
- It was formed after the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) — an arms control treaty that bans the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons — entered into force in 1997.

- The OPCW is the implementing body of the Convention. It has the powers to inspect chemical production facilities.
- Members:** All its 192 member states are required to destroy their existing stockpiles of chemical weapons and stop large-scale production.
  - Israel has signed the agreement but is yet to ratify it.
  - The countries that have not signed it are Egypt, South Sudan and North Korea.
- OPCW was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize for destroying Syria's declared stockpile on behalf of the UN.

### Present Status of Chemical Weapons:

- Of the 192 CWC signatories, Albania, India, Iraq, Libya, Russia, Syria, and the US declared possession of chemical weapons in past.
- Of them, Albania, India, Libya, Russia and Syria have declared completion of destruction of chemical weapons.
- According to OPCW, 96.27% or 69,610 of 72,304 tonnes of the world's stockpile of chemical weapons have been "verifiably destroyed".
- Syria:** Earlier, OPCW had concluded that chemical weapons were used in Syria's Eastern Ghouta (2013) and Khan Sheikhoun (2017). In the aftermath of April 2018 incident, a team of inspectors from the OPCW arrived in Syria to probe the suspected chemical weapons attack.

## CAATSA

According to recent reports, India's planned defence procurement from Russia could get adversely affected due to implementation of CAATSA.

### Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA):

- CAATSA is a United States federal law, that was enacted in August 2017 with the objective of countering the aggression by Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures (e.g. imposing sanctions).
- Section 231 of the Act empowers the US President to impose sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction"

with Russian defence and intelligence sectors. Two of the most stringent of these sanctions are:

- suspending export licences related to munitions, dual-use and nuclear related items and
- ban on American investment in equity/debt of the sanctioned person.
- Under Section 231, the Department of State has notified almost all of the major Russian companies (such as Rosoboronexport, Sukhoi Aviation, MiG), dealings with which could make third parties liable to sanctions if it adversely affects US national security and foreign policy interests.



### ANALYSIS

#### Implication on Indo-Russia Defence Relations:

- First, India's planned procurement from Russia, particularly the S-400 air defence system, Project 1135.6 frigates and Ka-226T helicopters, will come under the immediate scanner of US authorities (as they are mandated to deter exports of key Russian defence entities).
- Second, CAATSA is likely to affect all the joint ventures (JVs) – such as Multi-Role Transport Aircraft Ltd and Brahmos Aerospace — between Indian and Russian defence companies.
- Third, it will also affect India's purchase of spare parts, components and raw materials for which India is dependent on Russia for maintenance of existing equipment.

- US sanctions on India will be counterproductive to America's own strategic interests vis-à-vis China. It is because any sanction on Indian defence will tilt the military balance in favour of China in the Indo-Pacific region.
- US is projecting India as a key partner in its Indo-Pacific strategy, with the US National Security Strategy 2017 explicitly supporting New Delhi's vital role in this regard.
- Both countries actively cooperating in various security forums including in the newly formed Quad.
- In other words, the US has much to lose if it imposes CAATSA on India.

#### Will CAATSA be imposed on India?

- Apart from the standard waivers that the US President enjoys on the grounds of national security interests, remarks from higher American authorities indicate that Washington may take a lenient view of CAATSA in regard to India's defence cooperation with Russia.
- It is because:
  - Russian weapons in Indian hands do not threaten American national security interests directly.
  - Sanctions on India or any of its entities and persons will bring bilateral defence cooperation to a halt. That, in turn, would force India to reverse its declining arms dependence on Russia, while arresting the upward trend in India-US defence trade.

#### Way Ahead:

- While CAATSA is unlikely to be imposed on India anytime soon, it is nonetheless a dampener on an otherwise booming defence relationship between India and the United States.
- Also, there is an overwhelming share of Russian weaponry in the Indian arms inventory, the upkeep of which necessitates India's continued dependence on Russia.
- Thus Indian defence decision makers should raise this critical aspect upon their American interlocutors and find suitable mitigation.
- At the same time, India also needs to be prepared for any eventual CAATSA-related sanctions. E.g. India can include a provision in its business dealings for banning defence companies of countries which resort to banning entities of other countries for foreign policy purposes.

## POKHRAN-II

**On May 11, 2018, India observed the 20th anniversary of the Pokhran-II nuclear bomb tests, which made India a full-fledged nuclear state.**

### Operation Shakti:

- Pokhran-II (a.k.a Operation Shakti-98) is the name assigned to the series of five nuclear bomb test explosions conducted by India at the Indian Army's Pokhran Test Range in May 1998.
- On May 11, 1998, India carried out three nuclear tests. Two days later, India carried out two more tests. Of the five detonations, the first was a fusion bomb and the remaining four were fission bombs.
- Subsequently, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared India a full-fledged nuclear state.
- It was the second Indian nuclear test; the first test, code-named Smiling Buddha, was conducted in 1974. It was called a Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE). By conducting it, India demonstrated its capability to produce a nuclear bomb, but simultaneously stated that it would not produce a nuclear bomb.

### Key People involved:

- The key men behind its success were APJ Abdul Kalam, former President and then Chief of the DRDO; R Chidambaram, Chief of the Atomic Energy Commission; K Santhanam, mission Director; and Anil Kakodkar, Director of BARC.
- The three top politicians in the NDA Government who decided to conduct the tests were PM AB Vajpayee; Defence Minister George Fernandes and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh.



### Pokhran?

Pokhran is a city and a municipality located in Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan. It is a remote location in the Thar Desert. The name Pokhran means "place of five mirages".

### National Technology Day?

The Indian government has officially declared the 11 May as National Technology Day in India to commemorate the Pokhran-II.

### Reasons for Conducting it:

#### • Nuclear adversaries as neighbours:

- By the late 1990s India was faced with a situation in which two neighbours with whom it had fought wars, Pakistan and China, already had nuclear weapons.
- Post 1974, Pakistan had actively started acquiring nuclear weapons. China had helped Pakistan to become a "covert nuclear weapons state," which was public knowledge.
- By conducting the tests, India was able to insulate itself from nuclear threats and blackmail.

#### • CTBT:

- In the 1990s, India had come under pressure from the US and Western nations to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that sought to embargo all nuclear testing.
- That brought in a tricky situation. If India signed on to CTBT, we would have been closing our nuclear option for ever. If we refused to sign, we would have to explicitly state why we do not want to sign.

### Nuclear Doctrine:

In the wake of the Shakti tests India released a draft nuclear doctrine. Its salient features are:

1. India would maintain a minimum but Credible nuclear deterrent (concerns about the possible disruption of peace requires a deterrence capability).
2. To achieve this India did not require further testing and hence putting a voluntary moratorium on further nuclear testing.
3. India would adhere to a 'no first use' doctrine as regards nuclear weapons.
4. Finally, India is committed to global nuclear disarmament.

### Was it a Failure?

- Immediately after the 1998 tests, and later on also, several voices, including some from within the atomic energy establishment, raised question marks over the success of the nuclear tests, especially that of the thermonuclear device.
- In 2009, K Santhanam, senior scientist and DRDO representative at Pokhran II, stated that the thermonuclear device tested was a 'fizzle' rather than a big bang (i.e. yield of the thermonuclear explosions was actually much below expectations).
- However, this is rejected by other project members who claims Pokhran-II to be a success.

June, 2018



## 20 YEARS OF INDIA'S NUCLEARISATION

### Significance:

- Although wide-ranging economic sanctions were imposed on India for defiance of global non-proliferation norms, in the hindsight, the tests opened-up a unique diplomatic opportunity for India.
- **Indo-nuclear deal:** The single most important outcome from 1998 tests came in the form of 'Indo-U.S. nuclear deal' which
  - called for India to "acquire the same benefits and advantages as other such (nuclear weapons) states" and
  - opened the gates of technical aid to India's civil nuclear industry which suffered for long due to constraints of technology and fuel supplies.
- **Membership of MECR:** India is now a member of three out of four multilateral export control regimes — Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement, Australia Group — and is in the reckoning for membership of the NSG.
- **Nuclear Triad:** At the strategic front, New Delhi has made impressive advances toward deploying a nuclear triad of land, air, and sea-based assets to build a Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD).
- **Foreign Policy Impact:**
  - It ushered in a much-needed shift in India's foreign policy thinking wherein India learned to negotiate its core interests amidst the great power rivalries.
  - The tests also enabled a historic shift in bilateral relations with the US.
  - Post-1998, however, India became more supportive of the prevailing non-proliferation order which emphasised on arms control as a critical pathway towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- **International Standing:**
  - India's stature globally has gone up.
  - India is always cited as a country that followed the rules by adherence to the non-proliferation regime, despite not being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- **Access to International Technology:**
  - Prior to this, even obtaining a high-end computer from abroad was a no-no. This has all changed.
  - Now there has been a growing engagement on the high-tech sectors of defence, space and atomic energy which is bringing a lot of dividends to the country.

### Challenge before India's Nuclear Diplomacy:

- **Slow progress of nuclear programme:** The growth of the Indian nuclear energy sector continues to lag far behind projections. India's installed nuclear power stands at just 6,780 MW against ambitious goals of 20,000 MW by 2020.
  - There have been various reasons for that. India had the problem of the liability act, then (American company) Westinghouse got into financial crisis, even French company Areva had problems.
  - In the aftermath of Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, opposition to nuclear power grew world-over.
  - Within the country, opposition, issues of land acquisition and finding new sites have led to delays.
- **NSG membership:** Securing the membership of the last remaining export control group, i.e. the NSG has proved to be relatively difficult for India due to China's consistent opposition to its admission on the grounds of its non-NPT status.
- **Problems with nuclear arsenal:**
  - While in theory India now possesses a nuclear triad—air, land, and sea deliverable nuclear weapons—in reality the sea leg is still a technology demonstrator. INS Arihant has faced numerous operational problems.
  - Also, India has yet to field an entirely reliable hydrogen bomb.
- **Proxy war with China:**
  - It was believed that an Indian nuclear bomb could neutralise conventional Chinese military superiority.
  - However, China's economic, political and conventional military power continues to grow advantageously. The territorial challenge and distrust still persist, as Doklam episode shows.
- **Proxy war with Pakistan:**
  - Full-fledged war have been replaced by Pakistan launching sub-conventional cross-border attacks, such as the devastating one on Mumbai in 2008 and other more recent ones. So far India has not found an entirely satisfactory response.

### Is India responsible for a Nuclear Pakistan?

- Chagai-I is the code name of five simultaneous underground nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan on 28 May 1998.
- The argument that Pakistan would not have gone nuclear if India had not tested does not hold. Pakistan had nuclear weapons much before 1998 and it was a public knowledge.
- They had not tested because they did not need to as they received weapons of proven design from China.

“It is generally said that in 1947 we got political freedom, in early 1990s we got economic freedom, and post-1998 we got technological freedom”

## AFSPA

**In April 2018, Union Government decided to withdraw the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from all of Meghalaya and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.**

### Salient Features of AFSPA:

- It is a law which gives armed forces (Army, the Air Force and Central paramilitary forces) the special powers and immunity to maintain public order in "disturbed areas".
- **When is it applied?** It can be applied only after an area has been declared "disturbed".
- **What is a Disturbed area?** An area can be considered to be disturbed due to differences or disputes among different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **Who declares an area as disturbed?** Section (3) of AFSPA empowers the governor of the state/Union territory to issue an official notification declaring the state or a region within as a "disturbed area", after which the centre can decide whether to send in armed forces.
- **What are the special powers?** Under section (4), Mere suspicion gives a non-commissioned officer (or an equivalent rank in the armed forces) the power to shoot to kill, to destroy any property, arrest without a warrant and enter & search any house on suspicion of it being used as a hideout.

### Timeline:

- It was enacted in 1958 to bring 'disturbed areas' under control.
- It was first implemented in the Northeast, and then in Punjab.
- In September 1990, Parliament passed the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, which came into force retrospectively from 5 July 1990.

### Areas under AFSPA:

- AFSPA continues to be implemented in Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and parts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Some recent developments:**
  - In 2015, AFSPA was revoked in Tripura.
  - In March 2018, Assam government extended the implementation of AFSPA in the state for six more months, till September.
  - In April 2018, AFSPA was revoked from and Meghalaya and 8 out of 16 police station jurisdictions in Arunachal Pradesh. It has been retained in Arunachal for areas bordering Assam and Myanmar as there have been no insurgency incidents in these states during 2017.



### DEBATE

Its revocation in some areas is welcome, but should it be on the statute books at all?

#### Arguments for Retaining AFSPA:

- It is required to protect armed forces while dealing with areas under insurgency.
- Supreme court has upheld its constitutional validity in Naga Peoples' Movement of Human Rights vs Uoi (1998).

#### Arguments for Revoking It:

- The AFSPA is a draconian law that gives enormous discretionary powers to the armed forces over a civilian population leading to human rights violation.
- It is a colonial hangover. It is a modified version of a 1942 colonial law devised to subjugate local populations.
- AFSPA is used as a reason by separatists for demanding a separate nation. Thus instead of curbing separatism AFSPA is fuelling Separatism.
- Earlier Tripura completely revoked it in 2015. All of this indicates a change in ground realities in North-East.
  - The continued imposition of AFSPA would hinder the normalisation of the north-east region.
- Besides, the north-east states comprise a critical pillar of the government's East Act policy. If government wants investors and tourists to flock to the northeast, it must create the right atmosphere.

#### Way Ahead:

- **Hold Armed forces accountable:** In 2016 the Supreme Court had ruled that the armed forces cannot escape investigation for excesses committed in the discharge of their duties even in "disturbed areas".
- **Revisit BP jeevan reddy committee report (2005):** The committee recommended the repeal of AFSPA altogether, and that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act be amended in a manner that would enable insurgency and conflict to be tackled legally.

It is time for the Centre to revisit the Jeevan Reddy committee report and find ways of humanising AFSPA, if not revoking it altogether.



# CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE - 2018

In April 2018, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 was promulgated to amend laws related to rape of minors.

## Amendments to Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860:

- **Enhanced punishment for rape:** The minimum imprisonment for rape has been increased from seven years to ten years.
- **New offences:** The Ordinance introduces three new offences related to rape of minors, and increases the penalty for one:

Age Group	Offence	Punishment
Below 12 years	Rape	Rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death.
	Gang Rape	Life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of the victim, or, death.
Below 16 years	Rape	Previously, the punishment for rape was imprisonment of ten years extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine. This has been enhanced to a minimum rigorous imprisonment of at least 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim.
	Gang Rape	Life imprisonment, along with fine, to meet medical expenses and rehabilitation cost of victim.

Source: Indian Penal Code, 1860; The Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018.

## Amendments to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012:

- Under the POCSO, 2012, for rape of minors (below 18 years), the punishment is at least seven years or life imprisonment, along with a fine. For rape of minors below the age of 12 years or for gang rape of minors, the punishment is rigorous imprisonment of at least ten years or life imprisonment, along with fine.
- The Ordinance amends the POCSO, 2012 to state that for all such offences, the punishment which is higher between the POCSO, 2012 and IPC, 1860, will apply.

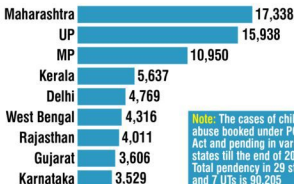
## Amendments to Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973:

- **Time-bound investigation:**
  - The time for completion of investigation into rape of a child is reduced from three months to two months.
  - Further, the Ordinance extends this timeline to all offences of rape.
- **Appeal:** Any appeal against a sentence related to rape cases must be disposed of within six months.
- **Anticipatory Bail:** The provision of anticipatory bail is not applicable to rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years of age and below 16 years of age.
- **Compensation:** The CrPC, 1973 provides that all rape victims will be given free medical treatment and compensation by state government. This provision has been extended to cover rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years and below 16 years of age.
- **Prior sanction:** The CrPC, 1973 states that prior sanction is required for prosecution of all public servants, except for certain offences, like rape. This provision has been extended to cover rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years and below 16 years of age.

## Amendments to Indian Evidence Act, 1872:

- Under the Evidence Act, in determining whether the act was consensual or not, the past sexual experience or character of the victim is disregarded.
- This provision has been extended to the rape and gang rape of minor girls below 12 years of age and below 16 years of age.

## Pending Cases of Child Abuse



**Note:** The cases of child abuse booked under POCSO Act and pending in various states till the end of 2016. Total pendency in 29 states and 7 UTs is 90,205



## DEATH PENALTY FOR CHILD RAPE?

### Arguments in Favour:

- The NDA government justified the ordinance as being exemplary punishment considering the brutality of the act.
- Faith in the law will be restored only if there is a severe deterrent to those committing heinous acts.
- Also, the death penalty for raping minors does not mean that all the accused will be hanged. The due process of law will kick in as soon as a complaint is registered.

### Criticism of Ordinance:

- **Not a deterrent:** Report No. 262 of the Law Commission of India on the death penalty noted that there is no evidence to show that the death penalty acts as a deterrent. It is because criminals don't consider the probability of being punished sufficiently high.
- **Ignores reformatory justice:** Report No. 262 of the Law Commission notes that by focusing on death penalty as the ultimate measure of justice to victims, the restorative and rehabilitative aspects of justice are lost sight of.
- **Would lead to Under-reporting:** In the majority of instances of sexual offences against children, the perpetrators are known to them (nearly 95% by NCRB 2016 figures). Given this proximity and the child's vulnerability, a punishment as harsh as death would deter the filing of cases.
- **Will lead to murder:** By equalising the punishment for rape and murder, it is likely that most child victims of rape will be killed so that the best witness is eliminated.
- **No need of special law:** According to judiciary, Death cannot be meted out in any but the rarest of rare cases. In a case like the Kathua rape-murder where the child was killed, the death penalty is already a possibility, it does not require a special law.
- **No discussion held:** Introducing capital punishment by way of the ordinance route ignored a parliamentary procedure which would have ensured discussion on all the pros and cons, study international experience and hear all the stakeholders.
- **A knee-jerk reaction:** It has been criticised as a knee-jerk, populist "solution" to curbing sexual violence.
- **Age difference:** What is the reasoning behind bringing in differential ages of girls below 12 & 16 and the ensuing punishment?
- **Execution of the innocent:** Witnesses (where they are part of the process), prosecutors and jurors can all make mistakes. When this is coupled with flaws in the system it is inevitable that innocent people can be given death sentence.
- **Not a Global Norm:** According to the Centre on Death Penalty at National Law University, India has become only the 14<sup>th</sup> country in the world to provide for the death penalty for child rape. The others are Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE, China, Cuba, Mauritania, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia and Vietnam.

- **Ignores judicial reform:** The new ordinance provides for fast-track courts, and a two-month time period each for police investigation and completion of trial of all rape cases. But it is silent on the appointment of more judges to handle the burden or sensitising the judiciary and the police in dealing with such cases.
- **Ignores victim support:** It is also silent on victim support and rehabilitation, despite evidence pointing to the need for one so that victim can be facilitated at every stage from the police station, to hospital and courts.
- Again, a 2016 study by the Centre on Death Penalty found that a majority of death row inmates belonged to the backward section or religious minorities, and were economically vulnerable.

### Main Problems:

- **Police reforms ignored:**
  - In order to achieve independence for the police and establish its accountability, the Prakash Singh And Ors v. Union Of India And Ors judgement of the Supreme Court in 2006 laid down seven directives for states and union territories.
  - However, a recent Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative study concluded that not a single Indian state has fully complied with a 2006 SC judgment issuing seven directives for police reform.
- **Low conviction rate:**
  - The conviction rate reflected in 'Crime in India: 2016' is low — 28.2% under Sections 4 and 6 of the POCSO Act.
  - This indicates that access to justice, and not sentencing in a handful of cases, is the problem that needs to be resolved.
- **Child protection system ignored:** In the Union Budget 2018-19, there is just a marginal increase from Rs 648 crore to Rs 725 crore for the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).

### Way Ahead:

- India's growing rape culture is best reversed by
  - enhancing conviction rates through reforms in the police and judicial systems; greater allocation of state resources towards the setting up of fast-track courts; proper witness protection;
  - by augmenting measures to rehabilitate and empower rape survivors; setting up of more one-stop crisis centres; more expansive compensation for rape survivors, and an overhaul of existing child protection services.
- Until these issues are addressed, little will change on the ground.

## SEX OFFENDERS REGISTRY

In April 2018, it was announced that National Crime Records Bureau will maintain a national database and profile of sexual offenders.

### About:

- A sex offender registry is essentially a database of convicted sex offenders maintained by authorities to refer to in investigations and to monitor the activities of convicted offenders.
- **Global Scenario:**
  - The registry in the US and south Korea is public i.e. they allow the public to access these records so that the community may be aware of a sex offender in their locality.
  - These serve as instruments for institutions, particularly schools, to conduct checks on prospective employees before hiring them. They also serve as important tools for

the police to use to conduct periodic checks on activities and statuses of convicted offenders.

- In other countries like Australia, Canada, UK etc, where such data of convicted sex offenders is maintained, it is purely for the consumption of the law enforcement authorities.
- **Indian Scenario:**
  - In India, the primary purpose of the registry will be to serve as an important accessory to the criminal justice system. However, it is not clear if the Indian database will be made public or not.
  - This data will be regularly shared with states and Union Territories for tracking, monitoring and investigation, including verification of antecedents by police.



### DEBATE

#### Arguments in Favour:

- With one-fifth of the world's children, India holds the dubious distinction of having the largest number of child sexual abuse cases being registered in the world. Yet, this subject is under-researched and remains obscured by stigma and taboos.
- Even after the PoCSO Act came into force, there is still a lot that needs to be done to curb child sex abuse. To aid investigations, the concept of a sex offender registry merits further consideration.
- The case of the Delhi-based tailor Sunil Rastogi, charged with assaulting over a hundred minor girls in spite of serving an earlier sentence for the rape of a minor, is a classic example of why we need a sex offender registry. It could also deter repeat offenders.
- Such registries exist in various countries.

#### Arguments Against:

- According to human right organizations sex offenders registry negates the concept of rehabilitation and perpetuates social stigma. Former convicts often find it very difficult to gain meaningful employment.
- Most sexual abuse of children is committed by family members or trusted figures. Once such a registry comes into being, it might lead to people not reporting rapes or sexual offences, because most of them are by people known to the victims.

- DNA identification technologies have advanced. Still, planting of DNA in a crime scene, misinterpretation of tests, and errors in analyses have all taken place in cases where DNA has been used to implicate a suspect, resulting in the miscarriage of justice.
- In the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal, people will have a better appreciation of how their DNA information could be misused just as their personal information and profiles are being misused by many data mining companies.
- Activists in India say that the talk of these lists is a knee jerk reaction to cases such as the Kathua and Unnao rape cases, both of which involved minor victims, and is intended to satisfy the public rage against sexual abuse by strangers.

#### Concluding Remark:

- The concept of rehabilitation and reintegration of convicted offenders as an idea needs further examination. But it cannot work without the overall improvement in functioning of the judiciary and the police, and comprehensive reforms.
- Japan runs successful rehabilitation programmes for offenders alongside a sex offender registry that have resulted in lower rates of sexual crimes against children. In India, this sort of rehabilitation will require a co-ordinated undertaking by the police and social rehabilitation groups.

## WOMEN IN SPORTS

The 2018 Commonwealth Games belonged to the Indian ladies, many of them unheard a few months ago, who led the country's medal surge across disciplines.

### Recent Achievements of Indian Sportswomen:

- Some of the notable performers were:
  - 16-year-old Manu Bhaker (won gold in the 10 m air pistol),
  - Manika Batra (won four medals, including two golds in Table tennis),
  - Shreyasi Singh, who clinched gold in the double trap, and
  - Mirabai Chanu and Sanjita Chanu, the Manipuri weightlifter duo who dazzled on the opening two days of the Games.
- However, this was not a one-off event as Indian sportswomen have been making headlines from quite sometime
  - The women's cricket team reached the final of the World Cup 2017.
  - At the Rio Olympics 2016, the only two medallists were P. V. Sindhu (Badminton) and Sakshi Malik (Wrestling).
  - Badminton player PV Sindhu won Super Series tournaments.
  - And Veteran boxer and five-time world champion Mary Kom is on a comeback spree.

This was not always the case, as India for long was devoid of any world-class female athletes. So it's time to have a brief look at the history of sportswomen.

### History of Women in Sports:

- **Women in Olympics:**
  - The first Olympic games in the modern era (1896) started as an all-male event. Women first started to participate from Paris Olympic Games 1900 onwards, where of a total of 997 athletes, only 22 women competed in five disciplines.
  - Female participation in sports increased gradually and London 2012 Olympics was the first Games in which women competed in every sport of the Olympic programme.
- **India at Olympics:**
  - Indian sportswomen participated in the Olympics for the first time in the 1952 Olympics (Helsinki) and had to wait till Sydney Olympics (2000) when, Karnam Malleswari, a weightlifter, became the first Indian women to win an Olympic medal.
  - As of Rio Olympics (2016), five Indian women have won an Olympic medal.

#### WOMEN OLYMPIC MEDALLIST FROM INDIA

	Name	Discipline	Venue (Year)	Medal
1.	Karnam Malleswari	Weightlifting	Sydney (2000)	Bronze
2.	Mary Kom	Boxing	London (2012)	Bronze
3.	Saina Nehwal	Badminton	London (2012)	Bronze
4.	P.V. Sindhu	Badminton	Rio (2016)	Silver
5.	Sakshi Malik	Wrestling	Rio (2016)	Bronze

“Don't let anyone tell you're weak because you're a woman”

—Mary Kom



#### Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport, 1994?

- The first international conference on women and sport took place in Brighton, UK in 1994. It was organised by the British Sports Council and International Olympic Committee.
- The declaration adopted at the conference calls for.
  - Sport facilities that meet the needs of women.
  - Allocation of resources for sportswomen.
  - Increase in the number of women coaches, advisers and decision-makers in sport.

#### Haryana Sports and Physical Fitness Policy, 2015?

Its salient features are:

- Rani Laxmi Bai award for lifetime contribution in sports for women will be given every year.
- Women sports competitions at district and state level shall be organised to promote sporting spirit amongst women.
- Higher scale of incentives to be given to women who win tournaments at national and international level.
- At least 30% of the available accommodation at various stadium to be made available to women players.

June, 2018



## ANALYSIS

### Reasons for increasing participation:

- **Changing mind-set:** The increased female participation in sports reflects the changing modern society that emphasized gender parity and realizes the role of sports in women empowerment.
- **Role of OGG and GSF:** Non-profit Organisations such as Olympic Gold Quest (founded by Geet Sethi and Prakash Padukone) and Go Sports Foundation (founded by Abhinav Bindra and Gopichand) have ensured that prodigious talents are transformed into worthy champions.
- **Role models:** Inspiration is now easier to find. The success of the likes of Sania Mirza, PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal has led to interest among young Indian women to take to the sport.
- **Role of Cinema:** Movies like Chak De India, Mary Kom and Dangal – which portrayed the determination of sport-women – has done its bit to promote women in sports.
- **Role of international bodies and treaties:**
  - Since 1991, International Olympics Committee (IOC) has mandated that new sports seeking to be included on the Olympic programme have to include women's events.
  - In 1994, The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport was adopted to promote sportswomen.
- **Haryana paradox:**
  - Haryana, once among the biggest offenders of gender discrimination, today tops the list of States in having the most number of internationally renowned women athletes.
  - With its women-centric sports policies – such as Haryana Sports and Physical Fitness Policy 2015 – it has become a source of encouragement for other States.

### Role of Sports in Women Empowerment:

- **Contribution to SDG:** The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), explicitly recognizes sport as an important enabler for women's empowerment.
- **Reduces inequality:** Women in sport defy gender stereotypes, make inspiring role models, and show men and women as equals. Seeing is one step closer to being.
- **Education:**
  - Sports can motivate children and youth to attend school and engage with formal and informal education.
  - It also improves learning outcomes by fostering concentration and achievement & leadership abilities.
- **Physical Health:** Participation in sport leads to reduction in risk of breast cancer among young woman by up to 50%; lighter and more regular periods among girls.

- **Emotional/Psychological health:** Girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression.

### Challenges: Misogyny in Sports

However, there is still a long way to go before we will see full equality in the world of sport.

#### • Social barriers:

- There are stereotypes about women's physical abilities who are often perceived as being too weak for sport.
- It is difficult for women to find women to play with during the early years.
- Apart from this, there is family pressure to quit for marriage and pregnancy.
- Then there is religious constraint. Tennis player Sania Mirza had to face a fatwa issued by some Muslim clerics over her short dress!

#### • Poor media coverage:

- **Quantity:** Media attention to women's sport is extremely low in comparison to men's which also has a negative effect on sportswomen's salaries and the access to sponsorships.
- **Quality:** The sexualisation of sportswomen is commonplace that reinforces gender stereotypes and inferiorizes their real achievements.

#### • Pay gap:

- Huge pay gap is the most common gender-based discrimination faced by women athletes across professional sports. The exception is tennis, which since 2007 has awarded equal prize money at all four Grand Slam tournaments.
- E.g. the total Pay-out for the Women's Soccer World Cup (2015) was \$15 million, compared to \$576 million for the Men's Soccer World Cup (2014).

#### • Lack of Support from sports organization:

- Girls and women across the world get less investment, training and safety when they play sport.
- Diana Edulji (Former skipper of the Indian women's cricket team) has called BCCI a "male chauvinist organisation" which hasn't done much for the promotion of women's cricket.

#### • Under-representation in Sports Administration:

- Off the field, women are underrepresented in the leadership of sporting organizations, in sport clothing companies and marketers.
- As of July 2016, 22 women are active International Olympic Committee (IOC) members (24.4 per cent) and four women (25 per cent) are members of the Executive Board.

- **Sexual harassment:** Like other professions, sexual harassment in the workplace is also common in the sports industry with allegations being levelled against coaches, athletes, and administrators.

### Way Ahead:

For ensuring women empowerment through sports, Government should consider the following steps:

- **Attitude change:** Put in place a communication strategy to dispel misconceptions about women's capabilities and raise awareness about importance of sports in women empowerment.
- **Improve media coverage:** Attention should be paid not only in increasing coverage but also increasing the quality and style of media reporting.
- **Infrastructure:** Establish separate women universities and clubs for sports and physical education.
- **Human resource:** Have a well-trained pool of women coaches and physiotherapists.
- **Funding:**
  - Ensure adequate Budget allocation for women sporting events. Gender budgeting can help in gender mainstreaming of women sports person.
  - Provide sports Scholarship and cash rewards as an encouragement.
- **Organize women sports events:**
  - Promote Mini leagues on the lines of Indian Premier League for Indian sportswomen.
  - Ministry of Sports has decided to organise an exclusive sports championship for women within Khelo India. This should be a regular exercise in future.
- **Increase presence in administration:** An increase of women in leadership positions in sport can also have a significant influence on social attitudes towards women's capabilities as leaders and decision makers.
- **Maternity rights:** Government can learn from Poland's Qualified Sports Act, 2005 which provides a sport stipend for the duration of their pregnancy and six months following childbirth.
- **Policy:** Frame a Comprehensive women sports policy to cover all the above mentioned dimensions.

In short, the results at the Gold Coast have shown that if the likes of Bhaker and Batra are nurtured the right way, they are capable of reproducing these results at bigger events.

## NEW HORMONE RULES FOR WOMEN RUNNERS

### Why in News:

- Recently, world athletics body introduced regulations that restrict the participation of female athletes with high testosterone levels in certain international track and field events.

### Background:

- The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) had been asked by the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) to finalise regulations that would clearly specify events in which women with high but naturally occurring levels of testosterone could participate.
- It all started after Indian sprinter Dutee Chand had successfully challenged the now suspended guidelines for hyperandrogenism in 2014.

### What were the old guidelines and how have they changed?

- Earlier, women with testosterone levels of 10 nanomoles per litre or more were ineligible to participate in track and field events.
- Now, IAAF has said that female athletes with 5 or more nanomoles per litre testosterone cannot participate in 400 m, 800 m and 1500 m races.

### How much do testosterone levels vary between males and females?

- Testosterone levels in females usually range between 0.12 to 1.79 nmol/L while the male range is much higher — 7.7 to 29.4 nmol/L.
- The IAAF has concluded that it is only possible for a woman to have a testosterone level of 5 nmol/L or greater in the case of a tumour or if the athlete falls in the intersex category.

### Who is an intersex person?

- An intersex person is one who has both male and female sex organs or other variations including chromosomes and does not fall exclusively into the defined male or female physical characteristics.

### Hyperandrogenism?

Hyperandrogenism, also known as androgen excess, is a medical condition characterized by excessive levels of androgens (male sex hormones such as testosterone) in the female body and the associated effects of the elevated androgen levels.



## LINGAYATS

In March 2018, Karnataka state government decided to declare Lingayats as a religious minority and include Veerashaivas as a group within this community.

### Lingayats and Veerashaiva:

- Lingayats are a dominant community (numerically and politically strong) in Karnataka and are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- There are over 90 sub-castes among Lingayats and Veerashaivas are recognized as one among them.
- Veerashaivas are a sub-sect of Lingayats and ardent followers of Lord Shiva.
- In official surveys up to 1930, Lingayats were identified as 'Lingayats', with Veerashaivas being part of Lingayats; subsequently, however, the community began to be identified as 'Veerashaiva Lingayats'.

	Veerashaiva	Lingayat
<b>Founder</b>	They claim mythical origins from the Shivalingam. They preceded Basaveshwara.	They are followers of the 12 <sup>th</sup> century social reformer-philosopher-poet Basaveshwara.
<b>Religious scripture followed by them</b>	Vedas, Agama, Siddhanta Shikhamani Veerashaivism has its roots in the Vedas and Agamas.	Vachana literature They reject the Hindu Brahmanical ritualism; adherence to sacred texts like the Vedas and caste hierarchy.
<b>View on Caste and gender equality</b>	No equality. It puts Aradhyas at the top of the ladder, while there is no gender equality	Complete equality of men and women in religious, political and social practices
<b>Whom do they Worship?</b>	Veerashaivas worship only Lord Shiva, the one mentioned in Hindu mythology (i.e. the one with snake around the neck etc.)	The Shiva that Basavanna referred to in his vachanas (verses) is not the Hindu god Shiva but the ishtalinga (a formless, timeless God that resides in each and every life form), which people of the community wear around their neck.

### Basaveshwara:

- He was a 12<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, Kannada poet, social reformer and founder of the Lingayats sect.
- Names:** He is also known as Bhaktibhandari, Basavanna or Basaveshwara.
- His philosophy:**
  - He rejected the Hindu Brahmanical ritualism; adherence to sacred texts like the Vedas and caste hierarchy.
  - He introduced 'Arubhava Mantapa', which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual and mundane questions of life, in open.
  - He declared that "work is worship".
  - his vision of a societal order was based on rationality.
- Key works related to him:**



	Vachana Sahitya	Basava Purana
<b>What is it?</b>	He and his followers spread their ideas through Vachanas (prose-lyrics) which are compiled under Vachana Sahitya.	It is a 13 <sup>th</sup> century epic poem which narrates the life story of Basava. It was written by Palkuriki Somanatha.
<b>Language in which it is written</b>	Kannada	Telugu

### Definition of Religion and Minorities?

- Constitution on Religion:** The Constitution of India is silent on defining religion. The Constitution neither establishes a religion nor contains provisions for creating one. All it does is to ensure the right of all religions to practice and profess their faith under Article 25.
- Constitution of minorities:** Though the Constitution of India does not define the word 'Minority' and only refers to 'Minorities based on religion or language', it lists the rights of the minorities under Article 29 and 30.
- Recognition of minorities:** Under National Minorities Commission Act 1992 and National Minorities Educational Institutions Act 2004, the Central Government can declare a community as minority at the national level.



## DEMAND FOR SEPARATE RELIGION STATUS

### Background:

#### • HN Nagamohan Das committee (2017-18):

- In late 2017 the Karnataka State Minorities Commission formed HN Nagamohan Das committee to study the demand of the Lingayat community.
- The committee, in its report submitted in March 2018 recommended granting of 'Religious Minority' status to the Lingayats and Veerashaiva-Lingayats under Section 2(D) of the Karnataka State Minorities Act.

#### • Demand accepted (March 2018):

- Karnataka State Government accepted the committees' recommendations.
- It also recommended the Centre to notify the same under the Central Minority Commission Act, thereby making them a minority community at national level.

#### • What next? Now it is up to the Centre to decide to whether to accept the state government's recommendation or not.

*The Veerashaiva responses to the recent events have varied from a disapproval of the need to become a separate religion to the religion being termed 'Veerashaiva-Lingayat'.*

### Arguments in Favour:

#### • Different from Hinduism:

- The movement made radical departures from the traditional Bhakti movements by not just challenging the roots of Hindu cultural practices but by also forming an institutionalised order for themselves.
- Though Lingayats worship Shiva, the concept of 'IshtaLinga' (personal god) and rules of conduct prescribed by Basaveshwara cannot be equated to the Hindu way of life.

#### • Protecting the philosophy:

- Contemporary Lingayat culture has made space for casteism and other practices abhorrent to its founding philosophy.
- Thus the community members are concerned about the dilution of distinctive Basava philosophy under 'a sanatana Hindu dharma'.

#### • Benefits of minority status: Once recognized, they would be able to avail benefits under Articles 25, 28, 29 and 30 of the Constitution apart from benefits under various schemes run for the benefits of religious minorities.

#### • Right to Religious Freedom:

- The Indian Constitution, which grants freedom of religion, doesn't prohibit the addition of any new religion.
- If a group follows a similar belief system, they may assert it as a right of a new sect or distinct religion. No state or law can interfere with this individual freedom.

### Arguments Against:

- **It is a reform movement:** It was a reformist movement, like various Bhakti movements, and not aimed at breaking away from the Hindu fold. While it rejected most of the broad Hindu traditions, it also assimilates many aspects of it.
- **Hinduism is too diverse:** Several distinct religious sects (followers of Arya Samaj, Swaminarayana Satsang, Ramanuja) have been declared by the judiciary as well as Hindu Code of Laws as "forms and developments" of Hindu religion. The Lingayats and Veerashaivas cannot stand on a different footing.
- **Other religions too have theological divisions:** If sects/communities in other religions — Sunni, Shia, Theravada Buddhists, Terapanthi Jains, Namdhari Sikhs, protestants — cannot lay claim to be an independent religion, nor can the Lingayats and Veerashaivas.
- **Constitution protects their right:** The Constitution concedes autonomy to all sections within every religious denomination when it speaks of "every religious denomination or any section thereof" in Article 26. But it doesn't give them the right to claim standalone status.
- **Comparison with other religion not applicable:** According to some political commentators, the case of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism is different as their identity as independent religions is well established in the society, and in law.
- **Vote-bank politics:** The Decision has been taken keeping in mind the 2018 assembly elections as the Lingayat-Veerashaivas community currently forms 17 % of Karnataka's population and has an influence on nearly 100 seats in the 224-member assembly.
- **Divide and rule policy:** In its pursuit of political dividends, a theological debate has been turned into a political dispute that has the potential to divide an already polarised society.
- **Domino effect:** The state's decision has already prompted demands from other communities — like the Kodavas of Coorg (Kodagu) district— for minority status.
- **Diversion from developmental issues:** As more communities demand special privileges, the government may end up committing greater funds for the welfare of select communities at the expense of socio-economic development for all.

### Concluding Remarks:

- The contentious nature of the Lingayat demand calls for serious deliberation and a nuanced approach, instead of taking any decision in a politically charged atmosphere.
- Also, primary attempt should be made towards addressing the concerns of an aggrieved community which requires a responsive governance.

# DRAFT CODE ON SOCIAL SECURITY - 2018

In April 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Employment released the Draft Code on Social Security - 2018.

## About:

- Social security refers to the protection given to workers to access health care and provide income security.
- The draft Code consolidates 17 laws related to social security, including: (i) the Employees' Provident Fund Act, 1952, (ii) the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, and (iii) the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 etc.

## Salient Features:

- **Application of Code:**
  - It will apply to: (i) workers employed by any entity in India (an enterprise or a household), (ii) owner of an entity in India, (iii) international workers, and (iv) Indian citizens outside India, who opt to be covered under social security schemes.
  - It will not apply to: (i) establishments of the central and state governments, and (ii) Indian employees working in a foreign country with whom India has a social security agreement.
- **Social security Organisations:** The draft Code sets up three bodies-

Body	Headed by	Objective
National Social Security Council	Prime Minister	To review and monitor the implementation of social security in India.
Central Board of Social Security	Minister of Labour	To administer scheme funds and ensure coordination between state boards.
State Board of Social Security (in each state)	Chief Minister	Implementing social security schemes in their states.

- **Vishwakarma Karmik Suraksha Khata (VIKAS):**
  - The State Boards, in coordination with the Central Board, will provide a portable social security account for the registration of workers.
  - This account, called the Vishwakarma Karmik Suraksha Khata (VIKAS), will be linked to the Aadhaar number of the worker.
- **Schemes:** The central or state governments may formulate schemes for social security after consulting the National Council.

## Funds:

- The draft Code establishes two funds in each state, to be managed by the respective State Board: (i) a fund for social security, and (ii) a fund for gratuity.
- The employer and workers will make contributions to the funds, as a proportion of their wages. In case of the gratuity fund, the employer will contribute 2% of the wage payable to each employee.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance:

- The Code, which is based on the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour in 2002, should be great news for workers in the unorganised sector who do not have any social security cover.
- Unlike the earlier version, the latest draft code provides clarity to several questions such as providing a detailed list of those who will not be covered and clearly defining the establishments in the unorganised sector. Also, the definition of 'wages' in the Code is more specific.

### Concerns:

- However, there is uncertainty regarding the compliance issue in which India's track record has been dismal.
- Smaller establishments will obviously be reluctant to implement the provisions because of higher cost. Under the proposed Code, the employer contribution to social security is estimated to go up to 17.5 per cent of wages.
- The inclusion of self-employed professionals and the necessity of compulsory registration might also complicate matters.
- The Code keeps the "income threshold" vague by stating that it will be "notified by the Central government from time to time".
- Fears about bureaucratic interference are also real, as employers have no representation in the apex decision-making body.

In short, the latest draft Code is welcome, but needs to be fine-tuned.

## SWACHH SURVEKSHAN - 2018

In May 2018, Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs declared Indore as the cleanest among 4,203 urban local bodies (ULBs) in the country in the Swachh Survekshan 2018 carried out earlier this year.

### About:

- The Swachh Survekshan 2018 assessed 4203 Urban Local Bodies and was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- Methodology:**
  - Data for ranking of the cities is collected from 3 sources (1) Service Level Progress, (2) Direct Observation and (3) Citizens Feedback.
  - Under 'Service Level Progress', Swachh Surveysan-2018 has introduced one more component 'Innovation and Best Practices'.



Component wise weightage for Swachh Survekshan-2018

### LIST OF AWARDEES

Top 3 cleanest cities	Indore (MP) followed by Bhopal (MP) and Chandigarh
'Cleanest big City' (over 10 Lakh million)	Vijaywada (Andhra Pradesh)
Cleanest Medium City (3-10 Lakh)	Mysuru (Karnataka)
Cleanest Small City	New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC)
Cleanest State Capital/ UT	Greater Mumbai (Maharashtra)
Best Performing State	Jharkhand followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.
Cleanest Cantonment	Delhi Cantt.



### Lessons from... INDORE'S CLEANLINESS CAMPAIGN

This is the second time in a row that Indore has been crowned India's 'cleanest city'. What did Indore do to defeat 433 other cities to win its maiden 'cleanest city' tag a year ago?

#### Steps Taken:

- Segregation of waste:** There is 100% segregation of wet and dry garbage at source.
- Regular waste collection:** Waste is collected once a day from residential areas and twice from commercial areas.
- Dustbin for vehicle owners:** In October 2017, Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) distributed 1,000 free dustbins to vehicle owners to encourage them to not throw waste out of windows. The bottle-shaped dustbins fit into car bottle-holders.
- Human resource management:** 1,000 additional rag-pickers have been employed to segregate dry waste. Safai workers clean the streets at night, including those at Sarafa, the city's famous night food market.
- Recycling of waste:** Recycling units have been installed in gardens, outside hotels, and marriage halls to make compost from organic waste. Compost pits were built at fruit and vegetable markets, and a bio-methanation plant has been set up at Choitharam Mandi.
- Public participation:**
  - Swachhata Samitis were set up in schools and colleges, and participants in religious and other processions were encouraged to keep the streets clean.
  - IMCs' Mayor has administered the oath of cleanliness to more than four lakh people over the past year.
- Public toilets** have been built in large numbers to end open defecation.
- Fines:** The municipal body imposes spot fines from Rs 250 to Rs 500 on those spitting on roads, urinating in the open, or littering.
- Public shaming:** To deter habitual offenders municipal body has recently announced a plan to publish names of offenders in newspapers and broadcasting them over radio.

# MANUAL SCAVENGING

In April 2018, two people died after being exposed to toxic gases in a sewage treatment plant at Vivanta by Taj-Ambassador Hotel in Delhi. This raised concern over sewer deaths and practise of Manual Scavenging.

## About:

- Manual scavenging is an umbrella term for manually cleaning of waste and excreta, ranging from dry latrines to septic tanks, drains and sewers, by humans.
- Prevalence:** According to Union Government, as of December 2017, only 426 workers were engaged in manual scavenging. However, according to Safai Karamchahi Andolan (SKA) around 1.8 lakh people are engaged in it.



## ANALYSIS

### Reason for Prevalence:

- Lack of concrete Data:** There is still no validated list of how many manual scavengers exist and how many joined. If the problem is not even identified, then how will it be solved?
- Loopholes in 2013 act:** The 2013 Act is silent about alternative methods to get the job done. Also it is not defined that what would constitute an emergency situation.
- Poor implementation:** Offenders have been rarely penalized under the 2013 act which shows lack of political will.
- Poor sewage and technology use:** Existence of dry latrines, poor sewage system and low use of technology like suction pumps generates demand for manual scavenging.
- Contractualization:** Municipal authorities often outsource sewer cleaning work to several third-party contractors who do not have the necessary machines. It also makes it difficult to monitor their functioning and hold them accountable.
- Poor rehabilitation:** Budgetary allocation for rehabilitation of manual scavengers (under SRMS) has reduced by a whopping 95% between 2014-15 and 2017-18. When funds are limited, how can they be rehabilitated?
- Casteism:** It's a caste based occupation reserved for schedule castes. In North India Bhangi caste/Jati (also called as Valmikis) are manual scavengers. It is difficult for them to shift to another profession as they are seen as Ritually Unclean by higher castes.

### Criticism:

- Infections:** It leads to infections as Scavengers come in direct contact with human excreta.

## Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:

- It outlaws more hazardous forms of the Manual Scavenging practice such as manually cleaning sewer and septic tank (except in emergencies).
- Municipalities have to provide protective gear such as gas masks, safety harness belts and helmets to manual scavengers in case they enter sewer and septic tanks.
- Strict fines and a prison term to be imposed on those who violate its provisions.

- Death:** According to estimates by SKA, atleast 1,470 manual scavengers have died at work between 2010 and 2017 due to lack of protective gears.
- Violation of Rights:** This is against Article 17 (Abolition of untouchability), Article 21 (Right to life with dignity) and Article 47 (Duty of the State to improve nutrition and standard of living to improve public health).

### HOW THEY DIE IN SEWERS/SEPTIC TANKS

Asphyxiation  
by inhaling  
sewer gas



Exposure to  
toxic matter



Electrocution



Injuries due to falling

### Recommendations:

- Compile data on manual scavengers in each district and issue cleaning equipment and protective gears to each worker.
- Register cases against contractors and even municipalities who force workers to perform manual scavenging.
- Allocate appropriate budget to rehabilitate all those engaged in manual scavenging.
- Have provisions w.r.t. insurance cover, both for life as well as for sickness of such employees and their families.
- Pay compensation of Rs. 50 lakh to the family of the deceased and provide decent, dignified jobs to them.

# READY TO USE THERAPEUTIC FOOD (RUTF)

In April 2018, National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges rejected the proposal to replace Ready to Eat food rations with Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) for beneficiaries.

## RUTF/EDNF:

- Ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) also referred to as Energy Dense Nutritious Food (EDNF), is a medical intervention to improve the nutrition intake of children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM).
- Ingredients:** It is a packaged paste of peanuts, oil, sugar, vitamins, milk powder and mineral supplements, which contains 520-550 kilocalories of energy per 100 g.



## Recent Controversy:

- Under the existing anganwadi-run supplementary nutrition scheme under Integrated Child Development Services Programme (ICDS), following are provided:
  - Hot-cooked meals to children (3-6 years) age group and
  - Take-home rations (THR) such as wheat, soya and sugar for younger children (6 months-3 years) and pregnant and lactating mothers.
- Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Gandhi has instead proposed to provide factory-made EDNF to every family that has a baby and a pregnant mother.
- In April 2018, National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges, rejected the proposal given by Maneka Gandhi.

## Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)?

Children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) have:

- Very low weight-for-height (below-3z scores of the WHO median growth standard),
- Visible wasting and
- Nutritional oedema or mid-upper arm circumference of less than 115 millimetres (in children 6-59 months).

## National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges?

- In January 2018, Union Government approved the setting up of new National Nutrition Mission (NNM).
- Under it, an inter-ministerial National Council on India's Nutritional Challenges under the Chairmanship of Vice-Chairman NITI Aayog has been setup to provide policy directions to address nutritional challenges in the country.



## DEBATE

### Arguments in favour of RUTF:

- As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4, over 93 lakh children in India have SAM.
- According to Maneka Gandhi, the food given under the existing scheme is a non-nutritious mix.
- A UNICEF report (2013) observed that RUTF has saved hundreds of thousands of children's lives as it has various benefits:
  - RUTF provides all the nutrients required for recovery,
  - has a good shelf life (upto 2 years) and
  - since it is not vegetable or rice, it cannot be misused or sold in the market.

### Arguments against RUTF:

- Cost:** At Rs. 25 per packet, a single child's treatment with three RUTF doses a day will cost Rs. 2,250 a month. Implementing it will financially burden the government.
- Temporary:** A study by Janarth Adivasi Vikas Sanstha in tribal Nandurbar district showed that once RUTF was stopped, children often slipped back into malnutrition.
- Wrong food habit:** Children who are given RUTF find it too heavy to eat anything else afterward. Thus RUTF may replace appropriate food habits.
- Not a one-stop solution:** RUTF is not a panacea for all forms of severe acute malnutrition in children.
- Commercialisation:** Attempts to substitute meals or rations with factory-made nutrients will inject commercialisation into a key mission, and upset the nutritional basis of the scheme.

### Concluding Remarks:

- RUTF should not be seen as a substitute for best nutritional practices or normal household food. It should only be used in extreme emergencies/humanitarian crisis to tackle only SAM in children.
- In the long run a holistic solution is needed to accelerate the progress of POSHAN Abhiyaan, which includes counselling on breastfeeding, proper functioning of anganwadis and improved access to water sources and sanitation facilities.



## MUMBAI DEVELOPMENT PLAN - 2034

In April 2018, the Maharashtra government approved Mumbai's new Development Plan (DP) 2034, which will serve as the blueprint for the development of the country's economic capital till 2034.

### Features:

- **Availability of Large Land Parcels:** The plan identifies about 3,300 hectares of additional land for housing, of which:
  - 2,100 hectares will be carved out of the 'No Development Zone' (or NDZ, an area where construction has been debarred for environmental reasons).
  - 1,100 hectares will be released from 'Tourism Development Area' and
  - the remaining amount from salt pans.
- **Boost to Affordable Housing:** With additional unused land available for fresh development, the government aims to create 1 million affordable homes. The PM's pet project of 'Housing for All' will receive a massive boost in Mumbai.
- **Increase in Floor Space Index (FSI):**
  - FSI has been raised from 1.33 to 3 for residential developments, while in the suburbs it has increased to 2.5 from 2.
  - Commercial developments in the island city as well as suburbs will benefit from the increased FSI of 5, raised from the earlier 2.5.

### Floor Space Index (FSI)?

FSI is a measurement that defines the extent of construction permissible on a plot. An FSI of 5 means a built-up area of up to five times the size of the total plot. A higher FSI means developers will be able to build more on a given plot. And that usually happens by adding floors.

- **Development of Mumbai Waterfront:** 120 hectares of the Eastern Waterfront will be developed through PPP (similar to London's redeveloped Canary Wharf business district).
- **Employment:** The new DP has the potential to create 8 million new job opportunities in Mumbai directly through the construction and real estate businesses and indirectly too.
- **More Green Lungs for Mumbai:** It envisages creating more parks, playgrounds and theme gardens around the city.
- **Parking spaces:** The BMC has also proposed two major parking spaces of 300 acres each, near Cuffe Parade and Bombay Port Trust. This is long overdue for the traditional business district of the city.
- **Other Civic Amenities:** Under the new DP, the BMC envisages creating theatres, museums, old age homes and shelters for the homeless.



### CONCERNS

To a large extent, on paper the DP 2034 looks grand in scale and if effectively implemented will change the landscape of the financial capital of India. But there are some misses and unaddressed aspects of the city planning in the DP:

- The previous Development Plan (DP) of 1991 was also viewed positively, however, only 20% of what the DP envisaged could be achieved due to lack of monitoring body to ensure effective implementation of the DP.
- The DP lacks any plans to address traffic, public transport and rising pollution levels of Mumbai.
- Activists have expressed dismay at the use of salt pan land which could worsen the flood situation in the city.
- There are fears of overcrowding and consequent health issues emerging from the increased FSI. Higher density of population per square foot will only serve to congest the city.
- With the increased FSI and availability of more land many blindly expect a rationalisation in prices. But this is possible only if the government doesn't levy a higher premium cost for the FSI on the developers who will in turn pass the cost on to the customers.
- The creation of housing stock does not necessarily lead to houses becoming more affordable, as prices remain artificially high in urban areas.
- Despite the introduction of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, the housing market remains a distorted one.
- Affordable housing, whether in Mumbai or elsewhere, will remain only in paper, unless the sector is further reformed.

### Concluding Remarks:

- Various civic bodies, activists, and residents of Mumbai have 60 days from the unveiling of the Development Plan 2034 to make suggestions. The previous DP saw numerous amendments, so it will not be a surprise to see many now as well.
- One hopes that this new plan, with or without its amendments, will enhance the quality of life in Mumbai and make the city more livable for many future generations to come.

# ANNUAL SURVEY OF INDIAN CITY SYSTEMS - 2017

In April 2018, findings of the Annual survey of Indian city systems (ASICS) - 2017, a study of 23 cities were released in public.

## About:

- It is an annual survey released by Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (a Bengaluru-based non-profit organisation). This is the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the survey.
- It measures the health of a city's governance and its preparedness to deliver high quality infrastructure and services.
- Methodology:** For ranking of cities, it uses City-Systems framework which comprises four components namely: (1) Urban Planning and Design (2) Urban Capacities and Resources (3) Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation (4) Transparency, Accountability and Participation.

## Report Summary:

- Overall, the survey paints a very dismal picture of Indian cities with average score improving marginally from 3.4 to 3.9 over the last three editions of the survey.
- In comparison, Johannesburg, London and New York which scored 7.6, 8.8 and 8.8 respectively.
- While Pune tops the rankings followed by Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram, the bottom five cities include Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Patna and Chennai.
- The most important highlight of the survey is identification of five systemic challenges for immediate addressal and subsequent recommendations –

Area	Challenge	Recommendations
Urban planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdated town &amp; country planning acts and their poor implementation</li> <li>Only 13% cities have enacted town &amp; country planning acts post liberalisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There should be formulation of model spatial planning framework along with empowerment of MPC.</li> <li>There should be constitution of an empowered MPC by elected representative from municipalities.</li> </ul>
Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dismal state of Financial sustainability of most municipalities along with challenges of pilferage, leakages.</li> <li>54% cities do not generate enough revenue to meet their salary costs</li> <li>39% is the average percentage of own revenues to total expenditure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State Government should undertake systematic fiscal decentralisation and devolve full powers over tax rates and assessments to municipalities.</li> <li>Government of India should create a national performance reporting framework for municipalities and publish annual fiscal rankings of municipalities.</li> </ul>
Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is inadequate number of skilled staff in Municipalities</li> <li>Municipalities lack proper human resource management policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City councils should formulate a workforce plan aligned to fiscal plan and annual budgets.</li> <li>States should provide one-time financial support to municipalities to meet target workforce levels and adopt technology.</li> </ul>
Political leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipalities experience low levels of devolution of 3Fs – funds, functions and functionaries.</li> <li>Smaller tenure of municipal commissioner which hinders policy implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal Corporation Acts should be reformed to ensure that mayors have full 5 year terms.</li> <li>Also it should be ensured that critical functions are meaningfully devolved, and mayors and councils have full powers over staffing and finances.</li> </ul>
Citizen centric governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 2 cities of India have formed both ward committees and area sabhas which represents low level of citizen participation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipalities should adopt open data standards and participatory budgeting.</li> <li>Enactment of Public disclosure laws and creation of an office of ombudsman for grievance redressal.</li> </ul>

## AIR POLLUTION (WHO REPORT)

In May 2018, findings of the updated 'WHO Global Ambient Air Quality Database' were released for the year 2016.

### Summary Findings:

- The World Health Organization (WHO) report summarised 2016 data for 4,300 cities. Rural areas are not covered in it.
- More than 80% of people living in urban areas are exposed to air quality levels that exceed the WHO limits.
- Global Death Toll:** The report puts the global death toll from air pollution at 7 million a year. Around 4.2 million people died owing to outdoor air pollution, while 3.8 million people succumbed to dirty cooking fuels such as wood and cow dung.
- Indian Cities:** India has 14 out of the 15 most polluted cities in the world in terms of PM 2.5 concentrations (The 15<sup>th</sup> was Ali Subah Al-Salem in Kuwait).

### What is PM 2.5?

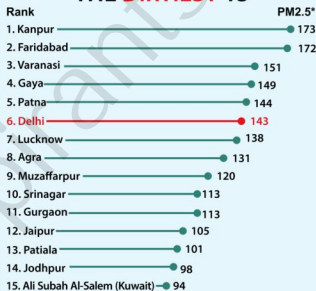
- PM 2.5 is an atmospheric particulate matter of diameter of fewer than 2.5 micrometres, which is around 3% the diameter of a human hair.
- Apart from reducing visibility, it causes chronic diseases such as asthma, heart attack, bronchitis and other respiratory problems.
- To protect oneself from PM 2.5, people are suggested to use air purifier equipped with a High-Efficiency Particulate Air filter (HEPA).

### Praise for Ujjwala:

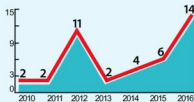
- The report had words of praise for India's Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme, which has provided 37 million women living below the poverty line with LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections.

- According to report, such schemes will also help cut the indoor air pollution that plagues much of rural India, which is not covered in the WHO analysis.

### THE DIRTIEST 15



### Number of Indian cities among 15 most polluted



### WHY 2017 COULD BE BETTER FOR DELHI

- In 2016, the number of days below the 24-hr standard (less than 'moderate') was 26%. In 2017, it was 23%.
- In 2017, the number of days in severe and emergency category was 5% and 6% respectively whereas in 2016 these figures were higher at 6% and 9% respectively.
- The highest PM2.5 level in 2016 was 736 microgramme per cubic metre, which is 12.3 times higher than the 24-hr standard. In 2017, the highest level went up to 546 microgramme per cubic metre, which is 8.9 times higher than the standard.

### WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN 2017

- Graded Response Action Plan was initiated in October and several measures were put in place across Delhi-NCR. This included "severe plus" or "emergency measures" in November that saw construction activities being shut down, along with stopping traffic into Delhi.
- Regular sprinkling of water on road to settle dust.
- Furnace oil and petcoke banned.
- Badarpur thermal power plant was shut down this winter.
- Increased vigilance and fines for waste burning, construction waste and dust violations.
- Brick kilns, stone crushers and hot mix plants were shut down during this winter.
- Usage of diesel generator sets was stopped in the capital.



## ANALYSIS

### Its more than Delhi-NCR:

- This shows that India is in the midst of an air quality crisis that extends beyond just the National Capital Region.
- The global health body's database should serve as a wake-up call for Indian policymakers whose efforts to curb air pollution have, by and large, centred on large metropolises alone.

### Geographical reasons for pollution in Northern Plains:

The list of the top 14 suggests that the problem of air quality is particularly intense in the northern plains. No southern or eastern cities figure.

While Delhi, Agra and Kanpur are known to have very high levels of air pollution, places like Varanasi, Gaya, and Srinagar do not have a high concentration of polluting industries, or other common sources of pollution, such as vehicular emissions.

Therefore, it is clear that this is not a problem linked directly to industrial production. Other issues are also involved.

- **High population:** The region is one of the most densely populated in the world. The sheer number of people is so high, in excess of 600 million, that the demand for energy sources, and the consequent burning of fuels, is extremely high.
- **Humidity:** The high levels of humidity in this region is very conducive to the formation of secondary aerosols. Water facilitates the reaction between the emitted gases whose molecules form clusters and slowly nucleate into particles.
- **Poor waste management:** Also, a lot of the smaller cities have poor waste management, thus there is a lot of burning.
- **Wind Pattern:**
  - In this region, wind predominantly blows from north-west to east for most of the year, but more so in the winter, carrying along with it pollutants generated elsewhere.
  - Acc. to researchers, more than 60% of the particulate matter found in Kanpur have been generated elsewhere.
- **Himalayas and Vindhyas as borders:**
  - Once the pollutants enter the Gangetic region, they get trapped, and remain suspended over the area.
  - It is because scientists point out that the Gangetic plains are like an enormous valley, trapped between the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhyas in the south, from where pollutants are unable to disperse very far.
- **No coastline:** This region is land-locked — pollution cannot dissipate quickly — and does not have the advantages of the coastal cities like Mumbai or Chennai.

### Is North India a Unique Case?

- No. North India is not the only part of the world with these or similar geographical constraints.
- There are international models in which similarly placed states/regions have laws that empower governments to invoke stringent measures whenever required.
- California, for example, is a valley with a propensity for pollution to build up — and it was the first state in the US to enact an anti-pollution law back in the 1940s.

### Comparison with China:

- In contrast, many Chinese cities are improving. In 2016 only four Chinese cities — Baoding, Hengshui, Xingtai and Anyang — were in top 20 compared to 14 Chinese cities in 2013. In 2016, Beijing's PM 2.5 concentration was 73 micrograms per cubic metre compared to Delhi's 143.
- According to WHO, China has put a number of measures since 2013, from a National Action Plan of Air Pollution Control, enforcement of environmental standards etc.
- **The trend is clear:** China's cities, once the most polluted, are improving thanks to careful government action, while Indian cities, including Delhi, are getting worse.

### Problem with Poor Monitoring:

- It also shows, how deficient air quality monitoring is.
- More than a fourth of the automatic air quality pollution monitoring centres in the country are located in Delhi. Kanpur, the worst performer on the WHO index, has just one centre to monitor real-time air quality.

### Way Ahead:

- Any approach for tackling air pollution needs to be synchronised with one that takes the regional landscape into consideration.
- Monitoring should be the one of the priority step towards addressing a problem.
- The newly proposed national clean air action plan has to ensure stringent action in all cities to comply with clean air standards.
- Smoke from open household fires may have decreased thanks to the availability of LPG connections, but the degree to which this has succeeded must be examined.
- The Smart Cities programme must prioritise re-planning cities with public transport hubs, in order to reduce vehicular traffic.
- Finally, construction norms should be stringently implemented. Dust from open construction sites is a strong contributor to PM 2.5 levels.

## DUST STORMS

From 2 to 3 May 2018, high-velocity dust storms swept across parts of North India and killed at least 125 people and injured over 200.



A dust storm approaching the city of Bikaner

### Terminologies:

#### • Sand Storms:

- A sandstorm is particles of sand carried aloft by strong winds; they are mostly confined to the lowest ten feet and rarely rise more than fifty feet above the ground.
- Sand particles are larger than dust particles, are not launched far and fall out of the air faster.

#### • Dust Storms:

- A dust storm is a severe weather condition characterized by strong winds and dust-filled air over an extensive area.
- The particles in a dust storm are smaller in size than particles in a sandstorm and can be launched higher and farther. Dust storms can be: (1) Localized and channelized dust storms, (2) Winter to early spring gradient dust storms and (3) Monsoonal convective dust storms.

#### • Haboob:

- Monsoonal convective dust storms are produced from downbursts in severe thunderstorm development.
- This creates a blast that lifts dust as high as 5,000 feet generating very large scale, high and dense dust storms. This type of dust storm is called a haboob.

- **Squall:** It is a sudden, sharp increase in wind speed usually associated with active weather, such as rain showers, duststorms, or heavy snow.

### Extra-terrestrial Dust Storms?

- Dust storms are not limited to Earth and have been known to form on other planets such as Mars. Martian dust storms are formed when solar heating warms the Martian atmosphere and causes the air to move, lifting dust off the ground.
- These dust storms can extend over larger areas than those on Earth, sometimes encircling the planet.

### Impact of Dust Storms:

- **Health impact:** A noxious mix of fungi, pollutants and chemicals can be picked up and transported by dust storms. These substances can irritate the lungs and trigger asthma attacks and other illnesses.
- **Impact on transportation:** During dust storms, visibility can be reduced significantly causing dangerous driving conditions.
- **Economic impact:** Dust storms cause soil loss from the dry lands, and worse, they remove organic matter, thereby reducing agricultural productivity. Also the abrasive effect of the storm damages young crop plants.

### 2018 India Dust Storms:

#### • Reason:

- The storms typically occur in the summer months, when the weather has been dry to allow dust to be picked up by passing winds.
- A low pressure trough was created from the borders of Punjab, Haryana due to pressure gradient which extends till Odisha. The relentless heat wave conditions added to the situation. The presence of moisture enabled the winds to carry rain along which created the current dust storm.

- **Casualties:** Storms are not uncommon in the region; however, because these storms occurred at night and with greater wind speeds than average, the death toll was higher than usual.

#### • Not a recent phenomenon:

- Although dust storm conditions are associated with coming rainfall in the region, they have become a source of misery in the past 10-12 years. In 2006, a series of dust storms had brought an unprecedented amount of rainfall causing a deluge in the region.
- The cause of this extremity of rainfall post dust storms had been linked to climate change by experts.

#### • Comment:

- In the wake of the storm on May 2, State governments have blamed the India Meteorological Department for not providing clear warnings, while the IMD claims to have conveyed the forecast of the coming storm to the Centre several days ahead. This clearly points to lack of coordination, that affects disaster-preparedness.
- On the ground, strong public infrastructure and adequate capacity among administrators and personnel to handle rescue and rehabilitation must be ensured.

# GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

In May 2018, The European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a law to strengthen data protection regime came into effect.

## Objective:

- GDPR replaces the 1995 European Union (EU) Data Protection Directive and is aimed at protecting the personal data of EU residents in the new digital world.

## Salient Features:

- Definition of Personal Data:** The definition of personal data now explicitly includes location data, IP addresses, and identifiers such as genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of a natural person.
- Privacy by design:** The GDPR is based on "privacy by design", a concept that data processing procedures are best adhered to when they are integrated at the point at which the technology is created.
- New rights:** EU residents will have stronger rights over their personal data such as –
  - Right to be 'forgotten':** They can ask data controllers to erase personal data under certain circumstances.
  - Right to 'Data portability':** They can ask service providers to port data out to another service provider.
  - Right to 'Prevent automated profiling':** This, for instance, prevents a software program from automatically rejecting a mortgage application or a visa request without human judgement being involved.
  - Right to 'informed consent':** Data controller will have to provide consent terms that are clearly distinguishable.
- Reporting obligations:** Companies that suffer data breaches have to disclose them within 72 hours. By contrast, it took Yahoo more than two years to reveal a breach that ultimately involved three billion users.
- Penalty:** Flouting the rules can attract fines of up to 20 million euros (\$24 million) or 4% of an organization's global annual revenue, whichever is higher.
- Coverage:** The regulation covers all the EU member states and citizens, so all global enterprises – regardless of where they are located – with operations or customers in EU must comply.

## Do You Know?

- Data controllers:** Those who determine why and how data is collected such as a government or private news website.
- Data processors:** Those who process the data on behalf of controllers, such as an Indian IT firm to which an E.U. firm has outsourced its data analytics.



## ANALYSIS

### Significance:

- The European Union GDPR is, arguably, the most notable change in the data protection regime in the last two decades.
- The EU's Data Protection Directive 1995 is not in sync with contemporary uses of data facilitated by the internet (i.e. people exchanging their personal data on Twitter, Google and Facebook).
- The growth in the digital economy and rapid advances in technology means companies and governments are using personal data on an "unprecedented scale."
- The recent Cambridge Analytica scandal, brought into light how big corporates like Google, Twitter, Amazon and Facebook are not abiding by a single set of rules.
- GDPR sought to replace the existing data privacy directive, which enables and guides laws in each of the 28 EU member states, with a stronger instrument which harmonises data protection laws across the 28 countries.

### Implications for Indian Companies:

- Europe is a significant market for the ITes, BPO and pharma sectors in India. The size of the IT industry in the top two EU member states (Germany and France) is estimated to be around \$155–220 billion.
- Yet, only a third of Indian IT firms are making arrangements for the GDPR, with 39% unaware of what it is even (acc. to a 2018 survey by tax and accounting firm EY). This will likely mean fines, loss of business, as well as diplomatic wrangling in trade talks between India and the E.U.
- However, given the economic dependence on data, these robust protections are necessary.

### Way Ahead for India:

- Indian companies should review their policies, procedures and existing privacy programmes; impart data privacy training to employees; and review or update contracts signed with third-party vendors, among other things.
- Moreover, following the Supreme Court's verdict on Right to Privacy, a data protection framework has been proposed by the Srikrishna Committee in India. This should be implemented.



## DATA LOCALISATION

In April 2018, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a directive on data localisation which led to a furore in India's digital payments industry.

### About:

- In its notification, RBI has mandated all payments companies, global or local, to set up data storage facilities within India by October 2018 (i.e. within six months).
- i.e. the payment companies will have to physically store Indian citizens' payment data in India.

### Reason:

- This is required to gain "unfettered supervisory access" to such data for better monitoring and regulation, which is essential for reducing risks from data breaches.
- The move comes in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica data leak, which has led to concern among regulators and policymakers about the security of Indian data.
- China has already introduced host of laws to ensure that all kinds of personal data of its citizens are stored on local servers.



## OPPOSITION TO DATA LOCALISATION

### Impact:

#### • Impact on IT-BPM sector:

- A 2016 McKinsey report indicates that cross-border data-sharing accounts for greater share of increase in global GDP than the global trade in physical goods.
- India, being the world's biggest data processing centre, has benefited greatly from this. India's IT-BPM (business process management) sector accounts for about 8% of India's GDP, and is one of the largest private sector employers (employing about four million people).
- These numbers showcase the importance of unhindered data flows to India's economic progress.

#### • Impact on infrastructure:

- To protect data from damage or corruption, data centres require a large amount of cooling which consumes an enormous amount of power.
- Even developed countries are migrating their data to Nordic countries to reduce the power required to cool their centres.
- On the other hand, almost 30 million homes in India have no electricity. Thus, proliferation of local data centres may negatively impact the initiative of providing electricity to all.

#### • Impact on the environment:

- According to the National Resources Defence Council (NRDC), data centres consume up to 3% of all global electricity production and produce 200 million tonnes of carbon dioxide.
- Companies with data as the main commodity have some of the highest carbon footprints, owing to their data centres.
- Thus, minimising the number of data centres in India might be an environmental advantage for India.

### Other Concerns:

- Data localisation per se does not guarantee data security. It also requires putting in place a strong data protection law, which is missing in India's case.
- Physical location alone does not guarantee access to the data. Sensitive data is often encrypted and legal justification is required prior to obtaining encryption keys.
- Also storing data in different jurisdictions mitigates the risk of damage due to natural disasters and ensures business continuity.

### Way Ahead:

- There is definitely a need for high level of data protection around sensitive data.
- But that can be achieved in multiple ways such as by incentivising businesses to implement tighter security measures and protocols.
- India can leverage **Mutual Legal Assistance in Trade Matters (MLATs)**, which enables data-sharing between countries in the event of fraud or security concerns.
- India can learn from European Union's GDPR (Global Data Privacy Regulation) attempts to protect their citizens' information. Their jurisdiction extends to any organisation that works with their citizens' data, regardless of where it is stored — around the globe or the cloud.
- In short, empowering authorities with greater bilateral understanding between countries will help prevent fraud while securing India's position as a top player in global markets.

## DRAFT TELECOM POLICY

In May 2018, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) released the draft National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP), 2018 for public comments.

### Objectives:

The Policy aims to accomplish the following objectives by 2022:

1. Broadband for all
2. Creating 4 million additional jobs in the Digital Communications sector
3. Enhancing the contribution of the Digital Communications sector to 8% of India's GDP from around 6% in 2017
4. Propelling India to the Top 50 Nations in the ICT Development Index of ITU from 134 in 2017
5. Enhancing India's contribution to Global Value Chains
6. Ensuring Digital Sovereignty

### Strategy:

To achieve the objectives, the policy envisages three Missions:

- (1) Connect India, (2) Propel India and (3) Secure India.

### National Telecom Policy 2012: Key Features

Broadband for all with a minimum download speed of 2 megabits; Make India a global hub of domestic manufacturing; Increase the Rural tele-density from 39 to 70% in next 5 years; Delinking of licenses from spectrum; Liberalization of the spectrum; Full Mobile Number Portability and One Nation – Free Roaming.

Mission	Strategy
<b>Connect India</b> <i>(Creating Robust Digital Communications Infrastructure)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a <b>'National Broadband Mission – Rashtriya Broadband Abhiyan'</b> to secure universal broadband access. Under it the following broadband initiatives will be implemented,               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>BharatNet:</b> Providing 1 Gbps to Gram Panchayats upgradeable to 10 Gbps</li> <li><b>GramNet:</b> Connecting all key rural development institutions with 10 Mbps upgradeable to 100 Mbps</li> <li><b>NagarNet:</b> Establishing 1 Million public Wi-Fi Hotspots in urban areas</li> <li><b>JanWiFi:</b> Establishing 2 Million Wi-Fi Hotspots in rural areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>Implementing a <b>'Fibre First Initiative'</b> to take fibre to the home, to enterprises and to key development institutions in Tier I, II and III towns</li> <li>Recognizing Spectrum as a key natural resource to optimise utilisation</li> <li>Strengthening Satellite Communication Technologies in India</li> <li>Reviewing the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) to cover the digitally deprived areas</li> <li>Establishing (i) Telecom Ombudsman and (ii) A centralised web based complaint redressal system to <b>protect consumers' interests</b></li> <li>Incentivising the use of renewable energy technologies in the communications sector to promote <b>Green Telecom</b></li> </ul>
<b>Propel India</b> <i>(Enabling Next Generation Technologies and Services through Investments, Innovation and IPR generation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting investments of USD 100 Billion in the Digital Communications Sector. For this give Telecom Infrastructure to be given the status of Critical and Essential Infrastructure</li> <li>Creation of innovation led Start-ups in Digital Communications sector</li> <li>Restructuring C-DOT as a premier Telecom Research and Development Centre</li> <li>Creation of Globally recognized IPRs in India</li> <li>Train/Re-skill 1 Million manpower for building New Age Skills</li> <li>Establish a multi-stakeholder led collaborative mechanism for coordinating transition to Industry 4.0</li> </ul>
<b>Secure India</b> <i>(Ensuring Sovereignty, Safety and Security of Digital Communications)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a comprehensive data protection regime for digital communications</li> <li>Ensuring that net neutrality principles are upheld</li> <li>Establishing a Security Incident Management and Response System for Digital Communications Sector</li> </ul>



## ANALYSIS

### Need for a new Communications Policy:

- A lot has changed since India's last telecom policy in 2012 which requires a new communication policy:
  - The country now has the world's second largest internet subscriber base.
  - With the advent of 5G, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, the sector is seeing technological shifts in digital communications.
- The telecom sector is a critical component of infrastructure which can trigger faster macroeconomic growth.
  - It is estimated that India's digital economy has the potential to reach \$1 trillion by 2025.
  - It is also estimated that a 10% increase in broadband penetration could lead to an over 1% increase in GDP.
- Thus the policy makers have to ensure that the advantages of the new technologies are accessible to all equitably and affordably; while securing them against existing and emerging threats.

### Challenges:

- According to critiques, almost all the proposals (broadband for all; restructuring of C-DOT) in the draft have found mention in the Telecom Policy of 2012 which was also hailed but the sector continues to face challenges.
- Service providers are facing enormous financial stress due to high spectrum fees and an ongoing price war in the sector (after the entry of Reliance Jio which brought down tariffs).
- The goal of attracting an additional \$100 billion seems unrealistic (the sector is currently finding it hard to raise even \$10 billion a year) as domestic banks are not lending to telcos.
- The industry is also mired in litigation, which has held back consolidation and development.
- The commitment to net neutrality has been strongly reiterated in the draft. However, TRAI recommendations on net neutrality (November 2017) have still not been ratified by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- The draft suggests setting up of new interception agencies. However, this recommendation will have to be implemented with great care to protect right to privacy.
- Also, a lot of the objectives listed in the draft are not entirely in the hands of the government and would require private participation.

### Concluding Remarks:

- While the stated goals are ambitious, it should have focussed more on giving a concrete roadmap on how to execute them.
- In short, Implementation holds the key to the new telecom policy.

## INTERCONNECT NORMS

### Why in News:

- In May 2018, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued the 'Draft Telecommunication Interconnection (Amendment) Regulations 2018'.

### About:

- The draft document proposes to amend certain norms of the interconnection regulations that were released in January 2018.
- **Key Proposals:**
  - Increase the time frame for provisioning of ports for initial interconnection and augmentation to a maximum of 42 working days.
  - Each service provider shall provide its forecast of busy hour outgoing traffic for each POI (point of interconnection), at intervals of every six months to the interconnecting service provider.
  - A service provider can ask another operator for additional ports, if the projected utilisation of the capacity is likely to exceed 85% over a 60 day period.

## TIME STAMPING AND TIME SYNCHRONIZATION NETWORK

### Why in News:

- In April 2018, CSIR and DoT entered into a MOU for establishing a nationwide Time Stamping & Time Synchronization network.

### About:

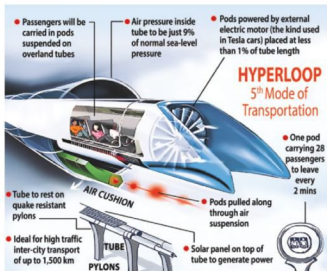
- **What is it?**
  - The Nationwide, Time Stamping & Time Synchronization network will consist of 22 numbers of Time Synchronization Centers (TSC's).
  - This network will provide synchronizing pulse in Indian Standard Time (IST) to all Telecom & Internet Service providers in all the 22 LSA (Licensed Service Areas) in the country.
- **Agencies involved:** It will be set up by Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications with technical assistance from Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL).
- **Implementation period:** The project will be implemented in two phases. In the first phase TSC's is to be set up in four metro LSA's and in the second phase remaining of the 22 LSA's will be covered.
- **Benefits:** It will improve the telecom network efficiency by reducing packet loss due to reduced slips in better synchronized digital network.

# HYPERLOOP

In February 2018, Richard Branson's Virgin Hyperloop One signed an agreement with the Maharashtra government to build an Hyperloop between Mumbai and Pune to reduce travelling time.

## About:

- Hyperloop is a proposed mode of transportation which envisages pods or capsules travelling at high speeds through low-pressure tubes or vacuumed steel tubes erected on columns or tunnelled underground.
- The pods would initially be set into motion using an electric motor after which magnetic levitation would kick into place and the pods would start gliding in the low-pressure tunnel.
- The aluminium pods can be used to ferry passengers, freight and even cars.



## Timeline:

- Hyperloop concept was proposed by Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX and Tesla who floated a white paper on the technology back in 2013.
- The Hyperloop concept has been explicitly "open-sourced" by Musk and SpaceX, and others have been encouraged to take the ideas and further develop them.
- Hyperloop One – an American company based in California – was founded in 2014 as one of the firms to explore the idea. In 2017, Hyperloop One received a big investment from Richard Branson, and was rebranded as Virgin Hyperloop One.
- In May 2018, the US-based Hyperloop Transportation Technologies (HTT) submitted a proposal to Andhra Pradesh govt. for setting up of an hyperloop transportation system.



## DEBATE

### Expected Benefits:

- Fast:** In a sealed environment with almost no air resistance and use of magnetic levitation (which creates almost no friction), the pods are expected to travel at speed exceeding 1,000 km/hr. Thus it is expected to be faster than both bullet trains and commercial aircraft.
- Cost-effective:** It is supposed to be cost effective because Hyperloop needs less ground to construct tracks. If the electricity is generated by its own solar panels, the fares could be far lower than that of commercial airplanes and bullet trains.
- No Land acquisition problem:** Availability of land will not be a big issue as the steel tubes will be either erected on columns or tunnelled underground.
- Energy agnostic:** Hyperloop is "energy-agnostic", i.e. it can draw power from whichever source is available (even solar or wind energy).
- Environment friendly:** According to Virgin Hyper-Loop one, the project will be almost carbon free as the project will be completely self-powered with electricity generated by its own solar panels.
- The system is fully autonomous and sealed, so **no driver-related error** is anticipated.

### Arguments Against:

- However, Hyperloop is currently only a concept — and experts warn that the global hype around it must be taken with a healthy dose of cynicism.
- Critiques in India argue that when the country is already short of funds for infrastructure, is there really a need for investing lakhs of crores for experimental transportation technology.
- Instead of investing in this experiment, promote regional air travel (UDAN) in the country (modern-day commercial aircraft already fly at speeds of over 700-800 km/hr).
- Also, claims of technology being more cost-effective than bullet trains and even aircraft are disputed. Many have called them gross exaggerations.

## DRONE SWARM

During the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics at Pyongyang, 1218 drone swarm made dynamic aerial caricatures depicting a gyrating snowboarder, Olympic insignia, etc.



### What is Drone Swarm:

- **SWARM** stands for **Smart Warfighting Array of Reconfigurable Modules**.
- It is another manifestation of nano-technology application in the Unmanned Aerial system (UAS) that is fast emerging.
- US, China and Russia have the possession of Drone Swarms.
- **How Dynamic Shapes were Formed?** The drones were individually **connected via radio frequencies (RF)** to a central computer, which controlled the movement and position of each drone to form the dynamic shapes.

### Utility/Advantages of Drone Swarms:

- **Disaster Management:** In Switzerland, Swarming Micro Air Vehicle Network (SMAVNET) Project aims to develop robot swarms that can be deployed in disaster areas to rapidly create communication networks for rescuers.
- **Space Exploration:** With Swarm Drones, taking humans to space and/or other planets will become faster, better, cheaper.
- **Operations in contaminated environment:** Drone swarms could readily take on tasks in contaminated environments having radiation, chemical or biological hazards or in dangerous situations.
- **Cheap and expendable:** Swarms are likely to reduce the monetary costs of war.
- **3D Mapping:** The drones can fly autonomously through the tunnels, scan the area and send data back to render a 3D map.
- **Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief (HADR) missions:** It can prevent a catastrophe from happening. e.g. spot spraying of outbreaks of fire, in wildfires.
- **Jungle Warfare:** Swarms could also find immense use in jungle warfare, particularly in seeking out hidden militants and targeting them.

- **Surgical Strikes:** Swarms would also make it easy to execute surgical strikes by replacing personnel with drones. Russian Air base and Naval facility in Syria were attacked by ten drones rigged with explosive devices.
- **Counter terrorist operations:** Drone Swarms could be launched inside buildings to seek out hidden militants and neutralize them.

### Limitations/Threat of Drone Swarms:

- **Mission Specific Programs:** For every mission, the drone swarm would require mission specific programming.
- **Not fool proof:** None of countermeasures is fool proof and each method or weapon has limitations.
- **Beginning of drone swarm attack:** First ever Drone Swarms attack on Russian air and naval base can be said as beginning of use of drone swarm attack.
- Misuse by terrorist organisations.
- Anonymity of Attacker
- There are no effective ways of stopping a swarm of drones.

### Available Counterstrategies:

- **Hacking:** For a swarm, an attack on their connectivity would be the most effective defence. So, a system (hacking) would be needed which removes:
  - their connectivity to their operator(s), and/or
  - the single or several connectivity to one another.
- **Jamming:** Most of the developed counterstrategies are based on jamming radio frequency and GPS signals. Drones needed those information flows to navigate effectively. Cut them off and you neutralize the attack.

### Way Forward:

- Rules should be designed to protect civilian air space from nefarious drone operators.
- No other technology is likely to offer as many tactical advantages to the military as drone swarms that too at a rather low cost.
- There is need to put considerable funds in research on this technology as done by western countries.
- Global communities should come under common roof at some multilateral platform to undersign a treaty to prevent its proliferation and misuse.

# ADOPT A HERITAGE SCHEME

Recently, leasing out of the Red Fort to the Dalmia Bharat Group under Adopt a Heritage Scheme has started a furore among different stakeholders.

## About:

- **Bodies involved:** The 'Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dhara, Apni Pehchaan' scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Survey of India.
- **Background:** It was launched in September 2017.
- **Objective:** To increase Public Private Partnership (PPP) in conservation and maintenance of heritage sites.
- **Monument Mitras:**
  - Under this, private and public sector companies have been invited to become 'friends of monuments' (Monument Mitras).
  - They will adopt heritage sites, develop basic amenities (e.g. drinking water access) & advanced amenities (e.g. surveillance systems) and look after their maintenance.
  - For their services, they will be 'given visibility' on the monument premises as well as on the tourism ministry's Incredible India website.
- **Coverage:** To begin with, the scheme focusses on 93 ASI-ticketed monuments. It will be expanded to include other natural and cultural sites across India.

## Recent Controversy:

- As per the MoU, the Dalmia Group will spend Rs. 25 crore over the next five years on the fort's upkeep.
- The money will be used to fund a light and sound show at the fort, and for providing amenities like clean toilets, free Wi-Fi, a cafeteria, and construction of ramps for differently-abled visitors.
- **Opposition to move by Critiques:**
  - Government is trying to commercialise the iconic Red Fort and symbol of India's independence.
  - Commitment of Rs. 25 crore by the Dalmia group for upkeep of the Red Fort could have easily been committed by the government from its own budget.
  - Private corporate groups (e.g. Dalmia, a cement company) lack expertise in heritage management.
  - Instead the tourism ministry could have relied on specialist agencies like INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) or the Aga Khan Trust, which has done splendid work on Humayun's tomb and other Islamic monuments in Delhi.



## JUSTIFICATION FOR SCHEME

### Arguments in Favour:

- **Failure of ASI:** In 2013, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India reported that more than 90 monuments under the ASI's charge were "missing".
- **No financial bidding:** These Monument Mitras have been selected through "Vision Bidding" instead of 'financial bid'. i.e. they have been selected on the basis of the bidder's 'vision' for development of all amenities at the heritage site.
- **ASI still has control:** The legal status of the monument will not change after adoption. Traditional preservation and conservation work will remain with the ASI.
- **Adequate safeguards exist:** An Oversight and Vision Committee can terminate the five-year contract "if the company does not comply with the ASI guidelines".
- **Global scenario:** This model has been successful in many countries. For example Italy which has the largest number of UNESCO Heritage sites in the world has handed a number of heritage sites to corporations.
- **Not a first of its kind initiative:**
  - A similar scheme named National Culture Fund (NCF) is in operation since 1996.
  - Under this, private firms can offer to protect tangible and intangible heritage in India and choose to develop amenities or offer funds for maintaining a heritage project.
- **Constitutional duty:** Under Article 51A, it is the Fundamental duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.
- **Better Tourist Experience:** It would help to increase tourist footfall by providing more attractions at the heritage sites through light and sound show, Digital screenings etc.

### Concluding Remarks:

- Governments can't do everything. Thus, corporates can be allowed, provided they do it sensibly.
- However, as an untried concept, it may have been advisable for the tourism ministry to have chosen a smaller, less significant monument to start with, to serve as a testing ground for possible site selection.
- Also, include 'prior work experience' as a criteria for selection of Monument Mitras.



## TAJ DISCOLORATION

In May 2018, Supreme Court said that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) "will have to be thrown out of the picture" to prevent discoloration of Taj Mahal.

### Background:

- In 1984, the case was filed in the Supreme Court for the changing colour of Taj. Recently, Supreme court has asked how the white marble, which had first become yellowish, was now turning brownish and greenish.
- The court has been hearing a plea filed by M.C. Mehta, seeking protection for the Taj from pollution.



### Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)?

- ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, regulate all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- It also regulates Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.
- ASI was founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham who also became its first Director-General.

### REASON FOR CHANGE OF COLOUR OF TAJ MAHAL'S MARBLE

#### Air Pollution:

- Agra has become the world's eighth most polluted city in terms of PM 2.5 levels, as per a WHO Report of 2018.
- In 2014, a study by Indian and U.S. researchers argued that the key culprits were: particulate matter; carbon from burning biomass; fossil fuels; and dust — possibly from agriculture and road traffic.

#### River Pollution:

- The second reason is that the Yamuna river, which flows behind the Taj, has become highly polluted.
- There is no aquatic life in it, and has caused insect and algae infestation on the Taj Mahal and other monuments situated on its banks. These insects breed in the polluted matter in the river, and then attack the Taj Mahal in the evening.

#### Tree-felling:

- Agra lies in a semi-arid zone, and experiences very hot summers when temperatures touch upto 49 degrees Celsius. Hot dusty winds have an abrasive effect on the marble.
- Increasing green cover and the number of water bodies is one way of curbing dust pollution. However, a large number of trees have been felled in Agra in recent years to build roads and other infrastructure.

#### River-front Project:

- Taj Heritage Corridor - the riverfront project comprising food plazas and malls, planned between the Agra Fort and the Taj - was shelved on the Supreme Court's orders as it could have been a threat to the monument.

- Sand accumulated in the reclaimed riverbed can erode the marble surface during sand storms, says the ASI. The site is yet to be turned into a green belt as directed by the court.

#### Natural Causes:

- The Taj Mahal is, after all, a 360-year-old monument, so some discoloring is to be expected.
- Marble does not exist in a pure form, so the marble in the Taj Mahal is full of minerals which become oxidized over time. Oxidization leads to the browning of these minerals, resulting in brown splotches on the beautiful mausoleum.

#### Tourists:

- Another major threat to the Taj is the unregulated number of visitors, which on some days is over 50,000. Constant treading wears down the marble floors.
- Presence of visitors increases humidity inside the building and the grease from their palms causes deposition of grime on the walls.

#### Apathy by Government:

- Acting on a similar petition filed by Mehta, the court had in 1996 ordered a slew of measures to protect the monument.
- Over two decades later, successive governments in New Delhi and Lucknow, and the Archaeological Survey of India, have failed to implement the court's order.

The situation needs thorough investigation and solutions from renowned experts and institutions working in the field of conservation and preservation. In the past, Supreme Court issued a direction for declaring Agra a Heritage City. Experts feel that implementing the same would improve the situation.

*Lessons from the Life of...*

## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

International Nurses Day was observed on May 12 to commemorate the birthday of Florence Nightingale.



### *Story of...* **LADY WITH THE LAMP**

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) was born in Florence, Italy in a wealthy family. However, she pursued what she saw as her God-given calling of nursing.



#### **Crimean War:**

- In 1854 the Crimean War began. Britain, France and Turkey were fighting Russia. The Crimea was part of Russia. After the war, army hospitals were filled with wounded men.
- Horrible Conditions in Hospital:**
  - The hospitals were overcrowded. There were not enough beds, so men lay on the floor.
  - These Hospitals were also very dirty. There were no proper toilets.
  - The patients ate bread that was mouldy-green, and meat 'more like leather'.
  - Due to these conditions, more soldiers were dying from diseases than in battles.

#### **What She did?**

- Florence Nightingale and 38 nurses arrived in Turkey in November 1854. The doctors let the nurses into the Army hospital at Scutari. She worked 20 hours a day.
- Sanitation:** On her arrival she got busy cleaning up. She paid workmen to clear the drains.
- Better food:** Florence stated that without good food, how sick men could get better. So, she started cleaning kitchens, and hired a new chef to cook better meals.
- Lady with the lamp:** At night she walked around the wards, to make sure the men were comfortable. She wrote letters home for men who could not write. She carried a lantern, so the soldiers called her 'The Lady with the Lamp'.

#### **Aftermath of Crimean War:**

- Her writings sparked worldwide health care reform.
- In 1860 the Nightingale Training School for nurses was opened at St. Thomas's Hospital in London. Florence's book Notes for Nursing helped many student nurses.

#### **Art of Caring:**

Following below are Nightingale's "Notes on Nursing Which Apply to the Art of Caring" –

- Observe the sick. (How much time did the doctor spend with you?)
- Never let a patient be waked out of his sleep.
- Avoid unnecessary noise.
- View and sunlight are matters of first importance to the sick.
- Leading questions are useless or misleading.
- Obtain accurate information.
- Be confidential.
- Children are much more susceptible than grown people to noxious influences.

#### **Notable Quotes:**

- Wise and humane management of the patient is the best safeguard against infection.
- The greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel.
- Live your life while you have it. But to live your life, you must discipline it.

#### **Her Views on Women Right Activists:**

- She criticized early women's rights activists. She insisted that powerful men had done more than women activists to help her attain her goals.
- She quoted "I have never found one woman who has altered her life by one iota for me or my opinions."

#### **Florence Nightingale Awards?**

- These were instituted in the year 1973 by the Government of India to recognize the services rendered by nurses to the society.
- The awards are given on 12<sup>th</sup> May every year to the outstanding nursing personnel employed in Government, Voluntary Organizations and Mission institutions. Private institutions can also apply with the due recommendation of concerned State Government.
- The award carries a medal, a certificate, a citation certificate and Rs. 50,000/- in cash to each of the awardees.

# WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX REPORT - 2018

In March 2018, United Nations (UN) published its World Happiness Report. It ranks countries on the basis of their happiness levels.

## What is World Happiness Report?

- The report is created by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's (SDSN).
- It is based on following factors (1) Per capita GDP, (2) Social support systems, (3) Life expectancy, (4) Social freedom, (5) Corruption levels and (6) General health.



## COMMENT ON INDIA'S PERFORMANCE

### Reasons:

- Poverty:** In India, around 270 million persons live below the Tendulkar Poverty Line. This results in abysmal health care, malnutrition, and inability to spend on basic needs.
- Rising inequality:** India is one of the most economically unequal country in the world. This inequality give rise to dissatisfaction and unhappiness.
- Health care:** The status of health care in country is considerably poor. This has been further magnified by increased cost of healthcare services and rise of existing and new diseases. This decreases the life expectancy and quality of life of people.
- Mental Health:** Mental health is one of the major contributing factor to happiness. However, Mental health care is one of the most neglected sector. According to WHO, the government spends merely 0.06 % of its total health spending on mental care.
- Child labour:** Significant number of children are in the clutches of child labor and are unable to get proper education and health care.
- Corruption:** There is glaring corruption in almost every aspect of life. India features at 81<sup>st</sup> place in Corruption Perception Index.
- Perception of personal liberties:** There have been events like increase in vigilantism. This has created a perception that personal liberties are decreasing in country contributing to unhappiness to significant section of country.
- Rising Crime:** Increased in crime in the country has affected the happiness of population.

## Report Summary:

- In this year report, Finland has been ranked one. The country at last place is Burundi.
- The migration issue is at the heart of this year's report. The top 10 countries also have a very satisfied immigrant population.
- India's performance:** India has been ranked 133<sup>rd</sup>. This is 11 places below its last year ranking. India is also behind all the SAARC countries, except Afghanistan.

- Crime against women:** It has emerged as a significant issue in recent time. According to NCRB data, there has been an increase in crime against women by 34% between 2012-15. This has created a perception that women are not safe in country. This contributes to unhappiness.

### Way Forward:

- Happiness is something which comes not just by economic prosperity but is affected by multiple factors. This has been demonstrated by our neighbors who perform better than us in the happiness index.
- Government should adopt multipronged strategy to improve the happiness level of population. Ensuring happiness of people should be the prime objective of the government.
- As seen in many countries, a strong social foundation leads to happiness. There is need to improve the social security of people. The spending on health, education, etc. need to increase significantly. Mental health care need to be focused.
- As demonstrated by Norwegian countries, lack of inequality in society results in higher level of happiness. We need to take steps to decrease the inequality in our society.
- There is need to ensure that personal liberties of people are protected and freedom of people is ensured.
- There is need to control the rising crime in the society, specially crime against women.
- The corruption in the country need to be eliminated to ensure happiness of people.

## MODEL CONTRACT FARMING ACT, 2018

*In May 2018, Union Agriculture Minister released the final version of the Model Agriculture Produce and Livestock Contract Farming and Services (Promotion & Facilitation) Act, 2018.*

### Background:

- **Meaning:** The concept of Contract Farming (CF) refers to a system of farming, in which bulk purchasers including agro-processing/exporting or trading units enter into a contract with farmer(s), to purchase a specified quantity of any agricultural commodity at a pre-agreed price.
- **Present status in India:**
  - Presently, contract farming is being promoted through the APCM Act 2003.
  - However, it did not pick up at the ground level due to conflict of interest of contract farming sponsors and the APMCs which were the designated registering, agreement recording and dispute settlement authority.
  - As a result, contract farming has been in practice in small scale in some states like Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh.
- In this background the model contract farming act, 2018 has been released to promote contract farming in India.

### Salient Features:

- It is a promotional and facilitative Act and not regulatory in its structure.
- Special emphasis is on protecting the interests of the farmers, considering them as weaker of the two parties entering into a contract.
- In a bid to allay the fears of individual farmers, the act explicitly states that no permanent structure can be developed on farmers' land/premises under such contracts.
- It gives no right, title of interest of the land to the contract farming sponsor.
- The contracting party will be obliged to buy the entire pre-agreed quantity as per contract.
- In addition to contract farming, service contracts all along the value chain including pre-production, production and post-production have been included.
- Contract farming to be outside the ambit of APMC Act.
- Contracted produce is to be covered under crop / livestock insurance in operation.

### Actors Involved:

- A 'Registering and Agreement Recording Committee' or an 'Officer' at the district/block/taluka level to be provided for online registration of sponsor and recording of agreement.
- **Farmer Producer Organization (FPOs)/Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs)** to be promoted to mobilize small and marginal farmers. FPO/FPC can be a contracting party if so authorized by the farmers.
- **Contract Farming Facilitation Group (CFFG)** to be setup for promoting contract farming and services at village/panchayat level.
- A **dispute settlement mechanism** to be set-up at the lowest level possible for quick disposal of disputes.

### Way Ahead:

- Now, it is upto the states, which have to adopt the model law and implement it at the earliest for the benefit of farmers.

## NATIONAL BAMBOO MISSION (NBM)

*In April 2018, Union Cabinet approved the restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) for implementation during the remaining period of Fourteenth Finance Commission (2018-19 & 2019-20).*

### Background:

- National Bamboo Mission (NBM) started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07, was mainly emphasizing on propagation and cultivation of bamboo, with limited efforts on processing, product development and value addition.
- There, was weak linkage between the producers (farmers) and the industry.

### Restructured NBM:

- The restructured proposal gives simultaneous emphasis to propagation of quality plantations of bamboo, value addition, micro, small & medium enterprises as well as high value products; markets and skill development, thus addressing the complete value chain for growth of the bamboo sector.
- An Executive Committee will be setup for the formulation of guidelines of the NBM.
- An outlay of Rs.1290 crore (with Rs. 950 crore as Central share) is provisioned for implementing it.
- The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantages particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh etc.

- Since it proposes to bring about one lakh ha area under plantation, it is expected that about one lakh farmers would be directly benefitted in terms of plantation.

## KRISHONNATI YOJANA

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the continuation of Umbrella Scheme, "Green Revolution – Krishonnati Yojana" in agriculture sector beyond 12th Five Year Plan for the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.*

### About:

- **Objective:** The Umbrella scheme comprises of 11 Schemes/ Missions with the aim of developing the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic and scientific manner.
- **Components:** The Schemes that are part of the Umbrella Schemes are –
  1. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)
  2. National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
  3. National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)
  4. Submission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE)
  5. Sub-Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP)
  6. Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM)
  7. Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPPO)
  8. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Census, Economics and Statistics (ISACES)
  9. Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperation (ISAC)
  10. Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Marketing (ISAM)
  11. National e-Governance Plan (NeGP-A)
- **Background:** All these schemes/missions were approved independently as separate scheme/mission. In 2017-18, it was decided to club all these schemes / missions under one umbrella scheme 'Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana'.

## FROZEN SEMEN STATION

*In May 2018, Union Minister of Agriculture laid the foundation stone of the frozen semen station in Maranga, Purnea city, Bihar.*

### About:

- It will be the first state-of-the-art semen production center of the country where 300 high genetic merit bulls will be kept and 50 lakhs of semen dose will be produced per year.
- With the establishment of this semen station, milk productivity of cows and buffaloes will increase rapidly in the state.
- It is being set up at a cost of Rs. 64 crore under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission with 100% contribution from the Central Government.

- Currently, the artificial insemination is being done by CMOFED (Sudha) in Bihar.

### Rashtriya Gokul Mission?

It was initiated in 2014 to conserve and develop indigenous breeds to increase milk productivity.

## TEA DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION SCHEME

*In May 2018, Union Government approved Indian Tea Board's (ITB) proposed "Tea Development and promotion" scheme with a planned outlay of around Rs. 400 crore.*

### Components:

- **'Development' component:** It involves increasing field productivity and quality of tea by encouraging replantation, replacement planting, improved irrigation and mechanization.
- **'Promotion' component:** It involves better showcasing of India's diversified portfolio of single-origin teas (Assam, Nilgiri, Dooars-Terai) each one with distinctive aroma & flavour attributable to its geographical origin.

### Salient Features:

- The scheme includes organized as well as small growers.
- Eligible plantations will be provided subsidy, incentives or grants for their various activities in these component sectors. To become eligible for benefits under the scheme, a set garden must be registered with the Tea Board.
- The scheme approved with a planned outlay of around Rs. 400 crores will remain effective till the end of 2019-20 FY.

## MICRO IRRIGATION FUND (MIF)

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved an initial Corpus of Rs.5,000 crore for setting up of a dedicated "Micro Irrigation Fund" (MIF).*

### About:

- The fund will be setup with NABARD under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).
- **Details:**
  - The allocation of Rs. 2,000 crores and Rs. 3,000 crores will be utilised during 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively.
  - NABARD will extend the loan to State Governments during this period.
  - Borrowings from NABARD shall be paid back in 7 years including the grace period of two years.

- **Benefits:** The dedicated Micro Irrigation Fund would supplement the efforts of Per Drop More Crop Component (PDMC) of PMKSY in an effective and timely manner.

## NATIONAL WATER INFORMATICS CENTRE (NWIC)

*Recently, the Union Ministry of Water Resources created the National Water Informatics Centre (NWIC).*

### About:

- NWIC would be a repository of nation-wide water resources data. It is expected to provide a 'Single Window' source of updated data on water resources & allied themes.
- It would work as a Subordinate Office under Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- The centre would be headed by a Joint Secretary level officer.

## GODAVARI INLAND WATERWAYS

*In May 2018, Union government completed a feasibility study on introduction of inland waterways on the Godavari.*

### About:

- Union government has completed a feasibility study on introduction of inland waterways on the Godavari over 1,184 km from **Nashik to Bhadrachalam**.
- Now it is ready to take it up this year with funding of ₹ 2,000 crores.
- It has invited **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra**, which are the riparian States of the Godavari, to have a 10% stake each in a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to be set up for the purpose.

## NABH NIRMAN

*In May 2018, Union Minister for Civil Aviation stated that the government will expand airport capacity as part of NABH (NextGen Airports for Bharat) Nirman initiative.*

### About:

- **Background:** NABH Nirman initiative was first announced in Union Budget of 2018.
- **Objective:** To expand the airport capacity more than five times to handle a billion trips a year.
- **Approach:** Focus will be on airport upgradation. For this a large percentage of the investment is to come from the private sector.

## DRAFT PASSENGER CHARTER

*In May 2018, Ministry of Civil Aviation notified a 'Draft Passenger Charter' defining Rights of Air Passengers for public consultation.*

*Under it, if the airline is found to be at fault, passengers will be entitled to the following benefits.*

### Boost to Passengers

A look at the proposals of the Civil Aviation Ministry

- |   |                                       |                  |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| • Passenger not informed of cancellation 1 day before departure - full refund | • Delay of over 4 hours - full refund | ₹3,000 per kg    |
| • Name change within 24 hours of booking a ticket - free                      | • Baggage delayed or damaged          | ₹1,000 per kg    |
| • Baggage lost -  | • Missed connecting flights -         | ₹5,000 - ₹20,000 |



## e-GATES

*In May 2018, government announced that e-gates will be installed at airport immigration counters.*

### About:

- e-Gates are automated kiosks for speedy document and identity verification.
- At the e-Gates, foreigners can present their machine-readable passports, place their fingerprints on the scanner and complete a customs declaration.
- By this, low-risk foreign travellers to India will not have to wait in long queues at airport immigration counters.

## PASIGHAT AIRPORT

*In May 2018, Arunachal Pradesh created history by becoming the last of the eight north-eastern States to be on India's commercial flight service map.*

### About:

- Pasighat, about 570 km northeast of Guwahati, is the headquarters of East Siang district and the State's oldest city.
- Pasighat airport is one of six operational advance landing grounds (ALGs) in Arunachal Pradesh.



June, 2018

- It was laid down in 1952 primarily for military use. A civilian terminal was built in 2017 and a test landing of Alliance Air's commercial flight was carried out in April this year.
- Recent development: An Alliance Air flight, a wholly owned subsidiary of Air India, touched down at Pasighat Airport on May 22, 2018 from Kolkata via Guwahati. With this,
  - Arunachal Pradesh found place on India's commercial flight service map.
  - Pasighat airport became India's easternmost airport with civilian operations.

## PARCEL CARGO EXPRESS TRAIN (PCET)

*In May 2018, Northeast Frontier Railway started operating on lease a Parcel Cargo Express Train (PCET) on fortnightly basis, connecting North-eastern Region (NER) of the country to the West Coast.*

### About:

- The route of this PCET is New Guwahati in Assam to Kalyan in Maharashtra with stoppages at New Jalpaiguri, Kalamna Goods Shed.
- This would enable farmers of NER to market their products at the retail markets in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Nagpur, Pune etc.
- Significance:**
  - The step is in line with the Government's priority to provide connectivity to Northeast region and empowering local industries of this region particularly.
  - A single PCET can carry consignment equivalent to 52 nos. of trucks. This will ensure less Carbon Emission.

## NATIONAL WIND-SOLAR HYBRID POLICY

*In May 2018, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy issued National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy.*

### About:

- Objective:** Promoting large grid connected wind-solar PV hybrid system for efficient utilization of transmission infrastructure and land.
- Features:** The Policy provides for
  - Integration of both the energy sources i.e. wind and solar at AC as well as DC level.
  - Flexibility in share of wind and solar components in hybrid project, subject to the condition that, rated power capacity of one resource is minimum 25 % of the rated power capacity of other resource for it to be recognised hybrid project.

- Promoting new hybrid projects as well as hybridisation of existing wind/solar projects.
- Way ahead:** A scheme for new hybrid projects under the policy is also expected shortly.

## GREEN SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (GSDP)

*In May 2018, Union Environment Ministry launched the Mobile App of Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP).*

### About:

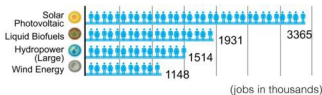
- The pilot project of GSDP was launched in June, 2017, for skilling Biodiversity Conservationists (Basic Course) and Para-taxonomists (Advance Course) in environmental courses which will be National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant.
- Now, GSDP is being scaled up to all-India level. The number of people to be skilled under GSDP will be increased to about 5 lakh by the year 2021.
- Environmental Information System (ENVIS) hubs and Resource Partners (RPs) in Botanical Survey of India (BSI), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and their respective regional offices are the nodal Centres for the programme.

## JOBS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY

*In May 2018, IRENA released the report titled 'Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review 2018'.*

### Key Findings:

- Global renewable energy employment reached 10.3 million jobs in 2017, an increase of 5.3% over the previous year.
- China alone accounts for 43% of all renewable energy jobs. China, Brazil, the United States, India, Germany and Japan have remained the world's biggest renewable energy employers, representing more than 70% of such jobs.
- Solar Photovoltaic (PV) sector was the largest employer (almost 3.4 million jobs, up 9% from 2016).



**International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)?**

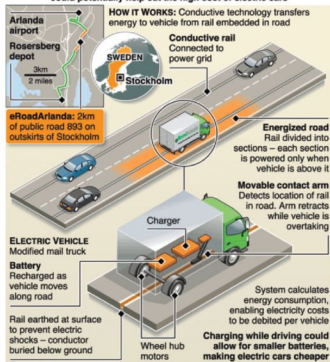
- **Objective:** It is an intergovernmental organization to promote adoption of renewable energy.
- **Established in:** 2009.
- **HQ:** Abu Dhabi.
- **Relation with UN:** IRENA is an official United Nations observer.

**WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRIFIED ROAD**

*In May 2018, it was reported that Sweden is testing the first road of its kind that can charge a vehicle as it drives along. The state-funded scheme, named eRoadArlanda, could potentially help cut the high cost of electric cars.*

**SWEDEN TESTS WORLD'S FIRST ELECTRIFIED ROAD**

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**NANAR OIL REFINERY**

*In April 2018, an MoU was signed between Saudi Arabia's Saudi Aramco and the three PSUs — HPCL, BPCL and IOC — to develop an integrated refinery and petrochemicals complex at Nanar village in Ratnagiri district, Maharashtra.*

**About:**

- The oil refinery is proposed to be promoted by three public sector units — Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL), Bharat Petroleum (BPCL) and Indian Oil (IOC). IOC is the lead partner with 50% while HPCL and BPCL will hold 25% each.

**Significance:**

- The proposed capacity is 60 million tonnes per annum, over 70% more than the 35 million tonnes of Jamnagar, currently India's biggest refinery.
- The proposed investment is Rs. 3 lakh crore and the project has an employment potential of one lakh.

**STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE (SPR)**

*In May 2018, UAE sent first shipment of oil for Mangaluru Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).*

**Agreement:**

- During the visit of PM Modi to UAE in February 2018, Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL) signed an agreement with Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) of UAE.
- Under it ADNOC will store about 5.86 million barrels of crude oil in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) facility at Mangalore at its own cost.
- Government of India can use the entire available crude oil stored by ADNOC in the Mangalore SPR facility during an emergency situation.

**Do You Know?**

ISPRL has built 5.33 million tonnes (around 39 million barrels) of strategic crude oil storage at three locations:

1. Vishakhapatnam has a capacity of 1.33 million tonnes (9.77 million barrels) of crude oil,
2. Mangalore has a capacity of 1.5 million tonnes (11 million barrels) and
3. Padur can stock 2.5 million tonnes (18.37 million barrels).

**COMPENSATION FOR POWER-CUT**

*In April 2018 Delhi became the first Indian city to frame rules for compensating consumers for power cuts.*

**About:****Background:**

- The Electricity Act, 2003 lays down that consumers be compensated for power cuts.
- Now Delhi has become the first Indian city to frame rules to give effect to the stipulation.

**New rules:**

- The policy requires discoms to pay Rs 50 if an outage lasts for more than two hours. They will have to pay Rs 100 for each hour following the first two hours of the blackout.
- Consumers can complain with the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) in case they are not paid the due commission by the discoms.
- The amount of compensation in such cases will be Rs 5,000 or five times the compensation payable, whichever is higher.

**Comment:**

- Effective implementation of this policy will ensure much-needed accountability of the discoms to the consumer.
- But for that to happen, however, the regulator will not only need to do some homework such as defining what exactly is an "unscheduled" power cut. It will also require real-time data on electricity supply.

**COAL INDIA LIMITED (CIL)**

*In May 2018, Anil Kumar Jha was appointed as the Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) of Coal India Limited.*

**About:**

- CIL is a state-owned coal mining company which contributes to over 80% of the coal production in India.
- Administration: Government of India owns CIL and controls the operations of CIL through Ministry of Coal.
- Status: In 2011, CIL was conferred the Maharatna status by the Union Government of India.
- HQ: Kolkata.
- Established in: 1975.

**NSCI SAFETY AWARDS – 2017**

*In April 2018, Santosh Gangwar gave away NSCI safety Awards – 2017.*

**About:**

- The NSCI Safety Awards are much coveted national level Awards in the field of occupational safety, health and environment.

- These are given in recognition of excellent safety & health performance by the organizations in Manufacturing, Construction and MSME Sectors.
- These Awards are adjudged and declared every year by the National Safety Council, an autonomous society set up by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India.

**DRAFT CODE ON WORKING CONDITIONS**

*In April 2018, the Ministry of Labour and Employment released the draft Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2018.*

**About:**

- The draft Code will apply to establishments employing ten or more workers.
- It consolidates 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.

**Salient Features:**

- **Duties of employers:** Every employer is required to ensure that the workplace is free from hazards that cause injury or diseases. The employer will give an employment letter to every worker.
- **Rights of employees:** Every employee will have the right to obtain information from the employer related to safety and health at work.
- **Role of facilitator:**
  - The employee may inform the facilitator if the safety and health arrangements are inadequate.
  - A facilitator will be empowered to examine the workplace and inquire into accidents or dangerous occurrences that take place.
- **Advisory bodies:** Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Boards will be set up at the national and state level.
  - The National Board will advise the central government on the rules to be framed under the draft Code.
  - The state boards will advise the state governments on matters referred to them.
- **Working Hours:**
  - No worker will be allowed to work in an establishment for more than 48 hours a week.
  - No worker will be allowed to work overtime for more than 100 hours in a quarter.
- **Welfare facilities:** The employer will provide welfare facilities to the workers such as separate bathing places and locker rooms for male and female employees.

## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

*Recently, International Labour Day – 2018 was observed with the theme "Uniting Workers for Social and Economic Advancement".*

### About:

- International Labour Day/International Workers Day, often referred to as May Day, is a celebration of labourers and the working classes.
- It is observed on May Day (1st May), an ancient European spring festival.
- The date was chosen by a pan-national organization of socialist and communist political parties to commemorate the Haymarket affair (Haymarket Massacre), which occurred in Chicago on 4 May 1886.

## KISHANGANGA PROJECT

*In May 2018, PM Modi dedicated the Kishanganga Hydropower Station to the nation.*

### About:

- **Location:** It is located 5 km north of Bandipore in Jammu and Kashmir, India.
- **Project details:**
  - It is a run-of-the-river project that includes a 37 m tall concrete-face rock-fill dam designed to divert water from the Kishanganga River through a tunnel to a power plant in the Jhelum River basin.
  - It will have an installed capacity of 330 MW.
- **Timeline:**
  - Construction on the project began in 2007.
  - Pakistan objected to the project arguing that it will affect the flow of the Kishanganga River (called the Neelum River in Pakistan).
  - In February 2013, the Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration (CoA) ruled that India could divert all the water leaving a minimum amount of water to the downstream of the dam on Kishanganga River for the purpose of environmental flows.
  - In March 2018, all the three units (3 × 110 MW) were commissioned and synchronised with the electricity grid.
  - In May 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Kishanganga hydropower project.

## PAKALDUL POWER PROJECT

*In May 2018, PM Modi laid the Foundation Stone of the Pakaldul Power Project.*

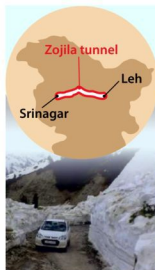
### About:

- **Location:** It is a proposed concrete-face rock-fill dam on the 'Marusadar River', a tributary of the Chenab River, in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Project detail:** The primary purpose of the dam is hydroelectric power generation. It will divert water to the south through a 10 km long headrace tunnel and into power station on the reservoir of the Dul Hasti Dam, on the Chenab.

## ZOJILA TUNNEL

*In May 2018, PM Modi inaugurated the construction of Zojila tunnel project, which will provide all-weather connectivity to Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.*

*The 14.15 km long tunnel between Baltal and Minamarg will be India's longest road tunnel and Asia's longest bi-directional tunnel.*



### Key Features

The longest bi-directional single tube road tunnel in Asia

**Length:** 14.15km

Open all days

All-weather accessibility

To be built at Zojila pass on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh NH-1 situated at an altitude of 11,578 feet

**Cost:** ₹6,809 crore

Will reduce time taken to cross Zojila pass from three hours and 30 minutes to 15 minutes

**Expected time of completion:** 5 years

## IMD WORLD COMPETITIVENESS RANKINGS

*In May 2018, the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking was released for the year 2018 covering 63 economies.*

### About:

- The Top five most competitive economies in the world are United States followed by Hong Kong, Singapore, the Netherlands and Switzerland.
- India was ranked at 44 out of 63 in 2018. In 2017, India was ranked at 45. In contrast, China was ranked 13th.
- Major improvements in India during the last year include bandwidth speed, pupil-teacher ratio in primary and secondary education, total health expenditure and banking and financial services.

**Do You Know?**

International Institute for Management Development (IMD) is a business education school located in Lausanne, Switzerland.

**UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2018**

*In May 2018, the UN Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2018 was released.*

**Report Summary:**

- South and Southwest Asia are the fastest growing sub-region of the Asia-Pacific region.
- For less developed countries, the role of external sources of finance, such as official development assistance, South-South cooperation, and global development partnerships remains critical.
- **Recommendations:**
  - Take advantage of high growth rate to enhance inclusiveness and sustainability of economies.
  - For this increase social spending and rationalise tax base.

**INJETI SRINIVAS COMMITTEE**

*In April 2018, the Insolvency Law Committee (Chaired by Injeti Srinivas) submitted its report examining issues arising from the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).*

**About:**

- The Code provides a time-bound 180-day process to resolve insolvency of companies and individuals.
- All decisions related to resolution or liquidation of an insolvent firm are to be taken by a committee of creditors (COC).

**Recommendations of the Injeti Srinivas Committee:**

- Add an explanation under the Code to clarify that home buyers would constitute financial creditors.
- Reduce the voting share of the financial creditors required for CoC to take decisions from 75% to 66% in certain critical matters, such as approval of the resolution plan. For routine decisions, the voting threshold may be reduced to 51%.
- Certain financial entities (such as asset reconstruction companies) be allowed to submit a resolution plan.
- Promoters of medium, micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) should be allowed to submit a resolution plan, as long as they are not wilful defaulters.

**FIRST RESOLUTION UNDER IBC**

*In May 2018, Tata Steel announced its takeover of Bhushan Steel, making it the first major resolution under India's new Insolvency and Bankruptcy code (IBC).*

**Comment:**

- The development was described by Union Finance Minister as a "historic breakthrough" in resolving the legacy issues of banks.
- But work towards the goal of ensuring timely action on Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) has not shown much success yet. IBC has a 270-day deadline for settling disputes over NPAs that are referred to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- But, as of May 2018, in 11 of the 12 path-breaking cases referred to the NCLT, the 270-day deadline has, in fact, passed with no action. The cases are at different points in the process.
- It is worth remembering that the 270-day deadline is itself longer than was originally planned for the IBC (180 Days).
- Blatantly ignoring the letter of the law in this manner hardly contributes to ease of doing business. Speed and timeliness should also be part of the precedent being set.

**SWISS CHALLENGE**

*In May 2018, Banks proposed to the Ministry of Corporate Affairs that bidding under the 'Swiss Challenge Method' be incorporated into the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) to make the insolvency resolution process more transparent.*

**About:**

- Under the 'Swiss Challenge' method, the highest (H1) bid in the first round of bidding becomes the base price for bidders, including the H1 bidder, to place counter-bids in the second round of bidding.
- The stressed asset will go to the highest bidder in the second round.
- If no other bidder is able to better the H1 bid, the top bidder in the first round is declared the successful bidder.

**CHAMPION SERVICES SECTORS**

*In May 2018, President of India launched Champion Services Sectors scheme.*

**About:**

- **Objective:** To give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
- **Sectors included:**

List of Champion Services Sectors		
Information & Technology enabled Services (IT & ITeS)	Technology	Legal Services
Tourism & Hospitality Services		Communication Services
Medical Value Travel		Construction & Related Engineering Services
Transport & Logistics Services		Environmental Services
Accounting & Finance Services		Financial Services
Audio Visual Services		Education Services

- **Action plan:** Ministries/Departments concerned with these sectors will have to finalize and implement the Action Plans for them.
- **Funding:** A dedicated fund of Rs. 5000 crores is to be established to support initiatives under these Action Plans.
- **Target:**
  - To increase share of India's services sector in global services exports from 3.3% (in 2015) to 4.2% (in 2022).
  - To increase the share of services in Gross Value Added (GVA) from 53% for India (in 2015) to 60% (in 2022).

**TCS MARKET CAP TOPS \$100 BILLION**

*In April 2018, Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS), which is currently in its 50th year, surpassed the \$100 billion mark in market value, becoming only the second Indian firm after Reliance Industries Ltd to do so.*

**About:**

- Even as analyst's debate if its share price is fairly valued, there is no dispute over TCS's scorching growth, having added \$10.9 billion in revenue over the past seven years.
- That is roughly the size of India's second largest IT services firm Infosys Ltd, which ended FY18 with \$10.94 billion in revenue.

**INDIAN CULINARY INSTITUTE, NOIDA**

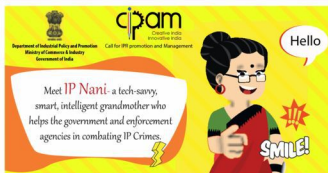
*In April 2018, Union tourism minister inaugurated the Noida campus of Indian Culinary Institute (ICI).*

**About:**

- The Noida campus is one of the two ICI campuses envisaged, the other being at Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.
- The NOIDA campus of ICI will also have a state of the art "Indian Culinary Museum" where the rich historical and diversified culinary objects and other literature will be displayed.
- The main objective of setting up of the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) is to:
  - institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine,
  - meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine and
  - promoting Cuisine as a Niche Tourism product.

**IP NANI**

*In May 2018, the Minister of Commerce launched IP Nani – the Intellectual Property (IP) mascot – to spread awareness about the importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) among people, especially children, in an interesting manner.*

**DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF TRADE REMEDIES (DGTR)**

*In May 2018, Union Government created 'Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR)'.*

**About:**

- **Parent body:** The DGTR will function as an attached office of Department of Commerce. It replaces the 'Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties' in Department of Commerce.
- **Function:** It will be an umbrella National Authority for providing comprehensive and swift trade defence mechanism in India to deal with unfair trade practices.



**Background:**

- Currently, the Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) deals with anti-dumping and CVD cases, Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) deals with safeguard measures and DGFT deals with quantitative restriction (QR) safeguards.
- The DGTR will bring DGAD, DGS and Safeguards (QR) functions of DGFT into its fold by merging them into one single national entity.

**INVESTMENT IN BOND MARKET**

*In April 2018, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), announced a number of decisions in an attempt to keep foreign investors in the local bond market.*

**About:**

- RBI withdraws minimum maturity cap of bonds for FPIs. Earlier, FPIs were allowed to invest in bonds maturing in at least three years.
- Investment of less than one year should not be more than 20% of the book.
- Minimum residual maturity cap for corporate bonds is now at one year, down from earlier cap of three years.
- Cap on aggregate FPI investments in any G-sec would now be 30%, up from 20%.
- FPI limit auction scrapped.

**PERMANENT RESIDENCY STATUS (PRS)**

*Two years after it was launched by the Union government, the Permanent Residency Status (PRS) scheme is yet to find a single applicant.*

*The scheme is open for citizens of every country, except Pakistani citizens or third-country nationals of Pakistani origin.*

**What is PRS scheme?**

A look at the Permanent Residency Status scheme

- The scheme promises facilities for foreigners who invest at least ₹10 crore under the FDI route
- Cleared by the Union Cabinet in 2016 to boost "Make in India"
- Open to foreign investors who pump in a minimum of ₹10 crore within 18 months or ₹25 crore in 36 months, since the date of inception, 2016
- The FDI should result in generating employment to at least 20 Indians in every financial year



MAKE IN INDIA

- PRS card holders are also eligible to buy residential property in India
- PRS will be granted for a period of 10 years with multiple entry and can be renewed for another 10 years

**RAMESH CHAND COMMITTEE**

*In April 2018, the Expert Committee on Integration of Commodity Spot and Derivatives Markets submitted its report.*

**About:**

- **Commodity spot markets:** In these markets the sale and delivery of commodities takes place immediately or within 11 days (e.g. a mandi for vegetables).
- **Commodity derivatives market:** Here, the exchange of commodities takes place at a later date, on certain conditions agreed upon previously. Alternatively, instead of delivery of goods, the difference between the prevailing price and the originally agreed-upon price may be paid or received.

**Recommendations of Committee:**

- **Integration of commodity spot and derivatives market:**
  - Integration of these two markets is required as it is important for both agricultural and non-agricultural markets in India. Also while the two market are distinct from each other, they are interlinked.
  - One of the ways to integrate these markets is by creating an electronic spot market platform, where the price of a commodity from across the country is available.
- **Adoption of model APLM Act:**
  - States should adopt the model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitating) Act, 2017 (APLM Act), released by the centre.
  - The model Act seeks to create a barrier free single market for trade in the country, and caps market fee levied by an agriculture market committee on the sale of produce.
- **Department for non-agricultural commodity markets:**
  - Create a dedicated department to oversee the working of non-agricultural commodity markets.
  - These commodities include base metals (e.g. aluminium and tin), precious metals, and energy related commodities (such as coal).

**MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY (MDP)**

*In May 2018, professors of IIT Roorkee released a paper titled 'Estimates of Multidimensional Poverty in India: Evidence from National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-2016)'.*

**Findings:**

- Poverty level has declined from 55% to 21% between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- This has improved the country's MDP ranking from 54 to 26 in a decade.

- The fall, at the rate of 3.4 points per annum on average, is largely due to the "lower burden of poverty" among the southern Indian States. However, poverty levels have dropped in all States.
- While the national average is 21%, in the five southern States (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) the average MDP is 9%.
- Bihar is the poorest State with MDP of 43%. Kerala has an MDP of 1%.



## SUBHASH CHANDRA KHUNTIA

*Recently, Subhash Chandra Khuntia was appointed as the 5th chairman of the insurance regulatory body, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).*

### AN OVERVIEW OF INSURANCE INDUSTRY

The new insurance regulator has a tough task ahead. Here are some statistics related to the industry



Life insurance



Non-life insurance

Number of insurers	24	33
Premiums underwritten as on FY18 (Rs cr)*	1,93,866.24	1,50,708.21
AUM as on FY17 (Rs cr)	28,54,193.11	2,22,343.65

Listed insurers	ICICI Prudential Life Insurance HDFC Standard Life Insurance SBI Life Insurance	New India Assurance General Insurance Corporation of India ICICI Lombard General Insurance
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#### Who is the new Irda chief?



**SUBHASH CHANDRA KHUNTIA**

Former chief secretary to the Karnataka government

\*First -year premium for life insurance and gross direct premium for non-life insurance; Data on non-life insurance includes two specialised insurance companies

## DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY ON OFFICIAL STATISTICS (NPOS)

*In May 2018, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) released the Draft National Policy on official Statistics (NPOS).*

### Background:

- In 2016, Union Cabinet of India adopted the 'United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics' so as to improve the quality of Official Statistics.
- To give effect to the Principles, a draft National Policy on Official Statistics (NPOS) has been brought out which has now been placed in the public domain for receiving feedback.

### Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics?

#### Background:

- In 1992, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) adopted the fundamental principles of official statistics in the UNECE region.
- The United Nations Statistical Commission adopted these principles in 1994 at the global level.
- The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) endorsed the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in 2013; and in January 2014, they were adopted by General Assembly.

#### Objective:

- The adoption of these Principles will bring professional independence, impartiality, accountability and transparency in methods of collection, compilation and dissemination of official statistics.

## ATAL PENSION YOJANA

*In May 2018, Atal Pension Yojana (APY) scheme's subscriber base crossed 1 crore on completion of 3 years of launch of the scheme.*

### About:

- Launched in:** 2015.
- Target group:** It is primarily targeted at the unorganised sector and informal workers.
- Eligibility condition:** Indian Citizens between the age group of 18 to 40 years eligible to join APY through their savings bank account or post office savings bank account.
- Monthly pension amount:** It provides guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1000 or Rs. 2000 or Rs. 3000 or Rs. 4000 or Rs. 5000 at the age of 60 years based on pension amount chosen.
- Governments contribution:**
  - The Central Government would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber.

- The contribution will be for a period of 5 years, i.e., from Financial Year 2015-16 to 2019-20, who have joined the APY before 31st March, 2016, and who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and who are not income tax payers.
- **Significance of participation in APY:**
  - Builds a pensioned society.
  - Adds sustainable fee income to banks by way of attractive incentive for mobilising APY at the rate of 120-150 for each account.

## PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING (PSL)

*Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) tightened priority sector lending (PSL) norms for Foreign Banks in India.*

### About:

- According to the new norms, Foreign banks with more than 20 branches in India will now be required to extend a portion of their loans to small and marginal farmers as well as micro enterprises from fiscal year 2018-19, as per the respective sub-sectoral targets.
- Those with less than 20 branches will also need to fulfil the overall PSL norms of 40% of adjusted net bank credit (ANBC) in a phased manner by 2020.

## SAMARTH

*In May 2018, Union Textiles Minister held a meeting to familiarize the stakeholders about the Samarth scheme and its guidelines.*

### About:

- Samarth is a Scheme for capacity building in textile sector under the skill India mission.
- **Objective:** To skill the youth for employment in the textile sector covering the entire value chain of textiles, excluding spinning and weaving.
- **Target:** To train 10 lakh persons (9 lakhs in organised and 1 lakh in traditional sector) over a period of 3 years (2017-20), with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore.
- **Background:** The scheme was approved by the Union Cabinet in December 2017 and guidelines were released in April 2018.

## GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

*In May 2018, at its 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, GST Council took number of key decisions.*

### Key decisions at the 27th meeting of the GST Council

- The issue of incentivising digital payments by giving ₹100 incentive for purchases by consumers was taken up. The matter will be referred to State Finance Ministers
- New model for single monthly returns in place of multiple filings required in a month
- Proposal to turn the GST Network into a 100% government owned entity. In the new set-up, the Centre will hold 50% and States (together) will hold 50%



### Deferred

- Decision on levying a cess on sugar, keeping in mind the acute condition of cane growers. A Group of Ministers will decide

- **GST Council:** GST Council is the governing body of GST having 33 members. It is chaired by the Union Finance Minister and comprises finance ministers of centre and all the states.
- **Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN):**
  - GSTN is a nonprofit organisation formed for creating sophisticated network, accessible to stakeholders, government and taxpayers to access information from on a single source (portal). The portal is accessible to the Tax authorities for tracking down every transaction, while taxpayers have the ability of connect for their tax returns.
  - The GSTN's authorised capital is Rs. 10 crore in which Central Government holds 24.5 percent of shares while the state government holds 24.5 percent. The remaining 51 percent are held by non-Government financial institutions.

## INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS

*In May 2018, Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs has further tightened the norms for Independent Directors.*

### About:

- According to the amendments in Companies (Appointment and Qualification of Directors) Rules, 2014, none of the relatives of an independent director should have any financial links with the company, its promoters or directors.
- **Why?**
  - It has been done to improve corporate governance practices.
  - The Uday Kotak committee on corporate governance had also stated that Independent directors are expected to bring objectivity in to the functioning of the board and thus recommended a number of changes in the eligibility criteria of independent directors.

## PM MODI'S VISIT TO NEPAL

*In May 2018, PM Narendra Modi paid a visit to Nepal.*

## Key Highlights:

- This was the third visit of PM Modi to Nepal and the first high-level visit from India since the formation of the new Government in Nepal
- Arun-III hydro-electric project:** Foundation stone of 900 MW Arun-III hydro-electric project in Nepal was laid which would enhance cooperation in the generation and trade of power between the two countries
- Ramayan circuit:** A direct bus service between Janakpur (Nepal) and Ayodhya, the two sacred cities for Hindus was inaugurated as part of a "Ramayan Circuit" to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.

## PANCHESHWAR DAM

*In May 2018, India and Nepal agreed to resume negotiations to resolve critical issues of water sharing and power purchase agreement related to Pancheshwar multi-purpose dam Project that was conceived 22 years ago.*

## NEEMRANA DIALOGUE

*In April 2018, a high-powered delegation travelled to Pakistan to discuss ways to improve the India-Pakistan relationship, thus giving a fresh start to Neemrana Dialogue, the original Track II initiative.*

## About:

- The delegation was headed by former MEA secretary and Pakistan expert Vivek Katju. Former NCERT chief J S Rajput was also part of the delegation.
- While like other Track II mechanisms, Neemrana is also a non-governmental dialogue, it is different in that both foreign ministries had, in the past, associated themselves with it.
- To many, it's a good start as the policy of not having any engagement with Pakistan has run its course.

## Track II Diplomacy?

- These are Unofficial dialogue involving influential academic, religious, and civil society actors who can interact more freely than high-ranking officials.
- Focus is on building relationships and encouraging new thinking that can inform the official process.

## PANCHESHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT:

**THREE KEY BENEFITS FOR INDIA AND NEPAL:**  
Hydropower, Irrigation, Flood control

**PROPOSED HEIGHT OF THE DAM:**

**311 metre**  
From the deepest foundation level

Main dam will form a reservoir of around  
**11,600 hectare**

Dam to have two underground power houses (one on each bank of Mahakali in India and Nepal) with installed capacity of 4,800 MW

**4,800 MW**

**SUBMERGENCE AREA ON INDIAN SIDE:**

**7,600 hectare**

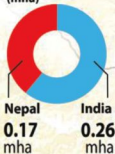
Covering Pithoragarh, Almora and Champawat districts in Uttarakhand

Pancheshwar main dam is proposed on river Mahakali (known as river Sarada in India)

Dam site is around 2.5 km downstream of the confluence of river Sarju with river Mahakali (Site location is where the river forms international boundary between the Far Western Development Region of Nepal and Uttarakhand in India)

Project also aims to provide annual irrigation benefits:

**0.43 million hectares (mha)**



**SUBMERGENCE AREA ON NEPAL SIDE:**

**4,000 hectare**

## 26/11 ATTACKS

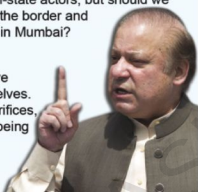
*In May 2018, former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif admitted Pakistan's role in 26/11 attack. He also said that Pakistan is isolating itself by using non-state actors as central to its foreign policy.*

### About:

- The Mumbai attack case has entered the tenth year but none of the suspects in Pakistan has been punished yet.
- A number of Pakistani witnesses have provided evidence against the seven accused, but the Pakistani authorities have been insisting on questioning Indian witnesses for reaching a verdict.

“Militant organisations are active in Pakistan. Call them non-state actors, but should we allow them to cross the border and kill over 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me

“We (Pak) have isolated ourselves. Despite making sacrifices, our narrative is not being accepted



## BANGLADESH ENDS QUOTA SYSTEM

*In April 2018, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh announced that there would be no more quotas for government services in future.*

### Quota System:

- At present 56% of government services are reserved in Bangladesh. This includes 30% for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, 10% for women, 10% for districts based on population, 5% for ethnic minorities and 1% for the disabled.
- Criticism:**
  - Thus only 44% of all public posts are filled on merit which is opposed by General candidates of the country which is witnessing a jobless growth.
  - Further, in 2010 government notified that the unfilled vacancies in the freedom fighters quota would be carried forward. Due to this, as of January 2018, 3.6 lakh posts in different ministries and departments were lying vacant probably.

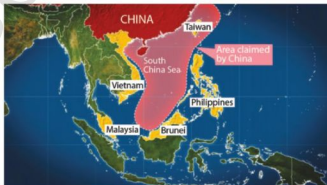
- Also, it has been reported that documents claiming descent of freedom fighter have been obtained through bribery.
- In this background, protests began in Dhaka University campus on 8 April 2018, and eventually spread to other parts of Bangladesh within days. The protests rapidly attained popularity among students of different universities forcing the government to announce changes in its policy.

## SOUTH CHINA SEA

*In May 2018, China installed anti-ship cruise missiles and surface-to-air missile systems on three of its outposts in the South China Sea.*

### About:

- China defended the deployment saying it has “indisputable sovereignty” over the area.
- China is engaged in hotly contested territorial disputes in both the South China Sea and the East China Sea. China claims almost all of South China Sea. Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counter claims.
- The strategic South China Sea is rich in energy reserves, fishery resources and is a busy shipping route.



## CHINA'S NAVAL MIGHT

*In May 2018, China's first domestically manufactured aircraft carrier – known as 'Type 001A' – started sea trials.*

### About:

- China's first indigenous aircraft carrier is expected to be commissioned by 2020.
- Significance:**
  - The possession of a home-grown aircraft carrier places China among the few military powers with such vessels, including the United States, Russia and Britain.

- It is a landmark in China's ambitious plans to modernise its navy as the Asian giant presses its claims in disputed regional waters.

## INDO-MYANMAR LAND BORDER CROSSING AGREEMENT

*In May 2018, India and Myanmar concluded the Agreement on Land Border Crossing.*

### About:

- The agreement will allow people from both sides to cross the border with passport and visa for health and educational needs and tourism.

## ROHINGYAS

*India is taking a number of steps for the welfare of Rohingya Refugee.*

### About:

- During her visit to Myanmar in May 2018, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj stated that India will soon complete the prefabricated housing project for the Rohingya population returning from Bangladesh.
- In May 2018, Supreme Court of India designated the sub-divisional magistrates of Mewat district in Haryana and areas in Delhi where Rohingya camps are located to act as nodal officers for the welfare of refugee children.

## HARIMAU SHAKTI 2018

*In May 2018, Exercise Harimau Shakti concluded between Indian and Malaysian Armies.*

### About:

- The exercise was conducted in the dense forests of Sengai Perdik, Hulu Langat, Malaysia from 30 April 18 to 13 May 18.
- The title of the joint exercise takes its name from 'Harimau', the Malay word meaning tiger. The Malaysian army is known for its expertise in guerrilla warfare.

## MALAYSIA ELECTIONS AND GST

*In May 2018, Mahathir Mohamad was sworn in as the seventh Prime Minister (PM) of Malaysia.*

### Mahathir Mohamad:

- At 92, he is the world's oldest sitting head of government.
- He is the first Malaysian PM not to represent the Barisan National coalition, which had governed Malaysia uninterrupted since its birth as an independent country in 1957.
- He previously served as the fourth PM from 1981 to 2003. He came out of retirement and formed a new party to take on PM Najib Razak after he became embroiled in a massive corruption scandal.

### GST and Malaysia Elections:

- Interestingly from the Indian point of view, the election was fought over GST, introduced in 2015 and now a sore issue with most Malaysians, who hold it responsible for higher prices and profiteering. Mahathir has promised to replace GST with the earlier sales tax.
- Notably, the anti-profiteering clause was introduced in India's GST law with an eye on Malaysia's experience.
- While India's multi-layered GST differs from Malaysia's, its impact on small enterprises, particularly in labour-intensive sectors with a long domestic value chain such as garments, did emerge as a political issue in Gujarat.
- If GST compliance issues remain unresolved, they could dog the ruling BJP in forthcoming elections.

## GOBIND SINGH DEO

*In May 2018, Gobind Singh Deo, an Indian-origin Sikh politician in Malaysia, became a cabinet minister, thus becoming the first member of the Sikh minister in the country's history.*

### About:

- He is among the two politicians of Indian descent included in the Pakatan Harapan coalition's Cabinet. The other Indian-origin lawmaker is M Kulasegaran.
- Malaysia has nearly 1,00,000 Sikh population.



## SUNNI-SHIA RIVALRY IN LEBANON

*In the May 2018 parliamentary elections of Lebanon, Hezbollah-led alliance emerged as the largest parliamentary bloc.*

### Background:

- Hezbollah is Lebanon's most powerful Shia movement that has been designated by the U.S. and Israel as a terrorist organisation.



- In post-civil war Lebanon, the political class is largely divided into two blocs — the Iran-allied Shia bloc led by Hezbollah that has joined hands with Christian parties, and the Sunni bloc led by Mr. Hariri that has close ties with Saudi Arabia and the West.

### Impact of Results:

- Lebanon has a unique, confessional system in which the Prime Minister must be a Sunni, the President a Christian and the Parliament Speaker a Shia.
- Being the leader of the largest Sunni bloc, Mr. Hariri could retain his job as Prime Minister despite the electoral setback.
- But Hezbollah and its allies will have a greater say in government-formation. Hezbollah could also stall government measures that target its clout.
- With the regional fault lines between Iran and its rivals set to sharpen further after the U.S. withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal and rising Iran-Israel tensions, it is bound to reflect on Lebanese politics. Coupled with the recent election results, the situation will become more complicated.

## U.S. EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM

*In May 2018, United States of America opened its Embassy in Jerusalem.*

### About:

- The move fulfilled a pledge by U.S. President Donald Trump, who in December 2017 recognised the holy city as the Israeli capital.
- But it has fuelled Palestinian anger and drawn foreign criticism for undermining peace efforts. It is because Palestinians seek East Jerusalem as the capital of a state they hope to establish in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

## ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC)

*In May 2018, at a meeting of OIC foreign ministers in Dhaka, Bangladesh proposed giving India an Observer Seat in the OIC as India has 10% of the Global Muslim Population.*

### Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC):

- **What is it?** It is an international organization with the primary objective of safeguarding the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.

- **Origin:** It was established in 1969 after attack on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
- **Membership:**
  - It is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states.
  - Of these, 47 are Muslim Majority countries.
- **Observer countries:** Bosnia and Herzegovina; Central African Republic; Thailand; Russia and Turkish Cypriot State.
- **Headquarters (HQ):** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

### India and OIC: Analysis

- **India's stand on OIC membership:**

- India, had shown an interest in joining the OIC as a member state at the time of its formation.
- However, India has never since made a formal application to join OIC as an observer or as a member state.

- **View of OIC members:**

- India's potential candidacy is supported by some OIC members as in the past few decade, India's relations with the Islamic world have undergone a considerable transformation.
- Infact, former Saudi ruler Abdullah had, in 2006, proposed that India become an observer in OIC.
- However, Pakistan's strong opposition and threat to boycott the OIC has effectively led to India's inclusion in the OIC being blocked.
- Pakistan has argued that India's inclusion in OIC would violate the rules of the OIC, which require that an aspirant state should not have an ongoing conflict with a member state.

- **Arguments for India Joining it:**

- In terms of Muslims as a percentage of the global population, India ranks third after Indonesia and Pakistan. Thus a large number of Muslim populations remain untouched by the good work of OIC.
- In the past, Pakistan has used the OIC to hit out at India on J&K. Thus by becoming a member/observer, India can check it.

- **Arguments for not Joining it:**

- The OIC statements mean less these days because a number of OIC countries privately dissociate themselves from the grouping, considering it more of an irritant.

BIG FIVE		
Country	Muslims	
	in million	% of popn
Indonesia	277.2	87.2
Pakistan	197.5	96.4
India	182	14.2
Bangladesh	140.6	89.1
Nigeria	95.3	50

## AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (ACFTA)

*In March 2018, leaders of 44 African countries have signed a deal to create the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA).*

### About:

- On 21 March 2018, leaders of 44 of the 55 members of the African Union gathered in Kigali, Rwanda and signed the agreement (CFTA).
- CFTA is a continent-wide free-trade agreement which initially requires members to remove tariffs from 90% of goods, allowing free access to commodities, goods, and services across the continent.
- The proposal will come into force after ratification by 22 of the signatory states.
- If ratified, the agreement would result in the largest free-trade area in terms of participating countries since the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

## INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

*In May 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin held their first informal Summit in the city of Sochi in Russia.*

### About:

- Both leaders agreed to institute a Strategic Economic Dialogue between NITI Aayog of India and the Ministry of Economic Development of Russia, to identify greater synergy in trade and investment.
- As a part of the expanding energy cooperation, they welcomed the arrival of the first consignment of LNG to India in June 2018 under a long-term agreement between Gazprom and GAIL.
- The two leaders welcomed the idea of holding informal Summits as an additional engagement at leadership level, besides the Annual Summits between the two leaders.

## MASS EXPULSIONS OF RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS

*In March 2018, NATO joined a wave of countries expelling Russian diplomats over the nerve-agent attack on a former spy in Britain.*

### About:

- The mass expulsions were a show of solidarity for Britain, which blames Russia for the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia on British soil.

### Russia's response:

- Russia denies responsibility and has pledged to retaliate.
- Russia has already expelled 23 British diplomats in a tit-for-tat response to London's expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats and their families on March 20.
- Russia also closed the British consulate in St Petersburg and the British Council cultural body.

## INDIA-LATIN AMERICA RELATIONS

*In May 2018, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu paid a week-long visit to three Latin America nations namely Guatemala, Panama and Peru.*

### Key Highlights:

- The visit bridges 'high level contact deficit'. His visit is the highest level ever from both sides to Guatemala and Panama since establishment of diplomatic ties about 50 years ago.
- Five Memoranda of Understanding and Agreements have been signed in various fields.

### Significance:

The three countries are significant for India because of:

- their high level of engagement with the USA and the other North and South American economies through regional arrangements and Free Trade Agreements and
- being logistic and financial hubs in the region.

## SAFETY OF INDIAN DIASPORA

*In May 2018, Six Indians were abducted on their way to work in Afghanistan.*

### Missing in Baghlan

- Six Indian engineers and one Afghan employee of Indian company KEC went missing early on Sunday in the Bagh-e-Shamal area of Pule-Khomre, the capital of Baghlan province in Afghanistan.
- KEC, a global infrastructure and engineering major, is one of the largest Indian companies in Afghanistan, and is responsible for electricity supply.
- No group has officially claimed responsibility for the abduction.



We are aware of the abduction of Indian nationals from Baghlan province in Afghanistan. We are in contact with the Afghan authorities.

**GravityRAT**

*In May 2018, it was reported that a Malware allegedly designed by Pakistani hackers has become stronger.*

**About:**

- GravityRAT is a malware allegedly designed by Pakistani hackers.
- **Functioning:**
  - The 'RAT' in its name stands for Remote Access Trojan, which is a program capable of being controlled remotely and thus difficult to trace.
  - It is designed to infiltrate computers, steal the data of users, and relay it to command and control centres in other countries.
- **Timeline:**
  - The RAT was first detected by Indian Computer Emergency Response Team, CERT-In, on various computers in 2017.
  - According to reports by Maharashtra cybercrime officials, it has recently been updated further and equipped with anti-malware evasion capabilities. Once it infiltrates a system, silently evolves and does long-term damage.

**NETWORK FOR SPECTRUM (NFS)**

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet has approved enhancement of budget for implementation of Network for Spectrum (NFS) for Defence Services.*

**About:**

- Under NFS, alternate communication network will be laid down for Defence Services for release of spectrum so as to boost their communication capabilities.
- Implementing agency: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL).
- Timeline: The project approved in 2012 will be completed in next 2 years.

**MOBILE CONNECTIVITY IN LWE AREAS**

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved Phase-2 of the project to provide mobile connectivity in Left Wing Extremism-affected States.*

**Background: Phase-1**

- In the first phase, which was completed two years ago, 2,329 towers were installed at a cost of ₹ 3,167 crore in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

**Phase-2:**

- 4,072 mobile phone towers will be installed in 10 Left Wing Extremism-affected States at a cost of ₹ 7,330 crores.
- **Significance:**
  - This network would be used by the security personnel deployed in LWE affected areas. Project will also provide the mobile services to help the residents in unconnected inhabited villages in improving the economic activities in the region.
  - It will give impetus to the e-Governance activities in the region.
- **Funding:** It will be funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) of the Department of Telecommunications.

**'BASTARIYA' BATTALION**

*In May 2018, Union Home Minister commissioned the 'Bastariya' battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).*

**About:**

- The new battalion has been formed with more than 534 tribal youth from Chhattisgarh. It has 33% representation of women with 189 Mahila Constables.
- It will be deployed in core areas of Chhattisgarh to fight naxals alongside the normal CRPF and CoBRA battalions.

**REHABILITATION OF MAOISTS**

*In March 2018, Kerala Cabinet approved an amnesty-cum-rehabilitation scheme for Maoists in the State.*

**About:**

- **Objective:** To rehabilitate Maoists in the mainstream society who mainly joined the movement for monetary benefits.
- **Scheme details:**
  - Activists would be categorised into three groups. Top leaders, who come under the first category, will be eligible for ₹ 5 lakh each and those under categories two and three will be eligible for ₹ 3 lakh each when they surrender.

- The funds will be given for pursuing education, marriage, and skill training.

- ITBP is also providing security to the pilgrims during Annual Kailash Mansarovar Yatra from 1981.

## MAOISTS WEAPON MODERNIZATION

*In May 2018, Joint Security Command released a report on Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) threats in Left Wing Extremism-hit areas.*

### Key Findings:

- Naxals have developed some lethal ammunition like Rambo arrows and improvised rocket bombs as part of their new armoury.
- 'Rambo arrow' is an innovative explosive weapon in which the arrow head carries low grade gun powder or fire cracker powder which explodes after hitting the target.

## FINANCING OF LEFT WING EXTREMISM (LWE)

*In May 2018, Union Government announced that a separate unit will be created in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for investigating "important" cases of Left Wing Extremism.*

### About:

- The move comes in the aftermath of reports of Maoist leaders having amassed huge assets in property and cash.
- The government has also set up a multi-disciplinary group to choke funding sources of Maoists and to seize assets of their leaders. It has representatives from the IB, ED, NIA, CBDT, CBI, State intelligence departments and CID.

## INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)

*In May 2018, Union Government decided to boost the manpower and infrastructure of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) by creating nine new battalions, a strategic sector headquarters on the front and 47 new border outposts along the China border over the next few years.*

### About:

- ITBP is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of India.
- It was raised in 1962, in the wake of the Sino-Indian War of 1962 for deployment along India's border with China's Tibet Autonomous Region.
- Presently, ITBP is deployed on Border Guarding Duties from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh covering 3488 KM of India China Border.

## ASSAM RIFLES

*In May 2018, Lieutenant-General Sukhdeep Sangwan took charge as the 20th Director-General of Assam Rifles.*

### About:

- The Assam Rifles is the oldest paramilitary force of India.
  - It can trace its lineage back to a paramilitary police force formed in 1835 called Cachar Levy.
  - Since then it has undergone a number of name changes, finally becoming the Assam Rifles in 1917.
- Since 2002 it has been guarding the Indo-Myanmar barrier as per the government policy "one border one force".

## TEJAS

*In April 2018, Tejas successfully fired an Beyond visual range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM), demonstrating its overall capability as an effective combat jet, inching closer to a final operational clearance.*

### About:

- HAL Tejas is an Indian single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter. The aircraft has a tail-less compound delta-wing configuration, which provides for high maneuverability.
- It is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force and Navy.
- **Timeline:**
  - **Background:** It came from the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters. In 2003, the LCA was officially named "Tejas", which means "Radiant" in Sanskrit.
  - **Present status:** The Tejas Mark 1 is in production for the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the naval version is undergoing flight tests for Indian Navy (IN).

### Beyond-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)?

- It is an air-to-air missile that is capable of engaging at ranges of 37 km or beyond.
- This range has been achieved using dual pulse rocket motors or booster rocket motor and ramjet sustainer motor.
- In addition to the range capability, the missile must also be capable of tracking its target at this range or of acquiring the target in flight. Systems in which a mid-course correction is transmitted to the missile have been used.

## JUDICIAL REVIEW

*In May 2018, the Supreme Court reinforced its authority to judicially review government policies and parliamentary laws.*

### About:

- The judgment from a five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra comes in the background of constant attacks aimed at the Supreme Court for judicial activism, interference in governmental actions and even its quashing of the NJAC law.
- Excerpts from the Judgement:**
  - Principle of 'separation of powers' does not mean mere division of labour among the three branches.
  - Judiciary has no power of the "sword or the purse," but it has the power to ensure that both the government and Parliament function within their limits.

## HATE SPEECH

*An Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report released in April 2018 has found 58 sitting MPs and MLAs had declared cases relating to 'hate Speech' in their poll affidavits.*

*In the absence of legal definition for 'Hate Speech', ADR goes by a 2017 law commission report that identified certain offences as such.*

### About:

- Law Commission of India submitted its 267th report on Hate Speech in March 2017, in which it drafted The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2017 by inserting new Sections in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) to deal with hate speech.
- New Sections:**
  - Insert Section 153C to penalise incitement to hatred.
  - Insert Section 505A to make 'causing fear, alarm, or provocation of violence in certain cases' a specific criminal offence.

## ONLINE NOMINATIONS FOR POLLS

*In May 2018, Calcutta High Court allowed Online Nominations for Polls.*

### About:

- The Calcutta High Court directed the State Election Commission (SEC) to accept the nomination of all candidates who submitted their papers electronically for the West Bengal panchayat polls.
- The historic order follows the widespread violence witnessed in West Bengal during filing of nominations for rural elections.

## IDENTITY POLITICS: AHINDA

*AHINDAs were the key focus of Karnataka Chief Ministers' Siddaramaiah election campaigning in the Karnataka state assembly elections, 2018.*

### About:

- AHINDA is an acronym for Alpasankyataru (minorities), Hindulidavaru (Backward Classes) and Dalitaru (Dalits).
- Numerically, AHINDA voters comprise at least 40% of the electorate in Karnataka.
- According to political commenters, the social engineering experiment of getting support of AHINDAs in elections has remained the cornerstone of former CM Siddaramaiah.
- It propelled him to power in 2013, however in the 2018 elections it did not yield much political benefit.

## ELECTORAL BONDS

*According to information received under RTI in May 2018, there are not many takers for small electoral bonds.*

### NOT MANY TAKERS FOR SMALLER ELECTORAL BONDS

An electoral bond is a financial instrument that can be purchased by any individual or body. This can then be donated to a political party of the buyer's choice. A look at the state of electoral bonds that were bought from March to April this year.



### ₹10 lakh bonds favoured

Denomination	% of total bonds	% of total amount
1,000	2.11%	0.0005%
10,000	0.00%	0.00%
1 lakh	1.29%	0.03%
10 lakh	59.02%	13.59%
1 crore	37.50%	86.38%

### 6 centres

Not a single bond was bought in Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Assam from March to April

## MPLADS

*In May 2018, the parliamentary panel on Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) funds recommended time-bound release of MPLADS funds.*

### About:

- The panel observed that funds allocated for the purpose by the Member of Parliament (MPs) often reach the affected people after six months to over a year because of red tape.
- Thus it has recommended that amounts donated by lawmakers for rehabilitation work after natural disasters be disbursed within two weeks.

### Do You Know?

- An MP gets ₹ 5 crore a year to spend on local area development.
- MP were allowed to spend the money outside their constituency and their State in case of Rajya Sabha MPs — after the 1999 super cyclone in Odisha.

## ARVIND VIRMANI ADVISORY COUNCIL

*In May 2018, Fifteenth Finance Commission constituted an Advisory Council.*

### About:

- Objective:** To advise the Commission on the matters related to its terms of reference.
- Key members of the Advisory Council:**
  - Arvind Virmani, former chief economic advisor in the finance ministry.
  - Surjit S Bhalla, part-time member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

## LOKPAL SELECTION COMMITTEE

*In May 2018, Former Attorney-General Mukul Rohatgi was appointed as the "eminent jurist" in the Lokpal selection committee.*

### About:

- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013, allows for setting up of anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level.
- Composition:** The Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members.

### Selection committee:

- Members of Lokpal will be appointed by a five-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India and an eminent jurist nominated by the President.
- The act has not been implemented all these years because there was no Leader of the Opposition in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. However, in 2017, Supreme Court, in a judgment, clarified that the Lokpal appointment process need not be stalled merely due to the absence of the Leader of the Opposition.

## TENSION BETWEEN IAS, IPS OFFICERS IN U.P

*In May 2018, State Home Department in U.P made it mandatory for all Superintendents of Police (SP) to take approval of District Magistrates (DMs) for posting of SHOs.*

### About:

- This has led to a sharp reaction from IPS officers who alleged that:
  - The Order is in conflict with law laid down by Hon'ble Supreme Court and High Court.
  - It is an attempt to undermine their authority.
  - It displays distrust in the police leadership and will demoralise SPs.
- A similar situation had taken place last year when Chief Secretary Rajiv Kumar had issued a letter, directing District Magistrates to chair all law and order meetings in their respective districts.

## INDIAN PETROLEUM & EXPLOSIVES SAFETY SERVICE (IPESS)

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the Cadre review and formation of Group 'A' service of the technical cadre of Petroleum & Safety Organization (PESO) in the name of Indian Petroleum & Explosives Safety Service (IPESS).*

### About:

- PESO is a subordinate office under Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP).
- The organization is serving the nation since 1898 as a nodal agency for regulating safety of substances such as explosives, compressed gases and petroleum.
- The creation of IPESS will enhance the capacity and efficiency of the organization and it will also enhance career progression of its Group 'A' officers.



## DISPUTE RESOLUTION

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a new mechanism to resolve commercial dispute resolution between central public sector enterprises (CPSEs).*

### About:

- A new two-tier mechanism will be put in place of the existing permanent machinery of arbitration (PMA) mechanism.
- At the First tier, such commercial disputes will be referred to a Committee comprising of Secretaries of the administrative Ministries/Departments to which the disputing CPSEs/Parties belong.
- At the Second level (tier), in case the dispute remains unresolved, the same will be referred to the Cabinet Secretary, whose decision will be final and binding on all concerned.

## CHIP IN FOR VIEWERSHIP DATA

*In April 2018, the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry proposed the installation of a chip in new television set-top boxes to collect data on channels watched, with duration.*

### Arguments in Favour:

- To get "more authentic" viewership figures for every channel.
- To help advertisers and the DAVP to spend their advertising expenditure wisely. It is because, only those channels which are widely watched will get promoted.
- To end the monopoly of the Broadcast Audience Research Council India (BARC), which measures the television audience preferences in the country.

### Do You Know?

- Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP)** is the nodal agency of the government for advertising by various Ministries and its organisations.
- Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)** – an industry body jointly owned by advertisers, advertisement agencies, and broadcasting companies – currently measures television viewership in the country, using television rating points, or TRPs.

## PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (PIB)

*In May 2018, Sitanshu Ranjan Kar, a 1983 batch officer of Indian Information Service, took over as the 27th Principal Spokesperson of the Government of India and Director General of Press Information Bureau (PIB).*

### About:

- PIB is a nodal agency of the Government of India to disseminate information to the print, electronic and new media on government plans, policies, programme initiatives and achievements.
- HQ: New Delhi.
- Established in: 1919.

## DRAFT CAUVERY WATER MANAGEMENT SCHEME

*In May 2018, centre submitted the 'Draft Cauvery Water Management Scheme' in supreme court.*

### About:

- Any decisions taken by the implementing authority under the proposed Cauvery Water Management Scheme, 2018 will be final.
- But when the riparian States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala or the Union Territory (UT) of Puducherry do "not cooperate", the authority would turn to the Centre for help.
- In that situation, the decision of the Centre will be final and binding on all parties concerned.

Proposed authority to have 10 members, of whom 6 will be from the Centre

Reservoirs to be operated by States concerned in an integrated manner under the authority's overall guidance

Authority to be assisted by Cauvery Water Regulation Committee

Distress to be shared by States after authority determines the conditions

Regulation Committee to meet once in 10 days in June and October and at least once a fortnight after the advent of monsoon

Authority's headquarters to be located in Bengaluru

Decisions will be based on a majority of the members

## DELHI SEALING DRIVE

*In May 2018, the Supreme Court allowed Centre to amend the Master Plan 2021, thus bringing relief to all those facing the sealing drive in Delhi on illegal constructions and businesses running from residential premises.*

### Proposed Amendments:

- Uniform floor area ratio (FAR) for residential and commercial plots.
- Basements can be used for commercial or professional activities in shop-cum-residential plots.
- Other service professionals like real estate agents are also permitted to use basements for commercial purpose.

## HEALTH

## INDIAN GUIDELINES FOR DIABETES MANAGEMENT

*In May 2018, Union Minister Jitendra Singh released 'Indian Guidelines for Management of Diabetes Mellitus'.*

## About:

- The guidelines have been prepared by 'Research Society for Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI)', a body registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- With more than 70% of India's population below the age of 40 years, management of Diabetes Mellitus, has become a national priority.

## NIPAH VIRUS

*In May 2018, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) declared "third major outbreak" of the Nipah virus infection in the country, as at least four people died of the zoonotic disease since May 5 in Kerala's district.*

NIPAH VIRUS (NIV) INFECTION IS A NEWLY EMERGING ZOOONOSIS THAT CAUSES SEVERE DISEASE IN BOTH ANIMALS AND HUMANS



NIV first identified in 1998 during an outbreak in Malaysia



Fruit bats are natural hosts of Niv

## PREVIOUS OUTBREAKS IN INDIA

Jan-Feb, 2001 Siliguri (WB)

Cases: 66

Deaths: 45

68%

April, 2007 Nadia (WB)

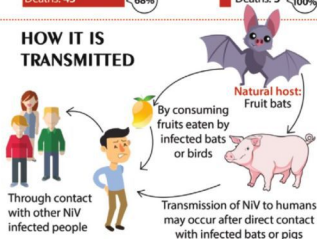
Cases: 5

Deaths: 5

Fertility rate

<100%

## HOW IT IS TRANSMITTED



### Killer Virus

A look at the Nipah virus that has claimed four lives in Kerala and has set off a public health scare

- Nipah virus (NIV) is a paramyxovirus that was first identified after an outbreak that occurred in Malaysia in 1998
- As part of that outbreak, 265 human cases were identified in Malaysia
- Primary mode of NIV transmission is human consumption of bat-contaminated fruits, and subsequently, person-to-person transmission. The natural host of the virus are fruit bats
- Pigs were the intermediate hosts in the outbreaks in Malaysia and Singapore, while in Bangladesh, human were infected as a result of consuming date palm sap that had been contaminated by infected fruit bats
- Both animal-to-human and human-to-human transmission has been documented
- From 1998 to 2015, more than 600 cases of Nipah virus human infections were reported
- Outbreaks include those in Bangladesh and eastern India
- Human-to-human transmission is particularly notable in the outbreaks in India and Bangladesh

### Diagnosis

- In the early stages of the disease, virus isolation and real time polymerase chain reaction test (RT-PCR) from throat and nasal swabs, cerebrospinal fluid, urine, and blood samples

- Antibody detection by ELISA (IgG and IgM) can be used later on

### Preventive Measures

- Wash, peel and cook fruits before eating them
- Handwashing at home in order to break the primary infection and transmission of the disease
- Quarantine of those infected has been suggested as it can be highly contagious

### Treatment

As of now, supportive measures for the patients No vaccine exists

### SYMPTOMS

Fever | Headache | Vomiting | Dizziness | Altered consciousness-total or partial | Coma  
Disorientation/hallucination | Seizures | Respiratory Distress | Cough/Cold

## REPLACE: TRANS FAT

*In May 2018, World Health Organization (WHO) released 'REPLACE', a step-by-step guide for the elimination of industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the global food supply by 2023.*

### Trans Fat:

- Trans fat, or trans-unsaturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, are a type of unsaturated fat.
- **Types:** There are two broad types of trans fats found in foods:
  - **Naturally-occurring:** They occur in small amount in Nature. These are produced in the gut of some animals. Foods made from these animals (e.g., milk and meat products) may contain small quantities of these fats.
  - **Artificial:** These are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid. These are contained in hardened vegetable fats such as margarine and ghee, and are often present in snack, baked, and fried foods.
- **Why do some companies use trans fats?** Trans fats are easy to use, inexpensive to produce and last a long time.
- **Impact on health:**
  - Trans fats not only raises one's bad (LDL) cholesterol levels but also lowers good (HDL) cholesterol levels. Thus it increases risk of developing heart disease and stroke.
  - It's also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
  - According to WHO estimates, every year, trans fat intake leads to over 5,00,000 deaths worldwide from cardiovascular diseases.
- **Global scenario:**
  - Denmark was the first country to mandate restrictions on industrially-produced trans fats in food products which led to quick decline in cardiovascular disease deaths.
  - Several high-income countries followed soon.
- **Indian scenario:**
  - According to WHO, trans fats should be limited to less than 1% of food energy, which it equates to a maximum of 2.2g of trans fats in a diet of 2,000 calories a day.
  - However, Vanaspati — used commonly in Indian households, restaurants and by road side vendors in India, contains 30-40% trans fats.

### Replace:

In May 2018, WHO released REPLACE which provides six strategic actions to ensure the quick and complete elimination of industrially-produced trans fats from the food supply by 2023. Its key components are:

1. Review dietary sources of industrially-produced trans fats and the landscape for required policy change.

2. Promote the replacement of industrially-produced trans fats with healthier fats and oils.
3. Legislate or enact regulatory actions to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats.
4. Assess and monitor trans fats content in the food supply and changes in trans-fat consumption in the population.
5. Create awareness of the negative health impact of trans fats among policy makers, producers, suppliers, and the public.
6. Enforce compliance of policies and regulations.

## POSHAN ABHIYAAN

*In May 2018, the Government of India signed a loan deal worth \$ 200 million with the World Bank for the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) for 315 districts across all states/UTs.*

### About:

- **Timeline:**
  - The POSHAN (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) Abhiyaan was launched by the Prime Minister in March 2018 at Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
  - It will be implemented in three phases between 2017 and 2020 across all districts of the country.
- **Objective:** It aims at reaching 10 crore beneficiaries, mainly children upto the age of six years, pregnant women and lactating mothers and adolescent girls.
- **Targeted reductions:**
  - A 2% reduction in both under-nutrition and low birth weight per annum.
  - Bring down anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls by 3% per year until 2020.
  - Reduce the prevalence of stunting from the current level of 38.4% (as per the National Family Health Survey 4) to 25% by 2022.
- **Funding:**
  - It has an approved budget of ₹ 9,046 crores. The total contribution of the Centre will be ₹ 2,849 crores and ₹ 1,700 crores will be contributed by the States.
  - The remaining will be funded through the government's tie-up with multilateral agencies such as the World Bank.

## AIIMS DEOGHAR

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) beyond 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for a period 2017-18 to 2019-20.*

**Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY):**

- **Objective:** Creation of tertiary healthcare capacity in medical education, research and clinical care, in the underserved areas of the country to correct regional imbalances.
- **Components of PMSSY:**
  - Setting up of new AIIMS like institutes in underserved regions of the country.
  - Upgradation of existing Govt. Medical Colleges (GMCs).
- **Origin:** The scheme was approved in 2006.
- **Present status:**
  - **Established:** Under the PMSSY, AIIMS have been established in Bhubaneswar, Bhopal, Raipur, Jodhpur, Rishikesh and Patna.
  - **Work in progress:** Work of AIIMS Rae Bareilly (U.P.), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Kalyani (West Bengal), Mangalagiri in Guntur (A.P.) and Gorakhpur (U.P.) is in progress.
  - **Approved:** Further, following AIIMS have also been sanctioned:
    1. Bathinda, Punjab in July 2016.
    2. Guwahati (Assam), May 2017.
    3. Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh) in January 2018.

**About:**

- As approved by the Commission, the word 'Ayush' will have the meaning "Traditional and Non-Conventional Systems of Health Care and Healing which include complementary systems of medicine namely Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, Homoeopathy etc.
- **Significance:**
  - This decision will give a boost to India's efforts to find a place for the Indian Systems of Healthcare in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) of the World Health Organization (WHO).
  - The Indian systems finding a place in ICD will lead to their international acceptance and increased research in them.

### Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT)?

- CSTT was set up in 1960 by a resolution of Government of India under Article 344(4) of the Constitution of India.
- It evolves and defines scientific and technical terms in Hindi and all Indian languages.

**WHO FCTC**

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved accession to the protocol under World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products.*

**About:**

- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international public health treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO.
- The objective of FCTC is to provide a framework for **supply and demand reduction measures** for tobacco control at the national, regional and global levels. It is applicable to both smoking and chewing or smokeless tobacco (SLT) forms.
- One of the key tobacco supply reduction strategies contained in Article 15 of WHO FCTC envisages elimination of all forms of illicit trade and tobacco products, including smuggling, illicit manufacturing and counterfeiting.

**AYUSH**

*In May 2018, The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) adopted the word 'AYUSH' in Hindi and English languages for scientific and technical purposes.*

**LEPTOSPIROSIS**

*In May 2018, it was reported that researchers, from Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre, Gandhinagar have successfully identified a peptide that can be used to develop a new preventive vaccine against leptospirosis.*

**About:**

- Leptospirosis is an emerging tropical infectious disease, and currently there is no preventive vaccine for humans that is available in the market.
- According to a paper published in 2015, leptospirosis causes almost 60,000 deaths every year, globally. The bacteria can be transmitted via exposure to contaminated water or soil or direct contact with reservoirs hosts like wild or domestic animals.

**NIDAAN**

*In May 2018, Rajasthan launched 'Nidaan' software for disease monitoring.*

**About:**

- A new software, 'Nidaan', has been launched in Rajasthan for presumptive diagnosis and monitoring of seasonal and non-communicable diseases as well as the trends of ailments found in specific areas.
- It is expected to help in formulation of specific action plans for control of diseases.

## EDUCATION

### UNNAT BHARAT ABHIYAN 2.0

*In April 2018, Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) launched Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 i.e. the second stage of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan.*

#### About:

- **Parent ministry:** Ministry of Human Resources Development (HRD).
- **Objectives:** To leverage the knowledge base of the Premier Institutions of the country to bring in transformational change in the rural developmental process.
- **Working:**
  - Under this each selected institute would adopt a cluster of villages/panchayats.
  - Institutes through their faculty and students, will carry out studies of living conditions in the adopted villages to assess the local problems and would work out the possibilities of leveraging the technological interventions to improve the implementation of various government schemes.

#### Salient Features of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0:

- Institutions have been selected in a Challenge Mode.
- The scheme has been extended to 750 reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country.
- The scope for providing Subject Expert Groups and Regional Coordinating Institutes to guide the participating institutions have been strengthened.
- IIT Delhi has been designated as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme.

### SWAYAM

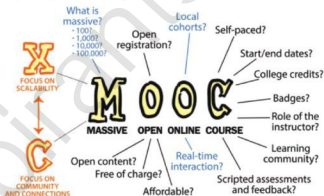
*In May 2018, Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) notified 75 National Resource Centres (NRCs) to prepare online training material for professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM.*

#### About:

- SWAYAM stands for Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds.
- **Objective:** It is a programme initiated by Government of India with the objective of taking the best teaching learning resources to all, thereby bridging the digital divide for students.

#### Content:

- It would be ultimately capable of hosting 2000 courses and 80000 hours of learning: covering school, under-graduate, post-graduate, engineering, law and other professional courses.
- The courses hosted on SWAYAM are in 4 quadrants (1) video lecture, (2) specially prepared reading material that can be downloaded/printed, (3) self-assessment tests through tests and quizzes and (4) an online discussion forum for clearing the doubts.
- **Bodies involved:** SWAYAM platform is indigenously developed by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) with the help of Microsoft.



### CLASSX CERTIFICATES FOR GURUKUL STUDENTS

*In May 2018, Union Government announced that students who have studied at 'gurukuls' and 'Veda pathshalas' will soon be eligible for Class 10 and Class 12 certificates.*

#### About:

- The scheme is National Curriculum Framework-compliant and is part of an initiative to promote "Indian Knowledge Tradition" courses.
- The move will make them eligible to apply for jobs that have a Class 12 qualification.

#### Working of Scheme:

- Any student who is 15 years of age and self-certifies that he can read and write Sanskrit is eligible to apply for Class 10 certification with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), which is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).
- The student will be assigned a 'gurukul' (those having Sanskrit teachers, classrooms and other basic infrastructure) nearby to be able to attend classes.

- **The students will have to pass five subjects:** Veda adhyayana (Vedic learning), Bharatiya darshan (Indian thought), Sanskrit vyakarana (Sanskrit grammar), Sanskrit sahitya (Sanskrit grammar) and Sanskrit language.
- If the students achieve passing mark (33%) in the exams conducted by the NIOS, they will be eligible for the certificate.

## WOMEN

### NAVIKA SAGAR PARIKRAMA

*In May 2018, Indian Navy's all-women crew of INSV Tarini completed the Navika Sagar Parikrama.*

#### About:

- Navika Sagar Parikrama was a project under which Women Officers of Indian Navy would circumnavigate the Globe on an Indian-Built Sail Boat INSV Tarini.
- The crew was led by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi.
- This was the first ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew.
- **The project had twin objectives:**
  - Promoting Ocean Sailing activities in the Navy.
  - Depicting Government of India's thrust for 'Nari Shakti'.

#### INSV Tarini:

- Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini (INSV Tarini) is the second sailboat of the Indian Navy (first being INSV Mahadevi) named after Tara-Tarini temple of Odisha.
- She was constructed at **Aquarius Shipyard located in Divar, Goa** and was commissioned to Indian Navy service in **February 2017**.

#### Do You Know?

During the course of her voyage, the vessel has met all criteria of circumnavigation, viz.

- crossing the Equator twice,
- crossing all Longitudes,
- crossing the three great capes (Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape of Good Hope).

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*In May 2018, the Supreme Court stated that the Domestic Violence Act, 2005 — meant to punish men who abuse women in a relationship — extends to all man-woman relationships.*

#### About:

- Supreme court confirmed a Rajasthan High Court ruling of 2013 that the term 'domestic violence' cannot be restrained to marital relations alone.
- Rather it extends to all 'Domestic Relationship' including "consanguinity, marriage, a relationship in the nature of marriage, adoption or as family members living together as a joint family".
- It also held that it also protects divorced women from their former husbands.

### ONE STOP CENTRES (OSCs)

*In May 2018, Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) approved 100 additional One stop centres (OSCs) in the States of Haryana, HP, UP, MP, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha and Tamil Nadu.*

#### About:

- **Present status:** Since April, 2015, The WCD Ministry has set up 182 One Stop Centres (OSCs) till date which have assisted 1.3 lakhs women affected by violence.
- **Objective:** The purpose of these OSCs is to facilitate integrated services for women affected with violence such as police assistance, medical aid, psycho-social counselling, legal aid/counselling, temporary stay for 5 days etc. under one roof.
- **Women's Helpline:** Every OSC is integrated to the Women's Helpline (181) of the Ministry that was started in 2015 which has now become operational in 30 States/UTs.
- **Funding:** The initiative is funded through Nirbhaya Fund. The Central Government will provide 100% financial assistance to the State Government/Union Territories Administrations under the Scheme.

### UNDER FIVE FEMALE MORTALITY

*In May 2018, a study was published in journal Lancet Global Health on Under 5 Female Mortality in India.*

#### Key Findings:

- More than 90% of the districts in India had excess Under 5 female Mortality rate mainly due to gender bias.
- U.P., Bihar, Rajasthan and M.P. accounted for two-thirds of the total female deaths.
- Low economic development, gender inequality and high fertility were the main predictors of excess female mortality.



## MINORITIES

### PRADHAN MANTRI JAN VIKAS KARYAKRAM (PMJVK)

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the proposal for renaming, restructuring and continuation of Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) as Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK).*

#### About:

- **Background:** Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)
- **Objective:** MsDP was launched in the year 2008-09 by Ministry of Minority Affairs to address development deficits in the identified minority concentration areas.
- **Strategy:**
  - Better implementation of existing Centrally Sponsored Schemes of various Central ministries/departments.
  - Taking up innovative projects which are not covered by any of the existing CSS.
- **Comment:** Although MsDP has made substantial progress, however, the development deficit identified in the selected areas has not been fully addressed. In this background MsDP has been restructured as PMJVK.

#### Key Changes:

- **Criteria for identification of Minority Concentration Towns (MCTs):**
  - Earlier only those Towns which were found backward in terms of both in Basic Amenities and Socio-economic parameters were taken up as MCTs.
  - Now, the Towns which were found backward in either or both of the criteria have been taken up as MCT.
- **Criteria for Clusters of Villages:**
  - Earlier only those Cluster of Villages which were having at least 50% population of Minority Community were taken.
  - Now the population criteria has been lowered to 25%.
- **Coverage:**
  - The MsDP covered 196 district of the country. Now, PMJVK will cover 308 districts of the country.
  - As compared to MsDP, the PMJVK would now cover five more States/UTs namely Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Goa and Pondicherry.
- **Special focus by earmarking funds:**
  - 80% of the resources under the PMJVK would be earmarked for projects related to education, health and skill development.
  - 33 to 40% of resources under the PMJVK would be specifically allocated for women centric projects.

## MODERNIZATION OF MADRASAS

*In May 2018, Uttar Pradesh government amended the Uttar Pradesh non-government Arabic-Persian madrasas (recognition, administration and service rules-2016).*

#### About:

- **Key amendments:**
  - Along with Urdu, madrasas in U.P will now also be required to teach students in English and Hindi.
  - Madrasas will have to follow the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) syllabus and the books prescribed under it.
- **Significance:** The decision would "improve the quality of education" and also bring "madrasa students into the mainstream".
- The decision will come into effect from the 2018-19 academic session.

## TRIBES

### VAN DHAN VIKAS KENDRAS

*In May 2018, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Government of India proposed to expand Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in Tribal Districts across the country.*

#### Objective:

- The initiative aims to promote Minor Forest Produce (MFPs)-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.
- Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.

#### Structure:

- **Van Dhan Vikas 'Samuh':**
  - At unit level, SHGs having about 30 members each would form Van Dhan Vikas 'Samuh'.
  - It would undertake aggregation of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) as well as primary value addition of the MFPs such as cutting, drying and packaging.
- **Van Dhan Vikas 'Kendra':**
  - A cluster of ten such SHGs within the same village shall form a Van Dhan Vikas Kendra.
  - These would be provided common infrastructure facilities (Pucca Kendra) in terms of building, warehouse, etc. for use of the Samuh members.

**Implementing Bodies:**

- The scheme will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal 'Department' at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal 'Agency' at the National Level.

**Timeline:**

- Earlier in April 2018, PM Modi launched the Van Dhan Vikas Kendra at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh.
- To begin with, this initiative is proposed to be taken up on priority in the 39 Districts with more than 50% tribal population and to then gradually be expanded to other Tribal Districts in India.

**Initiatives w.r.t. MFP?****MFPs**

- Minor Forest Produce (MFP) or what may be more aptly referred to as Non Timber Forest Produces (NTFPs) are the primary source of income and livelihood for about 5 crore tribal people in the country.

**Past initiatives:**

- In the past, the Government of India has brought in certain reforms in the sector through Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 which conferred ownership rights on tribal Gram Sabhas in respect of MFP found in their area.
- In 2014, the Scheme of MSP for MFP was introduced which provides minimum support price to MFP gatherers for selected MFPs.

**Comment:**

- While the steps are in right direction, however, most of the trade related to the MFPs is unorganized in nature, which has led to low returns to the gatherers and high wastages due to limited value addition.
- Thus, a more holistic approach with robust institutional mechanisms is required for strengthening the backward and forward linkages of MFP supply chain and particularly for mainstreaming the tribal community.
- In this background, the initiative of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras has been launched.

**SCHEDULED AREAS**

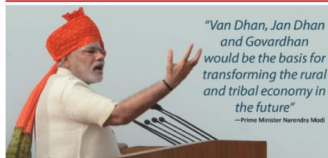
*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the declaration of Scheduled Areas in respect of Rajasthan under Fifth Schedule to the Constitution.*

**Beneficiaries:**

- By this, the Scheduled Tribes residing in Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, and partial areas of Udaipur, Rajasamand, Chittorgarh, Pali and Sirohi districts of Rajasthan will get benefits of protective measures available under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution of India.

**Background:**

- Meaning:** As per paragraph 6(1) of the Fifth Schedule (Article 244(1)) to the Constitution, the expression 'Scheduled Areas' means 'such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas'.
- The Scheduled Areas were first notified in the year 1950.
- Criteria for declaring an area as a Scheduled Area: The First Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, also known as the Dhebar Commission (1960-61) laid down the following criteria for declaring any area as a 'Scheduled Area' under the Fifth Schedule:
  - Preponderance of tribal population, which should not be less than 50 percent;
  - Compactness and reasonable size of the area;
  - Underdeveloped nature of the area;
  - Marked disparity in the economic standard of the people as compared to the neighboring areas; and
  - a viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk.
- Power of President:** As per paragraph 6(2), any kind of alteration of boundaries of a Scheduled Area, whether it is increase, decrease, cessation, or declaration, is only permitted by an order of the President of India.
  - The President is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers at the Centre.
  - In certain situations, consultation with the Governor is necessary.
- Role of the Governor:**
  - Governor has been vested with enormous powers under the Fifth Schedule.
  - Unlike president, Governor, while exercising his powers under the Fifth Schedule, is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- Role of the Tribes Advisory Council:**
  - Paragraph 4 of the Fifth Schedule requires the constitution of a Tribes Advisory Council (or 'TAC') in each State which has a Scheduled Area.



- The main function of the TAC is to provide advice to the Governor, when he seeks it, on matters relating to "welfare and advancement of Scheduled Tribes" in the State. Thus, the TAC does not render advice to the Governor suo motu.

## CASTE

### 'SC', 'ST' BRANDING IN MP?

*In April 2018, Madhya Pradesh government ordered a probe after photographs of newly recruited police constables with 'SC', 'ST' and 'OBC' markings on their chests during their medical examination surfaced in the media in Dhar, triggering outrage. Sources said the male candidates were marked to identify them for relaxation in selection norms.*



### SC AND ST (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT OF 1989

*In May 2018, Supreme Court clarified its ruling on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989.*

#### About:

- The Supreme Court clarified that in its March 20 judgment, it had never intended, to make the enquiry before arrest a mandatory condition in each and every complaint filed by Dalits under the Prevention of Atrocities Act.
- The police need to conduct a preliminary enquiry before arrest only in cases where they feel a complaint filed about an atrocity committed on Dalits is outright "absurd" or "absolutely" frivolous.
- Background:** The judgment, which banned immediate arrest of a person accused of atrocities against SC/ST community members, had led to widespread unrest and violence.

## SANITATION

### SWACHH BHARAT SUMMER INTERNSHIP

*In April 2018, Union Government announced the launch of Swachh Bharat Summer Internship.*

#### About:

- Background:** This follows the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call on October 2, 2014 for each individual to devote at least 100 hours to Swachhata through the year.
- Objective:** To develop the skill and orientation of Youth for sanitation related work and village level development.
- Internship duration:** At least 100 hours (between 1st May to 31st July 2018) of Swachata related activities in rural areas.
- Activities:** The activities that participants may conduct have been categorized into three clusters:

<b>Information-Education-Communication activities</b>	Nukkad Natak/Street Plays; Swachhata Melas; Conducting Village or School-level Rallies; Wall Paintings on public walls and government buildings (Panchayat Ghar)
<b>Solid Waste Management related activities</b>	Waste Collection Drives; Help Panchayats draw up plans for installation of biogas plants wherever possible/required; Transportation of Household waste (to appropriate disposal site)
<b>Toilet Construction</b>	Helping in construction of toilets

- Eligibility:** Besides students from college & Universities, youth from Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) can also register.
- Rewards and Recognition:**
  - On completion of internship, students would be given a Swachh Bharat certificate.
  - Two curriculum credits will be given to interns whose internship reports are found eligible to get credits by parent institution.
  - Additionally, top performers would receive awards and cash prize at the College/University, State and National Level.
- Bodies involved:**
  - It was launched by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in association with Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS).
  - Nodal officers at college level will coordinate the implementation of the internship.

## SWACHHATA ACTION PLAN

*In May 2018, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation informed that the Swachhata Action Plan had seen its budget drop by more than ₹1,500 crore in its second year.*

### About:

- The Swachhata Action Plan is a programme to integrate 'swachhata' or 'cleanliness' activities into all Central Ministries and departments.
- The programme, launched in April 2017, was originally intended to be a two-year programme.

## Persons with Disability (PwDs)

## ARTIFICIAL LIMBS MANUFACTURING CORPORATION OF INDIA (ALIMCO)

*In May 2018, ALIMCO signed a MoU with Aravalli Power Company Pvt. Ltd (APCPL), Jhajjar for distribution of Assistive Devices to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) at Charkhi Dadri District of Haryana under the CSR initiative of APCPL.*

### About:

- Administration:** ALIMCO is a 'Not for Profit' Central Public Sector Undertaking (PSU). It functions under the administrative control of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.
- Objective:** Manufacturing various types of aids and appliances on mass scale to meet the requirements of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- HQ:** Kanpur.
- Established in:** 1972.

## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH REHABILITATION (NIMHR)

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved the establishment of National Institute of Mental Health Rehabilitation (NIMHR) at Bhopal.*

### About:

- NIMHR, Bhopal will be established as a Society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 under the aegis of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
- It will be the first of its kind in the country in the area of mental health rehabilitation.

### Its key objectives are:

- To provide rehabilitation services to the persons with mental illness,
- capacity development in the area of mental health rehabilitation,
- policy framing and
- advanced research in mental health rehabilitation.

## LGBT RIGHTS

### SECTION 377

*In May 2018, Supreme Court (SC) admitted a petition to scrap Section 377 of the IPC, which criminalises homosexuality.*

*Earlier, in January 2018, SC referred to a larger Bench a writ petition filed by members of LGBT community to strike down Section 377.*

### About:

- Section 377 of IPC criminalizes "carnal intercourse against the order of nature". Carnal means relating to physical, especially sexual, needs and activities.
- It criminalizes all forms of sexual activity other than heterosexual penile-vaginal intercourse which includes Child abuse, Bestiality and Sex among Homosexuals.
- Person convicted under this section can be imprisoned for 10 years and even for life.
- Battle for its removal:**
  - The section was decriminalized with respect to sex between consenting adults by the High Court of Delhi on July 2009.
  - That judgement was overturned by the Supreme Court of India on 11 December 2013 with the Court holding that amending or repealing Section 377 should be a matter left to Parliament, not the judiciary.

## TRANSGENDER

*In May 2018, Kerala witnessed the first transsexual wedding.*

### About:

- While Ms. Surya had a sex reassignment surgery four years ago, Mr. Ishaan underwent the procedure two years ago to assert his identity as a trans man.
- Their marriage was solemnised and registered under the Special Marriage Act.

## OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES

### CYBERBULLYING

*In May 2018, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), for the first time, issued guidelines on cyberbullying.*

#### About:

- Issued in three parts, the guidelines are directed at schools, students and teachers.
- It asks students to
  - not bully others online by teasing, threatening, using rude or offensive language, making derogatory or hateful comments.
  - report online bullying immediately to teachers, parents or someone they trust.
- It also asks teachers to regularly review browsing history on the devices being used by children and monitor device usage by students.
- Schools should consider contracting third-party vendors for cyber security, make sure the computers on campus have licensed software, and password-protect school Wi-Fi.

### PRADHAN MANTRI VAYA VANDAN YOJANA (PMVVY)

*In May 2018, Union Cabinet approved doubling of investment limit for senior citizens from Rs. 7.5 lakh to Rs.15 lakh as well as extension of time limits for subscription from 4th May 2018 to 31st March, 2020 under PMVVY.*

#### About:

- Objective:** PMVVY aims to provide social security during old age and protect elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.
- Implementing agency:** Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).
- Detail:**
  - The scheme provides an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum for ten years, with an option to opt for pension on a monthly/quarterly/half yearly and annual basis.
  - The differential return, i.e. the difference between the return generated by LIC and the assured return of 8% per annum would be borne by Government of India as subsidy on an annual basis.

### WOMEN SC JUDGES

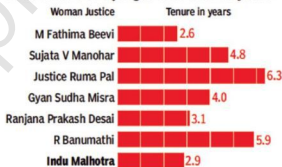
*Indu Malhotra was recently, appointed as Supreme Court Judge*

## WOMEN SC JUDGES FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

India lags other major countries in terms of women's representation in the top judiciary. Only 7 women have made it to the Supreme Court as judge in 70 years of Independence



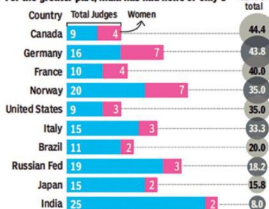
### Total tenure of 7 judges less than 30 years



It's rare for two women to be SC judges at the same time. The tenures of Justices Banumathi & Malhotra will overlap for about 2 yrs. Justices Misra & Desai served together for about 2.5 years

### Women in top constitutional courts

**For the greater part, India has had none or only 1**



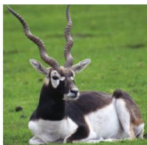
## ENVIRONMENT

## BLACKBUCK

*In April 2018, Bollywood actor Salman Khan was Given 5 Years' Jail by trial court for Shooting Blackbucks, a Schedule-I animal under the Wildlife Protection Act, at Kankani village in 1998.*

## About:

- **Nomenclature:** The blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*), also known as the Indian antelope.
- **Genus:** The blackbuck is the sole extant member of the genus *Antelope*.
- **Subspecies:** Two subspecies are recognized.
  - **A.C. Cervicapra:** Known as the south-eastern blackbuck. Occurs in southern, eastern and central India.
  - **A.C. Rajputanae Zukowsky:** Known as the north-western blackbuck. Occurs in north-western India.
- **Physical characteristics:**
  - The long, ringed horns, are generally present only on males, though females may develop horns as well.
  - The white fur on the chin and around the eyes is in sharp contrast with the black stripes on the face.
  - The coat of males shows two-tone colouration: while the upper parts and outsides of the legs are dark brown to black, the underparts and the insides of the legs are all white.
  - On the other hand, females and juveniles are yellowish fawn to tan.
- **Diet:** Herbivores.
- **Habitat and ecology:**
  - The species inhabits open grassland, dry thorn scrub, scrubland and lightly-wooded country as well as agricultural margins, where it is often seen feeding in fields.
  - Blackbuck require water daily, which restricts their distribution to areas where surface water is available for the greater part of the year.



- **Range Description (according to IUCN website):**
  - The Blackbuck formerly occurred across almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent south of the Himalaya. But they are now extinct in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
  - Blackbuck are still present in the terai zone of Nepal.
  - The species has been introduced to the United States of America (Texas) and Argentina.
- **Population:**
  - During the 20th century, blackbuck numbers declined sharply due to excessive hunting, deforestation and habitat degradation.
  - Nevertheless, populations in India have increased from 24,000 in the late 1970s to 50,000 in 2001.
- **Conservation:**
  - The blackbuck is listed under Appendix III of CITES.
  - In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- **Cultural significance:**
  - The blackbuck has significance in Hinduism. According to Hindu mythology, the blackbuck draws the chariot of Lord Krishna and is thus mentioned in Sanskrit texts as the Krishna mrig.
  - The blackbuck is routinely depicted in miniature paintings of the Mughal era (16th to 19th centuries) depicting royal hunts often using cheetahs.
  - Tribes such as the Bishnois (found in the Western Thar Desert and northern India) revere and care for most animals including the blackbuck.
- **State animal:** Blackbuck is the state animal of Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh.

## The Case

Night of Oct. 1-2, 1998 | Salman, along with Hum Saath Saath Hai' co-stars Saif Ali Khan, Sonali Bendre, Tabu & Neelam, hunts 2 blackbucks at Kankani village near Jodhpur.

Oct 2 | Bishnoi villagers register complaint against Salman, his co-stars and a local.

May 23, 2013 | Trial begins in Jodhpur (rural) CMC's court.

Apr 9, 2018 | Salman found guilty of poaching, sentenced to 5 yrs jail

## Salman's Jail Stints

Total time spent | 32 days

Oct 12-16, 1998 | Charge: Shooting 2 blackbucks at Kankani

Oct 7-24, 2002 | Charge: Rammed car into bakery in Mumbai, killing 1 and injuring 4 sleeping on footpath

April 10-13, 2006 | Charge: Killing a blackbuck at Mathania

August 26-30, 2007 | In connection with Mathania case

## What The Judge Said

CJM Dev Kumar Khatri referred to Salman's role model statue while explaining the tough sentence.

“Khan is a film star whose actions are followed by the common man and still he shot two innocent and mute blackbucks

—CJM Khatri



Salman at Jodhpur  
Cleared jail after the verdict

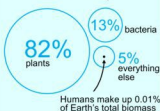


## BIOMASS DISTRIBUTION OF EARTH

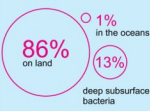
*In May 2018, a study on 'Biomass Distribution Of Earth' was published in the Journal PNAS.*

**The total biomass of the human race accounts for just 0.01% of the life on Earth**

All life on Earth is made up of ...



... and found in ...



### Biomass?

- The term "biomass" refers to organic matter which has stored energy through the process of photosynthesis.
- It exists in one form as plants and may be transferred through the food chain to animals' bodies and their wastes, all of which can be converted for everyday human use through processes such as combustion, which releases the carbon dioxide stored in the plant material.

## FAUNAL DIVERSITY OF INDIAN HIMALAYA

*In May 2018, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), published "Faunal Diversity of Indian Himalaya".*

### About:

- The Indian Himalayas, which constitute about 12% of the country's landmass, is home to about 30% of its fauna.
- The region covers 9.6% of the entire protected area of the country, almost the same as the Western Ghats (10% of protected areas).
- Fauna of the region exhibits an intermingling of both the Oriental (Indo-Chinese and Malayan sub-regions) and Mediterranean-Ethiopian elements.
- The central Himalayas are the richest in faunal diversity, followed by the west Himalayas.
- Threat:** Climate change is the major threat to Himalayan biodiversity. Other threats include Habitat loss due to land use change, illegal wildlife trade, forest fires and increasing anthropogenic activities.

## 2018 STATE OF THE WORLD'S BIRDS REPORT

*In April 2018, The 2018 State of the World's Birds report, which provides a comprehensive look at the health of bird populations globally was released by BirdLife International.*

### Key Findings:

- A number of well-known bird species are now at risk of extinction.
- 40% of the world's 11,000 bird species are in decline, and one in eight bird species is threatened with global extinction.
- One of the greatest of those threats, according to the report, is agriculture. The expansion of agriculture, as well as its intensification, impacts 1,091 (74 percent) of globally threatened birds.

### BirdLife International?

- It is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds and their habitats.
- It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
- It also designates Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).
- Formation:** 1922.
- HQ:** Cambridge, United Kingdom.

## BLACK WINDMILL BUTTERFLY

*In May 2018, Black windmill butterfly was photographed for the first time in history of India.*

### About:

- Byasa crassipes, the black windmill, is a butterfly found in India and Southeast Asia. It is being sighted for the first time in India since 1917.
- It is a black butterfly which is unmarked except for obscure red spots on the upper hindwing. The tail is red tipped below.
- It is listed under Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act (1972), which ensures the insects the same protection as that given to tigers.

## BENGAL FLORICAN

*According to a study published by Dehradun's Wildlife Institute of India in May 2018, Bengal florican – a grassland bird – not only resides in grasslands, but in agricultural fields too.*

**About:**

- **Name:** Its scientific name is *Houbaropsis bengalensis*. Commonly it is also called as Bengal bustard.
- **Genus:** It is a bustard species which is the only member of the genus *Houbaropsis*.
- **Habitat:** It is native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia and Vietnam.
- **Status:** It is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List because fewer than 1,500 individuals were estimated to be alive as of 2013.

**SATKOSIA TIGER RESERVE**

*In May 2018, it was announced that Six tigers will be relocated to the Satkosia Tiger Reserve (in Odisha) from Madhya Pradesh to revive tiger population in the protected forest.*

**About:**

- **Components:** Satkosia Tiger Reserve comprises of two adjoining Sanctuaries of central Odisha named as
  - Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary and
  - Baisipalli Sanctuary.
- **Establishment:** These two sanctuaries together covering an area of 963.87 sq.km. have been notified as Satkosia Tiger Reserve in 2007.
- **Location:**
  - It is located in the Angul district of Odisha where the Mahanadi River passes through a 22 km long gorge in the Eastern Ghats mountains.
  - The area is also a part of the Mahanadi elephant reserve.
- **Biodiversity:**
  - Satkosia is the meeting point of two bio-geographic regions of India; the Deccan Peninsula and the Eastern Ghats, contributing immense biodiversity.
  - The major plant communities are mixed deciduous forests including Sal and riverine forest.

**Do You Know?**

The name Satkosia originates from two words; sat meaning seven and kos meaning two miles, indicating the length of the gorge as 14 miles or 22 km.

**ROYAL BENGAL TIGER GENOME SEQUENCED**

*In May 2018, scientists of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CSIR-CCMB) carried out the first-ever genome sequencing of the Royal Bengal tiger.*

**Findings:**

- The genome data can be used for strengthening forensic evidence in tiger poaching cases. It will also help in precise understanding of tiger's evolutionary linkage.
- The researchers claim that this is the first report on the discovery of copy number variants and large structural variants in the genome of a wild, endangered species.
- This genome of Royal Bengal tiger was also compared with the genome of Amur or Siberian tiger. This will help in understanding of Genomic Changes and the species ability to adapt to discreet habitats".

**Royal Bengal Tiger?**

- **Scientific name:** *Panthera Tigris Tigris*.
- **Status:** Endangered.
- **Region:** It is found primarily in India with smaller populations in Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar.
- **Habitats:** Dry and wet deciduous forests, grassland and temperate forests, mangrove forests.
- **Population:** It is the most numerous of all tiger subspecies with more than 2,500 left in the wild.

**ELEPHANT TUSK IS 'GOVERNMENT PROPERTY'**

*In May 2018, Supreme Court declared that the elephant tusks seized is 'government property' thus filling a half-a-century vacuum in law.*

**About:**

- The court was examining the Kerala Forests Act of 1961 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 in a case dealing with the alleged unauthorised collection and storage of elephant tusks.
- The Supreme Court observed that there is a clear "declaration" in the 1972 Act on elephant tusks being government property.
- **Exceptions:**
  - The ruling, however, would not affect individuals who have ownership certificates for declared ivory.
  - Even in the case of captive elephants, either the government keeps custody of tusks or owners are permitted to retain them if they give an undertaking that they would not be traded.
- This gives a boost to the conservationists campaigning to curb ivory-trafficking and poaching. India prohibits import and export of ivory.

## UROPELTIS BHUPATHYI

*In May 2018, a new snake named Uropeltis bhupathyi was found in western ghats.*

### About:

- **Etymology:** It has been named after the late herpetologist S. Bhupathy, for his contributions to the field.
- **Habitat:** The snake is currently observed only in the forests of the Anaikatty hills in Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore district.
- **Shield-tails Family:**
  - The reptile belongs to a family of snakes called shield-tails found only in peninsular India and Sri Lanka.
  - They are non-venomous, burrowing and mostly earthworm-eating.
  - They are called shield-tails after the large, flat tips of their tails, which make them appear almost sliced off.

## MICROHYLA KODIAL

*In May 2018, Indian scientists announced the discovery of new frog.*

### About:

- The newly discovered frog is the 'Mangaluru narrow-mouthed frog', which has been found in a small industrial region in coastal Karnataka.
- It is christened Microhyala kodial after the city of Mangaluru (called kodial in the Konkani language) from where it was first spotted.
- **Features:**
  - It has a very distinct loud, long calls.
  - Genetically it is more closely related to southeast Asian frogs than Indian frogs.

## FEJERVARYA GOEMCHI

*In April 2018, Scientists reported the identification of a new species of frog called Fejervarya goemchi in the Western Ghats parts of Goa.*

### About:

- The new species is named after the historical name of the state of Goa where the species is discovered.
- Although most of these frogs are terrestrial, they need water bodies to survive.



- The new species is found in the high elevation areas of laterite plateaus, temporary water bodies and paddy fields of Goa.

## HIMALAYAN TRILLIUM

*According to a study published in May 2018 by researchers at Uttarakhand's Kumaun University, the Himalayan trillium, could soon go locally extinct in many parts of its range in India.*

### About:

- The Himalayan trillium is a common herb of the Himalayas, found across India, Bhutan, Nepal and China. It grows mostly in moist hill slopes with dense tree cover.
- It is a natural source of steroidal saponins which are important components of steroidal drugs.
- **Threat:**
  - The plant is popular in traditional Chinese medicine. This has made its illegal collection from the wild a lucrative business in India.
  - Another threat is low levels of reproduction. Mature plants usually produce only one flower per year.
  - In this background, researchers have recommended to include it as a schedule species under the Wildlife Protection Act to ensure more protection.



## NASA REPORT ON STUBBLE BURNING

*In May 2018, NASA released a report on Stubble Burning in India.*

### About:

- The study analysed satellite data for 15 years (2002-2016).
- **Key findings:**
  - There is an increasing trend in crop fires.
  - There is also a strong link between agricultural fires in Punjab and Haryana and rising PM2.5 concentrations in Delhi during the post-monsoon months of October and November.
- **Significance:** While the link between crop burning and winter pollution peak was being speculated for long, this is the first scientific study to validate the same.

## AIR POLLUTION AND PREMATURE DEATHS

*In May 2018, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi in collaboration with environmental NGO Centre for Environment and Energy Development (CEED) released a study titled 'Know what you breathe'.*

### About:

- The study was conducted in 11 north Indian cities.
- Key Findings:**
  - Pollution is a major reason for premature mortality.
  - Annual mortality linked to air pollution is in the range of 150-300 persons per 1 lakh population.
  - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) was the largest cause of the deaths (at 29.7%) and lung cancer the lowest (0.6%).
  - Residential (cooking, heating and lighting) sources are the largest contributors to annual ambient PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations (73.8%).

## U.S. AND CLIMATE CHANGE

*In May 2018, U.S. cancelled a NASA programme called Carbon Monitoring Project citing budget constraints.*

### About:

- The Carbon Monitoring System (CMS) programme tracked sources and sinks for carbon and made high-resolution models of the planet's flows of carbon.
- The cancellation of programme has been criticized by environmentalists as the latest move in a "broad attack on climate science" mounted by the White House.

## CFC-11

*In May 2018, scientists reported that CFC-11 in atmosphere has declined by half.*

### About:

- Tri-chloro-fluoro-methane, also called freon-11, CFC-11, or R-11, is a chlorofluorocarbon.
- It is a colourless, faint ethereal, and sweetish-smelling liquid that boils around room temperature.
- It is an ozone-depleting chemical banned by the Montreal Protocol. The recent announcement that decline of CFC-11 has recently slowed by half, suggests a serious violation of the 1987 Montreal Protocol.

- The decline of atmospheric CFC-11 was constant from 2002 to 2012, and then slowed by about 50% after 2012.
- There is increased CFC-11 emissions from eastern Asia after 2012.

## KILLING OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS

*According to a report published by the Guardian, nearly 200 environmental defenders were killed in 2017.*

### EXPANDING MINING, AGRICULTURE INDUSTRIES BEHIND 60% OF THE VIOLENCE

Activists are threatened with murder, sexual violence and well-orchestrated legal cases, and perpetrators range from the governments, like in the Philippines, to gangs, like in Mexico. Indigenous or poor communities are often worst hit. Few cases are brought to the public's attention and those affected rarely get justice.

### LATIN AMERICA WAS THE MOST DANGEROUS REGION IN 2017



### TOP MOTIVES BEHIND KILLINGS IN 2017



## SOUTH ASIA WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT NETWORK (SAWEN)

*In May 2018, the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) held its first ever meeting in India.*

### About:

- SAWEN is an inter-governmental wildlife law enforcement agency.
- Members:** The 8 member countries are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.
- Background:** SAWEN was launched in Bhutan in 2011 and in 2016 the Union Cabinet gave permission to adopt the statute of SAWEN.

## CLEAN GANGA MISSION

*In May 2018 it was reported that only 20% of the ₹20,000 crore allotted for the National Clean Ganga Mission (NCGM) has been utilised till March 2018.*

## Key Facts:

**12,000**  
million litres per  
day (mld) sewage  
is generated in the  
Ganga basin

**4,000**  
mld is the  
treatment  
capacity  
available now

**3,000** mld of sewage is discharged  
into the main stem of the river

**1,000** mld treatment capacity  
created till date near the main stem

Out of 100 sewage infrastructure  
projects sanctioned, only 20 have  
been completed till date

**₹ 16,000**  
crore is the  
estimated cost of  
the  
sanctioned  
projects

**46,000**  
cremations  
annually  
performed in  
Varanasi also add  
to the pollution

## About:

- **Namami Gange Programme**, an integrated conservation mission, was approved as the flagship programme by the government in June 2014 with a budget outlay of Rs. 20,000 crore to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation, and rejuvenation of the Ganga.
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for setting up of **Clean Ganga Fund** in September 2014 with the aim of using the collection for various activities under the Namami Gange programme for cleaning the Ganga such as:
  - Setting up of waste treatment plants
  - Conservation of biotic diversity of the river
  - Development of public amenities
  - Activities such as Ghat redevelopment and Research and Development and innovative projects.
- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMG)** is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council which was set up in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities order 2016.

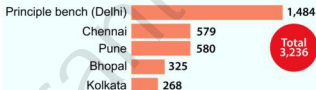
## NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL (NGT)

*In April 2018, it was reported that staff crunch has forced NGT to close 4 Regional Benches.*

## About:

- The National Green Tribunal was established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of environmental disputes.
- The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

## PENDING CASES WITH NGT



## Vacancy in NGT

**Minimum strength** should be 1 chairperson, 10 judicial members, 10 expert members as per NGT Act 2010.

**Max strength** | 20 judicial, 20 expert members

**Current strength** | 3 judicial members including chairperson, 2 expert members

**Posts advertised by Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) on August 29, 2017** 5 judicial and 7 expert members

## 25 YEARS OF CBD

*International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May) was celebrated all over the world under the theme "Celebrating 25 years of action on biodiversity".*

*It marks the 25 years of coming into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity.*

## Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):

- **Goals:** CBD is a multilateral treaty with three main goals –
  1. Conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity);
  2. Sustainable use of its components; and
  3. Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.
- **Timeline:**
  - The Convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and entered into force in 1993.
  - At the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, the Nagoya Protocol was adopted.

## PARTY POPPERS

*In May 2018, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) banned party poppers on the grounds that the devices posed a health risk.*

### What are 'party poppers'?

Party poppers work akin to the popping of a champagne bottle

Sometimes they are shaped like bottles but, in most instances, they are sealed cardboard cases, about as big as a rolled-up newspaper, and stuffed with shredded paper and glitter.

Pulling an attached string sets off a mild, chemical explosive, which 'pops' open the container and releases a confetti of coloured paper and fine glitter.

There have been reports of injury, even in India, when party poppers exploded. Majority of them being eye injuries

Armstrong's mixture, which is used to create the explosive, consists of:

- Red phosphorus** Very small quantities of these chemicals—less than a 1000th of a gram—is used in poppers
- Potassium chlorate**
- Potassium perchlorate**
- Sulphur**



## GEOGRAPHY

### LONG PERIOD AVERAGE (LPA)

*In April 2018, The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) released its first long range (seasonal) forecast for the coming south-west monsoon season (June to September 2018).*

*It forecast that the country would receive normal rainfall during the coming south-west monsoon season, with a low probability of deficient rainfall.*

#### About:

- IMD brands the monsoon as 'normal' or 'deficient' based on how it fares against its benchmark Long Period Average (LPA).
- LPA is the average rainfall received by the country as a whole during the south-west monsoon, for a 50-year period.
- **Reason for a 50-year period:**
  - The LPA uses a 50-year average because annual rainfall can be highly variable.
  - A 50-year average is expected to smooth out the day-to-day, month-to-month variations, while also accounting for freak weather events like the El Nino and La Nina.
- **Present benchmark:**
  - The current LPA is 89 cm, based on the average rainfall over years 1951 and 2000. This acts as a benchmark against which the rainfall in any monsoon season is measured.
  - **Deficient rainfall:** The country is said to have received deficient rainfall if the actual rainfall falls below 90 % of LPA.
  - **Excess rainfall:** Similarly, the country is said to have received excess rainfall if the rainfall is greater than 110% of LPA.
  - **Normal rainfall:** It is deemed 'normal' when the actual rainfall received falls between 96 and 104 per cent of LPA.
- **What is the scenario for 2018?** In 2018, the IMD expects the rainfall to be at 97 per cent of LPA. The IMD also budgets for a 'model error' of plus or minus 5 per cent from its forecasts.

### WESTERN GHATS AND TAMIL NADU MONSOON

*According to study published by a team of IIT Bombay, in May 2018, dense vegetation in the Western Ghats determines the amount of rainfall that Tamil Nadu gets during the summer monsoon.*

#### About:

- It has found that dense forests of the Western Ghats contribute as much as 40% of moisture to the southwest monsoon rainfall over Tamil Nadu during normal monsoon years.
- The average contribution is 25-30%. But during monsoon deficit years, the contribution increases to as high as 50%.

### MOUNT KILAUEA

*In May 2018, Mount Kilauea erupted in the state of Hawai'i (U.S.A.).*



**About:**

- Kilauea is a currently active shield volcano in the Hawaiian Islands, and the most active of the five volcanoes that together form the island of Hawai'i.
- Like all Hawaiian volcanoes, Kilauea was created as the Pacific tectonic plate moved over the Hawaiian hotspot in the Earth's underlying mantle.
- It is part of the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park.
  - It encompasses two active volcanoes: Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, and Mauna Loa, the world's most massive shield volcano.
- It was designated as an International Biosphere Reserve in 1980 and a World Heritage Site in 1987.

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT

**CYCLONE OCKHI**

*In April 2018, the Standing Committee of Home Affairs (Chaired by P. Chidambaram) submitted its report on the impact of the cyclone Ockhi and the damage caused by it.*

**About:**

- Cyclone Ockhi was a strong tropical cyclone that devastated parts of Sri Lanka and India. It was an unusual cyclone due to its rapid intensification.
- It was the most intense tropical cyclone in the Arabian Sea since Cyclone Megh in 2015.
- **Journey:**
  - Cyclone Ockhi originated from a low pressure area over southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas of south Sri Lanka & equatorial Indian Ocean on 28 November.
  - It crossed south coast of Gujarat between Surat and Dahanu as a well-marked low-pressure area on Dec. 6.
  - The storm traversed a distance of 2,538 km. In its entire course, Cyclone Ockhi left a trail of massive destruction in Sri Lanka, Lakshadweep, South India, and Maldives as it strengthened from a depression to a mature cyclone.

**Recommendations:**

- **Forecasting:** The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) should develop forecasting models for rapid intensification of cyclones.
- **Tracking systems:** ISRO should complete an early trial of the satellite-based vessel tracking system to track fishing vessels and send messages.

- **Missing fishermen:** To prevent the instances of fishermen going missing as a result of the cyclone, IMD and Home Ministry should issue cyclone advisories to the state government, and give it wider publicity through the media and radio.
- **Assistance to states:** Share of the central and state governments contribution to the State Disaster Response Fund should change from 75:25 ratios to 90:10 as recommended by the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission.

## COALITION ON DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE (CDRI)

*In May 2018, Preeti Saran committee submitted its report on establishing a Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).*

**About:**

- During the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) held in 2016, PM Modi outlined a 10-point Agenda for Disaster Risk Reduction, which also contained a proposal for establishing CDRI.
- Subsequently, in 2017, a Task Force headed by Ms. Preeti Saran, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs was constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 2017.
- The report recently submitted provides a step-by-step implementation plan and analysis in order to build and operationalise a Coalition.

**NIDM SOUTHERN CAMPUS**

*In May 2018, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu laid the foundation stone for National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), in Kondapavuluru, Andhra Pradesh.*

**About:**

- **Functions:**
  - National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) is the nodal agency for human resource development, research and policy advocacy in the field of disaster management.
  - NIDM also serves as international SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC).
- **Background:**
  - In 1995, National Centre of Disaster Management (NCDM) was constituted under an Act of Parliament.
  - In 2006 it was redesignated as National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) under the Disaster Management Act 2005.
- **HQ:** New Delhi.
- **Parent body:** Ministry of Home Affairs.

## NATIONAL BIOPHARMA MISSION

*In April 2018, Government of India and World Bank signed a Legal Agreement for flexible financing arrangement on National Biopharma Mission.*

### About:

- **Official name:** Innovate In India (I3) Empowering Biotech Entrepreneurs And Accelerating Inclusive Innovation Mission.
- **Programme detail:**
  - It is a programme for development of bio pharmaceuticals through industry-academia collaboration.
  - It will focus on development of specific products such as vaccines, biotherapeutics, medical devices and diagnostics.
- **Implementing agency:** Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC). It is a public sector undertaking of Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- **Duration of mission:** It was launched in June 2017. It will be implemented for a 5 years' period.
- **Funding:** This program entails an investment of Rs 1,500 crore by it over a period of five years. 50 percent of the cost for the program will come from the World Bank loan.
- **Background to this mission:** The National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-2020 announced by the DBT lays emphasis on making India ready to meet the challenge of achieving USD 100 billion biotech industry by 2025.

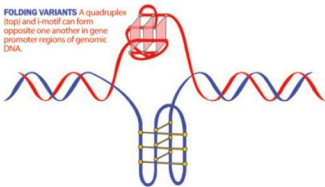
## i-MOTIF DNA

*In April 2018, researchers for the first time observed i-motif inside the nucleus of a living cell.*

### About:

- i-motif is a twisted "knot" of Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).
- It is found in the nuclei of human cells.
- Unlike the double helical conventional DNA, the i-motif is four-stranded. i.e. it has a quadruplex structure made up of two parallel duplexes.
- These appear when DNA is being actively read and is in promoter regions and telomeres.
- The molecule is stable in acidic conditions, but begins to become unstable in basic or neutral solutions.
- I-motif DNA is rich in unusual cytosine-cytosine bonds.

**FOLDING VARIANTS** A quadruplex (top) and i-motif can form opposite one another in gene promoter regions of genomic DNA.



## CHYTRID FUNGUS

*According to a study published in the international journal Science in May 2018, the Chytrid Fungus possibly originated in east Asia.*

### About:

- Chytridiomycosis is an infectious and fatal skin disease that has led to mass die-offs and species extinctions of frogs since the 1990s around the world.
- It is caused by a fungus called Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis (Bd, also known as the chytrid fungus).
- Though first reported in frogs in South America in 1997, the killer fungus has also been recorded from several frog species in the Western Ghats in India also.

## GM MUSTARD

*In March 2018, The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, the apex regulator of genetically modified crops in India, has demanded more tests for genetically modified mustard, before it is cleared for "commercial cultivation."*

### About:

- Dhara Mustard Hybrid (DMH-11), the transgenic mustard in question, had been developed by a team of scientists at Delhi University, under a government-funded project.
- The clearance for GM mustard has been mired in confusion.
  - In May 2017, GEAC recommended the crop for cultivation.
  - However, in October 2017, Union Environment Minister, Harsh Vardhan — who had the final say on the matter — said that wider consultations on the release of the crop were needed.

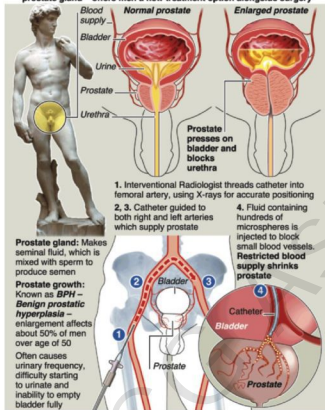
## PROSTATE ARTERY EMBOLISATION (PAE)

*In April 2018, Prostate artery embolisation (PAE) was approved by UK's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). This is expected to encourage health authorities to adopt the procedure throughout Europe.*

*Brazil and the U.S. approved PAE therapy in 2016 and March 2018 respectively.*

### Prostate therapy without surgery

Prostate artery embolisation (PAE) – a breakthrough that uses tiny plastic beads to restrict the blood supply and shrink an enlarged prostate gland – offers men a new treatment option alongside surgery



### Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH):

- What is it? BPH, also called prostate enlargement, is a noncancerous increase in size of the prostate, while also blocking the urethra.
- Symptoms/Effect:
  - Sufferers need to make repeated night-time trips to the toilet, but often find they cannot urinate at all.
  - Complications can include urinary tract infections, bladder stones, and chronic kidney problems.
- Prevalence: The condition, affects about 50% of men over the age of 50, rising to 75% over 80, although not all affected men experience symptoms.

### Prostate Artery Embolisation (PAE):

- The procedure uses tiny plastic beads to restrict the blood supply.
- The reduction in blood supply induces the enlarged prostate gland to shrink in size over time.
- Benefits of PAE:
  - This gives men an alternative to surgery i.e. transurethral resection of the prostate (TURP) which has common side effects such as sexual dysfunction, infertility and transient incontinence.
  - The procedure is quick — PAE takes approximately 2 hours to perform, and the patient can be discharged after 4 hours, whereas surgery may require an overnight stay or longer.

## EMBRYO CREATED WITHOUT EGG OR SPERM

*In May 2018, Scientists have for the first time created embryo-like structures in the lab from stem cells, without recourse to eggs or sperm.*

### About:

- In experiments, bundles of mouse stems cells — one type corresponding to the placenta, another to the embryo — self-organised into proto-embryos and initiated pregnancies when implanted into mouse wombs.
- A few days after a mammal egg has been fertilised, it develops into a so-called blastocyst, a hollow sphere formed by less than 100 cells divided into an outer layer — the future placenta — and a small cluster in the middle, the future embryo.
- Significance:
  - These early embryos have all the cell types required to form a whole organism.
  - The procedure could yield important insights into fertility and the earliest phases of life.

## 3-D PRINT DRUG DELIVERY

*In May 2018, it was announced that Scientists have created a 3-D printed mouth guard that could deliver drugs to the wearer. It is a major progress in transition to 3-D-printed drug delivery devices.*

### About:

- Three-dimensional printing (3DP) technology relies on computer aided designs to achieve exceptional manufacturing capability of pharmaceutical drug products.

- The process involves 3D proto-typing of layer-by-layer fabrication (via computer-aided design models) to formulate drug materials into the desired dosage form.
- **Advantages:** Compared to conventional pharmaceutical product manufacturing process, 3DP offers a lot of attractive qualities, such as:
  - Higher precision and accuracy esp. for potent drugs that are applied in small doses.
  - Amenability to broad types of pharmaceutical active ingredients including poorly water-soluble, peptides and proteins.

## ATOMIC CLOCK

*In May 2018, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced the development of an atomic clock that will be used in navigation satellites to measure precise location data. Currently ISRO imports atomic clocks from European aerospace manufacturer Astrium for its navigation satellites.*

### About:

- **What is it?** An atomic clock has an atomic oscillator inside (such as a cesium or rubidium oscillator).
- **Working:**
  - All clocks track time by counting the "ticks" of a "resonator." In a pendulum clock, the resonator is a pendulum.
  - On the other hand, an atomic clock uses the resonance frequencies of atoms as its resonator. it uses the microwave signal that electrons in atoms emit when they change energy levels.
- **Benefits:**
  - As the atoms resonate at extremely consistent frequencies, it ensures reliability.
  - Thus Atomic clocks are designed to measure the precise length of a second, the base unit of modern timekeeping.
  - The International System of Units (SI) defines the second as the time it takes a caesium-133 atom in a precisely defined state to oscillate exactly. **9,192,631,770 cycles per second.**
  - Satellite navigation systems like GPS, GLONASS, and Galileo also rely on precise time measurements based on atomic clocks to calculate positions accurately.

## GREEN PROPELLANT

*In May 2018, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) reported progress in the development of Hydroxylammonium nitrate (HAN), an environment-friendly propellant to power satellites.*

### About:

- The effort is to replace the conventional hydrazine rocket fuel, a highly toxic and carcinogenic chemical, with a greener propellant for future missions.



## 3-D MAP OF MILKY WAY

*In April 2018, Europe's Gaia satellite produced a 3-D map of more than a billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy — complete with their distance from Earth, colour, and motion through space. The rich dataset is believed to revolutionise astronomy and our understanding of the Milky Way.*

### About:

- The Milky Way is the galaxy that contains our Solar System. The descriptive 'milky' is derived from the appearance from Earth of the galaxy – a band of light seen in the night sky formed from stars that cannot be individually distinguished by the naked eye.
- The Milky Way is a 'barred spiral galaxy'. Unlike a regular spiral, a barred spiral contains a bar across its center region, and has two major arms.
- The Milky Way does not sit still, but is constantly rotating.



## ANITHA-SAT

*In May 2018, Anitha-SAT, was launched from Aztra Labs in Mexico City.*

**About:**

- Anitha-SAT is a lightweight satellite developed by a 17-year-old Plus Two pass out student of R.S.K. Higher Secondary School, Tiruchi.
- It has been developed to measure the effects of air pollution and global warming.

**InSight**

*In May 2018, NASA launched InSight spacecraft, the first mission ever dedicated to study deep interiors of Mars.*

**About:**

- **What is it?**
  - InSight is a robotic lander designed to study the interior of the planet Mars.
  - Its name, InSight, is short for Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport.
- **Mission details:**
  - InSight's objective is to place a stationary lander equipped with a seismometer and heat transfer probe on the surface of Mars to study the planet's early geological evolution.
  - This could bring new understanding of the Solar System's terrestrial planets — Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars — and the Earth's Moon.
- **Payload:** The payload consists of two main instruments –
  - **Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS):** it is a seismometer (an instrument that measures motion of the ground, caused by, e.g. an earthquake, a volcanic eruption, or the use of explosives).
  - **Heat Flow and Physical Properties Package (HP3):** It is a self-hammering probe that will monitor the flow of heat in the planet's subsurface.

**LIQUID CHLORINE**

*In April 2018, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) granted license to Gujarat Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd for liquid chlorine on All India basis.*

*This is first license granted for liquid chlorine on All India Basis.*

**About:**

- Liquid chlorine is usually used as a gas obtained by evaporating the liquid from the metal container.
- It is used mainly in paper, pulp, textile bleaching, water sterilization and manufacture of chemicals.
- The Indian Standard 646:1986 for Liquid Chlorine, Technical, prescribes the requirements and the methods of sampling and test for liquid chlorine.

**ZIRCON**

*In May 2018, scientists announced that the World's second oldest rock is from Odisha.*

**About:**

- Geologists from the University of Calcutta have found that a rock in Champua in Odisha's Kendujhar district contains a grain of magmatic zircon that is estimated to be 4,240 million years old.
- The only instance of zircon older than this discovery was the one found in Jack Hill, Western Australia, which was 4,400 million years old.
- **Significance:** The discovery holds great promise to study the earth's early years and also puts India at the forefront of geological research in the world.

**Zircon?**

- Zircon is a mineral belonging to the group of nesosilicates.
- It plays a key role in radiometric dating as it contains trace amounts of uranium and thorium and can survive geologic processes like erosion, transport, thus containing a rich record of geological processes.

**ATAL NEW INDIA CHALLENGES**

*In April 2018, the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) of the NITI Aayog announced the launch of Atal New India Challenges.*

**About:**

- Under this, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using cutting edge technologies or prototypes across 17 identified focus areas.
- Under this, winning ideas will be incubated under the aegis of Atal Innovation Mission.
- The programme came into being following Prime Minister's call to bring innovations and technologies relevant to the people.
- It will be run by AIM of NITI Aayog in collaboration with five ministries.

**INDUSTRIAL ROBOTS AND (UN)EMPLOYMENT**

*In May 2018, Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram released a study on the use of industrial robots in India.*

**Key Findings:****• Number of industrial robots:**

- The density of robots per 10,000 manufacturing workers has risen from less than 1 in 2000 to almost 10 in 2016.
- Yet, the stock of industrial robots in India in 2016 at 16,026 accounts for barely 0.1% of India's industrial workforce. Thus India has one of the lowest density of robots in the world.

**• Sectors of deployment:** The use of robots in India, as elsewhere, has been largely concentrated in tasks such as welding or soldering which are very hazardous for human workers to do.**• Job threat?**

- The report agrees with World Bank's World Development Report 2019, which argues that the jobs threat from automation is grossly exaggerated.
- It is because automation affects only certain tasks in certain industries. Also job losses because of automation can often be offset by rising demand for goods and services which create new jobs.
- Nonetheless, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) could lead to new kinds of robots, which could put a far greater number of jobs at risk.

**Industrial Robots?**

International Federation of Robotics (IFR) defines an industrial robot as an "automatically controlled, reprogrammable, and multipurpose machine".

**AI: NITI AAYOG-GOOGLE PARTNERSHIP**

*In May 2018, NITI Aayog and Google announced their partnership to work towards building the AI ecosystem across the country.*

**About:**

- Under this programme, Google will train and incubate Indian AI start-ups in an accelerator program.
- The move is aimed at fostering growth for India's nascent AI and Machine Learning (ML) ecosystem.

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN AGRICULTURE**

*In May 2018, NITI AAYOG signed an agreement with IBM to develop precision agriculture using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Aspirational Districts.*

**About:**

- Under the agreement, a crop yield prediction model would be developed using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to provide real time advisory to farmers in Aspirational Districts.
- It includes deployment of weather advisory, rich satellite and enhanced weather forecast information along with IT & mobile applications with a focus on improving the crop yield and cost savings through better farm management.

**NEANDERTHALS AS ARTISTS?**

*In February 2018 it was stated that scientists have found the first major evidence that Neanderthals, rather than modern humans, created the world's oldest known cave paintings.*

**About:**

- A new study Published in the journal Science shows that paintings in three caves in Spain were created more than 64,000 years ago - 20,000 years before modern humans arrived in Europe.
- This means that the Palaeolithic (Ice Age) cave art – including pictures of animals, dots and geometric signs – must have been made by Neanderthals, a 'sister' species to Homo sapiens, and Europe's sole human inhabitants at the time.
- The researchers used a state-of-the-art technique called uranium-thorium dating to fix the age of the paintings.
- This suggests they may have had an artistic sense similar to our own.

**Neanderthals?**

- **Timeline:** Neanderthals were archaic humans that became extinct about 40,000 years ago.
- **Regions inhabited:** They seem to have appeared in Europe and later expanded into Southwest, Central and Northern Asia.
- **Comparison with Homo Sapiens:**
  - Neanderthals are considered either a distinct species, Homo neanderthalensis, or more rarely a subspecies of Homo sapiens (H. s. neanderthalensis).
  - Modern humans and Neanderthals share 99.7% of their DNA and are hence much more closely related than to their closest non-human relative, the chimpanzee (98.8%).
  - Compared to modern humans, Neanderthals were stockier, with shorter legs and a bigger body.





## IN-FLIGHT CONNECTIVITY

### Why in News?

- In May 2018, Telecom Commission, the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), approved almost all of TRAI's Recommendations on In-flight Connectivity.

### Working:

- Flyers on board an aircraft will be able to make calls and remain connected to the Internet while travelling through the Indian airspace, once an aircraft reaches an altitude of 3000 metres.
- In-flight WiFi services rely on geostationary satellites which beam signals directly to antennas installed on the airline.
- The direct transmission of internet through satellites will be carried over the Ku and Ka bands. The former has a smaller range of 12-18 gigahertz (GHz) while the latter has a range of 26-40GHz, resulting in better bandwidth.

### Implementation in India:

- This facility will also be applicable to communication on ships.
- The service will be provided through Indian Satellites or through satellites approved by Department of Space for communication purposes, with gateways in India.
- In-flight connectivity (IFC) providers:**
  - The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will create a new category of licensees called In-Flight Connectivity (IFC) providers.

- They will provide internet and voice services on flights operating within India and need not necessarily be Indian entities.
- DoT will frame a new licence for IFC providers and charge an initial token fee of Re1 annually.
- It is expected that it will take 3 to 4 months to operationalise the services.

### Significance:

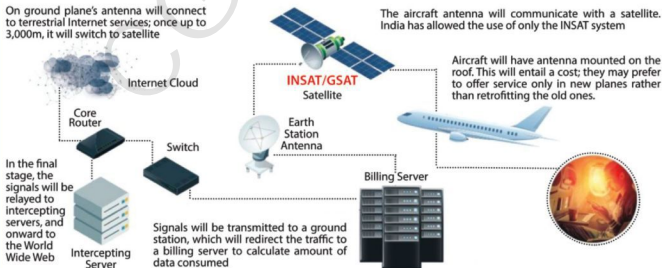
- Users will be able to better utilize the time spent travelling. Passengers will be able to order products while flying and have them delivered to their homes, or the hotel on arrival at their destination.
- Cabin crews can help passengers to change their onward transit plans to accommodate for changes to their flight, while they are still in the air.
- It will bring Indian aviation sector at par with others in this aspect. According to a January 2018 report, 82 countries and over 30 airlines offer onboard connectivity.

### Challenges:

- Cost:** Airlines will have to put a server and other equipment's on the flight to convert satellite signals into data packets which can be a costly affair for airlines esp. low-cost carriers.
- Quality:** In general, WiFi on a plane is much slower than on the ground. Also, there will be interruptions when the airline moves from the range of one satellite to another. However, this is changing with newer technologies.

## In-Flight Connectivity Working

On ground plane's antenna will connect to terrestrial Internet services; once up to 3,000m, it will switch to satellite



# 8 ETHICS, VALUES & INTEGRITY

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

*In May 2018, SEBI notified new rules for listed companies to improve Corporate Governance, thus implementing recommendations of the Uday Kotak panel.*

### New rules for listed companies:

- Setup Governance committee (comprising board of directors) to monitor their governance.
- Split the post of Chairman and Managing Director (CMD).
- Have at least six independent directors, including a woman.
- Enhanced disclosure norms for related-party transactions.
- Mandatory secretarial audits.
- Top 100 listed companies to webcast annual general meetings.
- From October 1, 2018, any changes in credit ratings of listed firms' outstanding instruments have to be updated immediately.

The changes will be put in place in phases. While a deadline of April 1, 2019 has been setup regarding the independent directors, deadline for other changes is April 1, 2020.

## MEDIA ETHICS

*In May 2018, Union Law Minister addressed a session on 'Ethical journalism' at the 15th Asia Media Summit 2018.*

### About:

- He said that under the garb of sensationalism, paid news and fake news, Ethical Journalism is being compromised.
- He emphasised that news must be fair, true, properly presented highlighting sights and counter sights and empowering the consumers in a decent and independent fashion.
- **Five Core Principles of Journalism** are (1) Truth and Accuracy (2) Independence (3) Fairness and Impartiality (4) Humanity and (5) Accountability.

## ANIMAL-FREE TESTING FOR DRUGS

*In May 2018, the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission approved modern, animal-free tests for drug manufacturers.*

### About:

- In the 2018 edition of Indian Pharmacopoeia, that provides guidelines on tests of drugs manufactured and marketed in India, the IPC has replaced the pyrogen test carried out on rabbits and the abnormal toxicity test carried out on guinea pigs and mice with tests that can be done in test tubes.
- The pyrogen test is carried out to check impurity or substance that can cause adverse side-effects.
- The abnormal toxicity test is carried out to check potential hazardous biological contamination in vaccine formulations.
- The guidelines in the edition will come into effect from July 1.

## Towards freeing the guinea pig

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission, a body under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has replaced two animal tests:

- 1. Pyrogen test**, carried out in rabbits, can now be replaced by bacterial endotoxin test or a monocyte activation test
- 2. Abnormal toxicity test** can be waived if a compliance certificate from National Control Laboratory is obtained

The mandate has been listed in the eighth edition of Indian Pharmacopoeia and comes into effect from July 1



## PETA'S POSITION

- It is unethical to intentionally cause pain, fear and loneliness in animals
- Animal testing is a 'bad science' because 92 out of every 100 drugs that pass animal tests fail in humans
- It is wasteful because animal testing prolongs suffering of people waiting for effective cures.

## ASHTAPADIYATTAM

*In May 2018, Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the revival ceremony of ancient Dance Drama 'Ashtapadiyattam' in Guruvayur, Kerala.*

### About:

- The dance drama is based on 'Gita Govinda' celebrating the mythological Radha-Krishna love.
- Although the 'Ashtapadiyattam' in its original form is no longer in existence, it can be found in various parts of India in various forms- like Mohiniattam and Kathakali in Kerala, Bharatanatyam in Tamil Nadu, Kuchipudi in Andhra Pradesh, Manipuri in Manipur and Odissi in Orissa.
- Each of these regions developed its own way of articulating Jayadeva's classic in the form of dance.

### Gita Govindam?

- The Gita Govinda is poem composed by Jayadeva (a 12<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit poet).
- It describes the relationship between Krishna and the gopis (female cow herders) of Vrindavana, and in particular one gopi named Radha.
- It is organized into twelve chapters. Each chapter is further sub-divided into twenty-four divisions called Prabandhas. The prabandhas contain couplets grouped into eights, called Ashtapadis.
- The text also elaborates the eight moods of Heroine, the Ashta Nayika, which has been an inspiration for many compositions and choreographic works in Indian classical dances.

*(Jayadeva was instrumental in popularising the Dashavatara, the ten incarnations of Vishnu in another composition, Dasakritikrite. Two hymns of Jayadeva, have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikh religion).*

## WARANGAL DHURRIES

*Recently, Chennai-based GI Registry granted Geographical Indication certificate for Warangal Carpets a.k.a Warangal dhurries.*

### About:

- Bright colours, geometrically repetitive patterns and interlocking zigzag motifs in cotton and jute are the signature styles of the carpets.
- One of the newest innovations by the weavers here is an adaptation of tie-dyed ikat techniques and hand-painted or block-printed kalamkari designs for the dhurries to save time and energy.
- Warangal is a city in the state of Telangana.



## VESAK

*Buddhists around the world celebrated Buddha Purnima, or Vesak on April 30, 2018.*

### About:

- Buddha Purnima, or Vesak, falls on the full moon day of the month Vaishakha.
- The day commemorates birth, death and the enlightenment of Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, all of which is said to have taken place on the same day.
- The auspicious day is celebrated with much fervour in Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal, Korea, Indonesia, Laos and Malaysia. Since it falls on the full moon day (Purnima), the occasion is referred to as Buddha Purnima in India.

## MRINALINI SARABHAI

*In May 2018, Google dedicated a doodle to Mrinalini Sarabhai on her 100th birthday.*

**About:**

- **Mrinalini Sarabhai (1918 – 2016)** was an Indian classical dancer, choreographer and instructor.
- She was trained in Bharatanatyam and Kathakali.
- **Darpana Academy of Performing Arts:**
  - She was the founder and director of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, an institute for imparting training in dance, drama, music and puppetry, in the city of Ahmedabad.
  - It annually presents the 'Mrinalini Sarabhai Award for Classical Excellence', in the field of classical dance.
- **Awards:**
  - Padma Bhushan (1992) and Padma Shri (1965).
  - Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (1994).
  - First recipient of the Nishagandhi Puraskaram, an annual award of the Government of Kerala.

**MAHADEVI VERMA**

*In April 2018, Google dedicated a doodle to Mahadevi Verma.*

**About:**

- **Mahadevi Verma (1907-1987)** was a Hindi poet, freedom fighter and educationist from India.
- She was the Principal, and then the Vice-Chancellor of Prayag Mahila Vidyapeeth, a woman's residential college in Allahabad.
- She is considered to be one of the four major poets of the Chhayavaadi school of the Hindi literature. She is widely regarded as the "modern Meera".
- **Key works:** Nihar, Yama, Neelkanth, Gaura, Madhur Madhur Mere Deepak Jal etc.

**Awards:**

- Padma Bhushan (1956)
- Padma Vibhushan (1988)
- Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (1979)
- Gyanpeeth Award for her poetry collection Yama (1982)

**Chhayavaad?****What is it?**

- It refers to the period of Neo-romanticism in Hindi poetry.
- Chhayavaad was marked by a renewed sense of the self & personal expression and for its leaning towards themes of love and nature.

**Period:** It ranged from 1914–1938.**Four pillars of Chhayavaad:** Jaishankar Prasad, Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala', Sumitranandan Pant and Mahadevi Varma.**Notable works:** Jaishankar Prasad's Kamayani; Mahadevi Varma's, Nihar, Harivansh Rai Bachchan's, Madhushala.**Criticism:**

- At that time, it was very well received by readers and critics alike.
- However, subsequent scholars have criticized Chhayavaad for romanticism aloof from contemporary social and economic malaise, excessive use of decorative language and setting stricter rules on rhyme etc.

**UTTAM PACHARNE**

*In May 2018, President of India appointed Uttam Pacharne as regular Chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi for a term of three years.*

**About:**

- **Shri Pacharne** is an eminent artist and sculptor.
- **Awards:** He is the recipient of National Lalit Kala Award (1985), Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1985) from Government of Maharashtra, Junior National Award 1986 and Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar (2017) from Profulla Dahanukar Foundation.

**Lalit Kala Akademi?**

- The Lalit Kala Akademi or National Academy of Art is India's national academy of fine arts.
- It is an autonomous organisation, established in New Delhi in 1954 by Government of India to promote and propagate understanding of Indian art, in and outside the country.
- It is funded by the Union Ministry of Culture.



## SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ

*In May 2018, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (SBS) entered into a legal battle with the West Bengal government over its decision to dissolve the governing bodies of eight colleges run by the organisation.*

### Key Facts:

- The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj (SBS) was formed in 1878 in Kolkata.
- Anandamohan Bose was appointed the first President of SBS.

### A brief account of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj:

- Brahman is Sanskrit for the Supreme Being, the author and governor of the Universe. The worshippers of this Supreme Being are Brahmos, and the Samaj means congregation or church. Brahmo Samaj thus means a congregation of the worshippers of the Supreme Being.
- **Affirmations:** It believes in –
  - the existence and personality of God;
  - the immortality and eternal progress of the human soul;
  - the duty and efficacy of divine worship.
- **Negations:** It does not believe in –
  - any supernatural revelation;
  - any particular book or collections of books as the one infallible revelation of divine truth;
  - any human being as a special or specific incarnation of the Deity, who is the full and final revelation of His word or idea;
  - any prophet or saint or teacher as absolutely infallible, or as the one only guide to God, or the only one way of salvation.

### Recent Controversy:

- In September 2017, the State's Minority Affairs decided to not grant the SBS the status of a minority religion
- Subsequently, the governing bodies of the eight colleges were dissolved. The order argued that since SBS was not a "separate minority religion", the related colleges administered by it should be treated as "non-minority Government-aided Colleges."

## SARASVATI RIVER

*In May 2018, Haryana Sarasvati Heritage Development Board signed MoUs with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Institute of Hydrology to study hydrological aspects relating to the Sarasvati river to speed up the work for its revival.*

### About:

- Sarasvati River is one of the Rig Vedic rivers mentioned in the Rig Veda and later Vedic and post-Vedic texts.
- Rigveda mentions the Sarasvati between the Yamuna in the east and the Sutlej in the west. Later Vedic texts mention that the Sarasvati dried up in a desert.
- The Sarasvati is also considered by Hindus to exist in a metaphysical form, in which it formed a confluence with the sacred rivers Ganges and Yamuna, at the Triveni Sangam.
- Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, some scholars have argued that the Vedic Sarasvati river is the Ghaggar-Hakra River system, which flows through north-western India and eastern Pakistan. However, this is debatable.

## ARANMULA SNAKEBOAT

*In May 2018, it was reported that the famous Aranmula snakeboat race egatta in Kerala will not be a competitive race in the Pampa river waters at this year's Onam festival, and will instead return to its roots as a spectacle of colour and song.*

*Palliyoda Seva Sanghom (PSS), which conducts the show, has decided to do away with the race format during the Uthtrattadhi Vallamkali in August. What caused concern was the influence of competitive sport on the legacy of style and colour.*

### About:

- The Aranmula Boat Race the oldest river boat fiesta in Kerala, the south western State of India is held during Onam (August–September). It takes place at Aranmula, near a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Krishna and Arjuna.
- Palliyodams are Aranmula's unique snake boats ("Chundan Vallam") which devotees hold in reverence, considering it as the divine vessel of the presiding deity in Sree Parthasarathy temple.
- The snake boats move in pairs to the rhythm of full-throated singing and shouting watched by an exciting crowd. The oarsmen sing traditional boat songs and wear white mundu and turbans.



## AWARDS

## NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE AWARDS – 2018

*In May 2018, the President of India presented the National Geoscience Awards.*

## About:

- The awards, instituted in 1966 and given annually by Ministry of Mines to encourage geoscientists for striving towards excellence.
- The National Geoscience Awards are of three categories:
  - National Geoscience Award for Excellence (lifetime achievement award).
  - National Geoscience Awards (given in 19 categories).
  - Young Scientist Award.

## ONV LITERARY PRIZE

*In May 2018, noted Malayalam writer M.T. Vasudevan Nair was selected for the ONV Literary Prize.*

## About:

- O.N.V. Literary Award has been instituted by the O.N.V. Cultural Academy.
- The award carries a cash prize of ₹ 3 lakhs, a sculpture, and citation.
- It is named after O. N. V. Kurup (1931-2016), a renowned Malayalam poet and lyricist from Kerala who has won the Jnanpith Award (2007) and has received Padma Vibhushan (2011).

## MAN BOOKER INTERNATIONAL

*In May 2018, the novel 'Flights' won the 2018 Man Booker International Prize.*

## Flights:

- It was originally written in Polish by Olga Tokarczuk. The book was later translated into English by Jennifer Croft.

- It has become the first book written by a Polish author to receive the Man Booker International.

## Man Booker International:

- The Man Booker International Prize is an international literary award sponsored by the Man Group, the same organisation that gives the Man Booker Prize for fiction.
- It is annually given for a single work of fiction that has been translated into English and published in the United Kingdom in the last year.
- It carries a cash prize of £50,000 prize for the winning title, shared equally between author and translator.

## SPORTS

## CRICKET REFORMS

*The world cricket body, International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a number of decisions following its five-day conclave in Kolkata in April 2018.*

## Key Decisions:

- T20 status to be granted to all its member countries.
- ICC Champions Trophy would be scrapped in favour of the World T20 which will be played every two years from 2021.
- ICC constituted a committee headed by former India captain Anil Kumble to formulate stricter sanctions for players indulging in ball-tampering and sledging.
- Inaugural World Test Championship will be played over a two-year cycle (2019-20) with the final being held in 2021. India and Pakistan will not play each other in the inaugural schedule of the Test Championship.

## PERSON IN NEWS

## E. C. G. SUDARSHAN

*In May 2018, Ennackal Chandy George Sudarshan (also known as E. C. G. Sudarshan) passed away at the age of 86.*



**About:**

- He was an Indian theoretical physicist and a professor at the University of Texas.
- He also developed a quantum representation of coherent light later known as Sudarshan-Glauber P representation.
- He was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 2007.

**Glauber-Sudarshan P representation?**

- It is a suggested way of writing down the phase space distribution of a quantum system in the phase space formulation of quantum mechanics.
- It has many useful applications in laser theory and coherence theory.
- It is named after E.C.G. Sudarshan and Roy J. Glauber, who were working on the topic in 1963.
- It was the subject of a controversy when Glauber was awarded a share of the 2005 Nobel Prize in Physics for his work in this field but E.C.G. Sudarshan's contribution was not recognized.

**19<sup>th</sup> KUSHOK BAKULA RINPOCHE**

*In May 2018, PM Modi attended the closing ceremony of the Birth Centenary Celebration of the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche in Leh.*

**About:**

- 19<sup>th</sup> Kushok Bakula Rinpoche (1917 – 2003) was a Buddhist lama who hailed from Ladakh.
- He was recognised by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama as a reincarnation of Bakula Arhat, one of the Sixteen Arhats who in legend were direct disciples of Gautama Buddha.
- To safeguard the interest of Buddhist monasteries of Ladakh, Rinpoche founded the All Ladakh Gonpa Association.
- He was elected Member of Parliament representing Ladakh for two consecutive terms, i.e. in 1967 and 1971.
- In 1977, Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister, appointed Rinpoche as a member of the newly constituted National Commission for Minorities.
- In 1989 he was appointed as ambassador of India to Mongolia. He thus became the first and only Monk diplomat in the world.



- He is mainly known for his efforts in reviving Buddhism in Mongolia and Russia by linking them with the community of Tibetan exiles in India. As an expression of gratitude towards him, he was awarded 'Polar Star', the civil honour of the highest degree in Mongolia in 2001.
- **Recognition:**
  - He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1988.
  - The airport at Leh in the Indian region of Ladakh is named after him.
  - For his role in building post-independent Ladakh, Rinpoche is hailed as the 'Gandhi of Ladakh' and 'Architect of Modern Ladakh'.

**ASHOK MITRA**

*In May 2018, Ashok Mitra passed away at the age of 90.*

**About:**

- Ashok Mitra (1928 – 2018) was an Indian economist and Marxist politician.
- **Positions held:**
  - Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India.
  - Chairman of the Agricultural Prices Commission of the Government of India.
  - Finance Minister of West Bengal.
- **Awards:** Sahitya Akademi Award (for his contributions to Bengali literature).

**PHILIP ROTH**

*In May 2018, Philip Roth passed away at the age of 85.*

**About:**

- Philip Milton Roth was an American novelist.
- **Major works:** Goodbye Columbus, American Pastoral, Sabbath's Theatre and Human Stain.
- **Awards:** The Nobel Prize eluded Mr. Roth, but he won most of the other top honours: two National Book Awards, two National Book Critics Circle awards, three PEN/Faulkner Awards, a Pulitzer Prize and the Man Booker International Prize.

