CURRENT AFFAIRS SYNOPSIS

OCTOBER 2019

A complete source of knowledge on regional, national and international issues

More than 50 sample UPSC prelims questions with answer key

2019 NOBEL PRIZE
International Solar Alliance
Global Hunger Index 2019
KHON RAMLILA
Green wall’ of India
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my outstanding and brilliant team members who have given their valuable support, cooperation, suggestions and expert advice from time to time in successfully completing this magazine and encourage me throughout this work.

DATE: 04/NOVEMBER/2019

A. SIDHARTH
M.A., PH.D IN GEOGRAPHY
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The Nobel Foundation has declared the complete list of winners for 2019 as of now. This year 15 eminent personalities would receive the prize.

WHAT IS IT?

The Nobel Prize is a set of annual international awards bestowed in several categories by Swedish and Norwegian institutions in recognition of academic, cultural, or scientific advances.

REWARD(S):

Prize money of 9 million SEK, approx. US$986,000 (2018); a medal and a diploma

WHO WAS ALFRED NOBEL?

- Alfred Nobel was born on 21 October 1833 in Stockholm, Sweden, into a family of engineers.
- He was a chemist, engineer, and inventor.
- In 1894, Nobel purchased the Bofors iron and steel mill, which he made into a major armaments manufacturer.
- Nobel also invented ballistite.
- This invention was a precursor to many smokeless military explosives, especially the British smokeless powder cordite.
- As a consequence of his patent claims, Nobel was eventually involved in a patent infringement lawsuit over cordite.
- Nobel amassed a fortune during his lifetime, with most of his wealth coming from his 355 inventions, of which dynamite is the most famous.
- The synthetic element nobelium was named after him.

FORMATION OF NOBLE FOUNDATION:

- The will of the Swedish chemist, engineer and industrialist Alfred Nobel established the five Nobel prizes in 1895.
- The prizes in Chemistry, Literature, Peace, Physics, and Physiology or Medicine were first awarded in 1901.
- The prizes are widely regarded as the most prestigious awards available in their respective fields.
Between 1901 and 2019, the Nobel Prizes and the Prize in Economic Sciences were awarded 597 times to 950 people and organizations.

The prize is not awarded posthumously; however, if a person is awarded a prize and dies before receiving it, the prize may still be presented.

A prize may not be shared among more than three individuals, although the Nobel Peace Prize can be awarded to organizations of more than three people.

NOBLE PRIZE 2019

NOBLE PRIZE IN LITERATURE

- The Nobel Prize in Literature is a Swedish literature prize that is awarded annually, since 1901.
- It is awarded to an author from any country that has produced “in the field of literature the most outstanding work in an ideal direction”.

1. Austria’s Peter Handke

   - Austria’s Peter Handke won the 2019 Nobel Prize “for an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience”.

2. Olga Tokarczuk (2018)

   - The postponed 2018 award went to Polish author Olga Tokarczuk, delayed by one year after a sexual assault scandal rocked the award-giving Academy – for “a narrative imagination that with encyclopaedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life.”
   - Olga Tokarczuk, the 15th woman to win the Nobel Literature Prize, also won the International Booker Prize in 2018.

NOBLE PRIZE IN PHYSICS

- Three scientists have won the Nobel Prize 2019 for Physics for their contribution to the understanding of the evolution of the universe and earth’s place in the cosmos.

1. James Peebles

   - Canadian-American cosmologist James Peebles, 84, won one-half of the Prizes for his theoretical work helping us understand how the universe evolved after the Big Bang.
   - His work is focused largely on Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB) radiation, which is electromagnetic radiation left over from the early universe once it had cooled sufficiently following the Big Bang.

2. Michel Mayor

   “For the discovery of an exoplanet orbiting a solar-type star”
3. **Didier Queloz**
   “For the discovery of an exoplanet orbiting a solar-type star”

- The other half went to Swiss astronomers Michel Mayor, 77, and Didier Queloz, 53, for their discovery of an exoplanet that challenged preconceived ideas about planets.
- Using a spectrograph, ELODIE, they predicted the planet by observing the “Doppler effect” — when the star wobbles as an effect of a planet’s gravity on its observed light.
- Today, exoplanets are being discovered very frequently — over 4,000 are known — which is remarkable progress from three decades ago, when not even one exoplanet was known.

**NOBLE PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY**

1. John B Goodenough of the University of Texas;
2. M Stanley Whittingham of the State University of New York at Binghamton;
3. Akira Yoshino of Meijo University in Japan

- Three scientists on were awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their contributions to the development of lithium-ion batteries.
- These batteries have reshaped energy storage and transformed cars, mobile phones and many other devices in an increasingly portable and electronic world.
- The prize went to John B Goodenough of the University of Texas; M Stanley Whittingham of the State University of New York at Binghamton; and Akira Yoshino of Meijo University in Japan.
- At 97, Mr. Goodenough is the oldest Nobel winner.
- The Nobel committee said the lithium-ion battery has its roots in the oil crisis in the 1970s, when Whittingham was working to develop methods aimed at leading to fossil fuel-free energy technologies.

**NOBLE PRIZE IN ECONOMIC:**

- The prize, officially known as the ‘Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences In Memory Of Alfred Nobel’, wasn’t created by the prize founder, but it is considered to be part of the Nobel stable of awards.
- The prize was created by Riksbanken, the Swedish central bank, in 1968, and the first winner was selected a year later.
- So far, 81 Nobel laureates in economic sciences have been awarded.

1. Abhijit Banerjee, (Indian American)
   - “Experimental approach to alleviating global poverty.”

2. Esther Duflo, (Abhijit Banerjee’s wife)
   - “Experimental approach to alleviating global poverty.”
3. Michael Kremer

ABOUT ABHIJIT BANERJEE:

- Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee is the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the USA. Born in Kolkata, Dr. Banerjee’s parents were also economics professors. After his post-graduation from JNU, he obtained his Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. He specialised in developmental economics.
- Dr. Banerjee is the co-author of the *award-winning Poor Economics*. The book, which was co-authored by his wife and fellow Nobel Laureate Esther Duflo, delves deep into the lives of the world’s poorest and argues that poverty eradication begins with understanding the daily decisions facing the poor.
- Dr. Banerjee was one of the economists consulted for formulating NYAY or Nyuntam Aay Yojana, a flagship scheme promised by Congress in its 2019 election manifesto that ambitiously aimed to provide basic income the poorest 20% of India’s population.

THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 2019

1. Abiy Ahmed Ali
   - “For his efforts to achieve peace and international cooperation, and in particular for his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighbouring Eritrea”

THE NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSIOLOGY OR MEDICINE 2019

1. William G. Kaelin Jr
   - “For their discoveries of how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability”

2. Sir Peter J. Ratcliffe
   - “For their discoveries of how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability”

3. Gregg L. Semenza
   - “For their discoveries of how cells sense and adapt to oxygen availability”

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Nobel Prize 2019

Sources: the Hindu.
Drone Innovators Network Summit-2019 is being held in New Delhi. Organized by the World Economic Forum under the aegis of the Ministry of Civil Aviation

EVENT TYPE:
Conference

REGIONS:
Asia-Pacific (APAC)

DRONE INNOVATORS NETWORK (DIN):

- Started by the World Economic Forum to hasten and contribute to healthy drone policies in need of legislation.
- Established to help overcome common challenges regulators are facing in enabling drones and unmanned aviation, such as how to enable beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) flights at scale, autonomous operations and flights over densely populated areas.

COMPOSITION:

Government aviation agencies, academics, and established drone entities. Inaugural Drone Innovators Network summit was held in Zurich in 2018.

DRONE REGULATION IN INDIA:

- India’s Directorate General of Civil Aviation issued Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR), effective 1 December, 2018 for drones.
As per the regulations, manufacturers of drone are required to comply with the requirements of No Permission, No Take-off (NPNT) on the Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS).

These regulations (CAR Version 1.0) only permit operations of drones during daytime Visual Line of Sight.

DigiSky is a portal for registration and flying of civil drones in India.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: how drones are changing the world? Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate. Composition and objectives of DIN.

For Mains: Need for regulations and international cooperation, overview of India’s drones regulations.

Sources: the Hindu.

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HYDERABAD NIZAM WIN UK COURT BATTLE WITH PAKISTAN FOR £35M

CONTEXT

The UK high court has ruled in favour of India and the titular 8th Nizam of Hyderabad and his younger brother in a case they had been fighting against Pakistan relating to who has the rights to £35m (Rs 306 crore) stashed away in a British bank account since Partition.

WHAT WAS THE DISPUTE?

- On September 20, 1948, a corpus of £1 million and one guinea had been transferred by the 7th Nizam of Hyderabad’s finance minister, Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung, from a government bank account to another in London held by Pakistan’s then high commissioner to the UK, Habib Ibrahim Rahimtoola.
- This was during the Indian annexation of the princely state of Hyderabad.
The grandson of the 7th Nizam, Turkey-based Mukkaram Jah, and his younger brother Muffakham Jah have laid claim to the fund, saying it had been gifted to them in a trust set up by their grandfather on April 24, 1963.

The Pakistan government, on the other hand, says it was a payment made by the erstwhile princely state to Pakistan for arming Hyderabad when it was about to be invaded by India.

On July 8, 1954, the 7th Nizam together with the state of Hyderabad issued a writ before the UK high court against Pakistan and Rahimtoola, asking for the £1 million to be returned to them.

On July 19, 1955, Rahimtoola got the writ set aside on the premise that the English courts were interfering with Pakistan’s sovereign immunity.

The money has stayed frozen in a British bank account ever since and grown to £35 million in the span of seven decades.

PAKISTAN’S ARGUMENTS:

- Referred to as the Arms for Money Argument, these funds were transferred to compensate/reimburse/indemnify Pakistan for assistance provided in procuring/facilitating the supply and/or transportation of weapons.
- The funds were transferred in order to keep them out of the hands of India, referred to by the judge as the Safeguarding Argument.
- The facts of this case were such as to render it non-justiciable because the original transfer was governmental in nature and that India’s annexation of Hyderabad in 1948 was an unlawful act, which tainted India and Nizam VIII’s claim.

WHAT DID THE COURT SAY?

- The fund was held by Pakistan through her high commissioner in the UK on trust for Nizam VII and his successors in title.
- The fund was not held by Rahimtoola personally, nor did either Pakistan or Rahimtoola have any beneficial interest in the fund.

ANNEXATION OF HYDERABAD TO UNION OF INDIA

BACKGROUND

- After the Siege of Golconda by Mughal Empire in 1687, the region was renamed as Deccan Subah (due to its geographical proximity in the Deccan Plateau) and in 1713 Qamar-ud-din Khan (later known as Asaf Jah I or Nizam I) was appointed its Subahdar and bestowed with the title of Nizam-ul-Mulk by the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar.
- Hyderabad’s effective independence is dated to 1724, when the Nizam won a military victory over a rival military appointee.
In 1798, Hyderabad became the first Indian princely state to accede to British protection under the policy of Subsidiary Alliance instituted by Arthur Wellesley and thus named as Hyderabad state.

At the time of Partition in 1947, the princely states of India, who in principle had self-government within their own territories, were subject to subsidiary alliances with the British, giving them control of their external relations.

In the Indian Independence Act 1947 the British abandoned all such alliances, leaving the states with the option of opting for full independence.

However, by 1948 almost all had acceded to either India or Pakistan. One major exception was that of the wealthiest and most powerful principality, Hyderabad, where the Nizam, Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII, a Muslim ruler who presided over a largely Hindu population, chose independence and hoped to maintain this with an irregular army recruited from the Muslim aristocracy, known as the Razakars.

The Nizam was also beset by the Telangana uprising, which he was unable to subjugate.

**OPERATION POLO (13–18 SEPTEMBER 1948)**

- Operation Polo was the code name of the Hyderabad "police action" in September 1948 by the then newly independent India against the Hyderabad State.
- It was a military operation in which the Indian Armed Forces invaded the Nizam-ruled princely state, annexing it into the Indian Union.

![Figure 2 Jawaharlal Nehru with Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan and Major General J. N. Chaudhuri after the police action](image)
SUNDERLAL COMMITTEE.

- The operation led to massive violence on communal lines.
- The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a commission known as the Sunderlal Committee.
- Its report, which was not released until 2013, concluded that "as a very reasonable & modest estimate the total number of deaths in the state, somewhere between 30,000 & 40,000."
- Other responsible observers estimated the number of deaths to be 200,000 or higher.

STANDSTILL AGREEMENT

Unlike the Instrument of Accession with India signed by other princely states at the time of Independence, the Nizam nominated a three-member team to negotiate a Standstill Agreement.

The Agreement signed on November 29, 1947 by Governor General Lord Mountbatten and Nizam Osman Ali Khan, specified that it would be valid for one year and that foreign affairs, defence and communications would be in India’s control while the Nizam had control over domestic affairs.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Accession of Hyderabad into India and What was the dispute all about?

Sources: the Hindu.

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OPEN-DEFECATION FREE (ODF)

CONTEXT

On the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, PM Modi announced that rural India and its villages have declared themselves open-defecation free (ODF).

WHAT IS OPEN DEFECATION?
Open defecation (also used in the opposite meaning as open defecation free (ODF)) is the human practice of defecating outside (in the open environment) rather than into a toilet. People may choose fields, bushes, forests, ditches, streets, canals or other open space for defecation. They do so because either they do not have a toilet readily accessible or due to traditional cultural practices. The current estimate is that around 673 million people practise open defecation. This is down from about 892 million people, or 12 percent of the global population, who practiced open defecation in 2016. In that year, seventy-six percent (678 million) of the 892 million people practicing open defecation in the world live in just seven countries. Open defecation was found by the WHO in 2014 to be a leading cause of diarrheal death. An average of 2,000 children under the age of five die every day from diarrhea.

**WHAT IS ODF?**

- The term "open defecation free" (ODF) is used to describe communities that have shifted to using a toilet instead of open defecation. This can happen for example after community-led total sanitation programs have been implemented.
- A village is ODF when:
  1. there are no visible faeces in the village, and
  2. Every household as well as public/community institution uses safe technology options for faecal disposal.
- After a village declares itself ODF, states are required to carry out verification of the ODF status of such a village.
- This includes access to a toilet facility and its usage, and safe disposal of faecal matter through septic tanks.

**REASONS:**

- No toilet
- Uncomfortable or unsafe toilet/ no privacy
- Lack of awareness
- Prefer being in nature

**IMPACT:**

- **PUBLIC HEALTH**
  - Lack of sanitation and hygiene causes various diseases; the most common being diarrhea and intestinal worm infections but also typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, polio, trachoma, and others

- **SAFETY OF WOMEN**

**DO YOU KNOW?**

In 2013 World Toilet Day was celebrated as an official UN day for the first time. The term "open defecation" was used in high-level speeches that helped to draw global attention to this issue.
The lack of safe, private toilets makes women and girls vulnerable to violence and is an impediment to girls’ education.

Women are at risk of sexual molestation and rape as they search for places for open defecation that are secluded and private, often during hours of darkness.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: open defecation and its impact

Sources: the Hindu.

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‘MO SARKAR’ INITIATIVE

CONTEXT

Odisha has launched a new governance initiative- ‘Mo Sarkar’- on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti

WHAT IS IT?

- The ‘Mo Sarkar’ was launched at all police stations across the State along with 21 district headquarters hospitals and three government-run medical college hospitals at Cuttack, Berhampur and Sambalpur.
- The programme will be effective at all the 30 district headquarters hospitals of the State by October 30.

OBJECTIVE:

To provide service with dignity to people who are coming to government offices for different purposes

HOW IT WORKS?

- The phone numbers of people who are coming to government offices will be collected randomly with the purpose to improve the governance system by collecting feedback on behavior and professionalism of government officers.
The Chief Minister, Departmental Minister, Director General of Police (in case of police stations) and Departmental Minister, Secretary and Director (in case of hospitals) will call on random numbers to collect feedback.

The employees will be ranked as good or bad on the basis of the feedback and those with good rank will get out-of-turn promotion and action will be taken against employees with bad rank.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** benefits of ‘Mo Sarkar’ initiative

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**YOUTH CO:LAB**

**CONTEXT**

AIM NITI Aayog, UNDP India Jointly Launch “Youth Co:Lab” to accelerate youth-led social entrepreneurship and innovation in India.

**WHAT IT IS?**

In a latest initiative to recognize young people as critical drivers of sustainable development, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India launched Youth Co:Lab which aims at accelerating social entrepreneurship and innovation in young India.

**HOW IT’S WORK?**

- Through Youth Co:Lab, young entrepreneurs and innovators will get a chance to connect with governments, mentors, incubators and investors, who will help equip them with entrepreneurial skills.
- The initiative will also convene a series of youth dialogues across several cities such as New Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Mumbai to promote entrepreneurship across India.
- Youth Co:Lab will convene social innovation challenges at the national and sub-national level, which will invite young people in the age group of 18-29 years and start-ups to showcase their proposed ideas and solutions to tackle some of the region’s biggest social challenges.
ABOUT YOUTH CO: LAB:
Co-created in 2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, and operational in 25 countries across the Asia Pacific region, the Youth Co:Lab initiative aims to create an enabling ecosystem to promote youth leadership, innovation, and social entrepreneurship.

ABOUT ATAL INNOVATION MISSION (AIM)
- AIM including Self-Employment and Talent Utilisation (SETU) is Government of India’s endeavour to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Its objective is to serve as a platform for the promotion of world-class innovation hubs, grand challenges, start-up businesses and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology driven areas.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: YOUTH CO: LAB and ATAL INNOVATION MISSION

Sources: the Hindu.

DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATIONS

CONTEXT
Rajasthan to create pneumoconiosis fund with DMF money. The fund will be used to execute a comprehensive policy on the disease, which is widely prevalent in the mining state.

WHAT IS PNEUMOCONIOSIS?
Pneumoconiosis, a lung disease, mostly affects workers who work in the mining and construction sectors and deal with soil, silica, coal dust and asbestos. The disease includes asbestosis, silicosis and coal workers’ pneumoconiosis.

ABOUT DMFS:
DMFs were instituted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act 2015.

They are non-profit trusts to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining-related operations.

**OBJECTIVE:**

To work for the interest of the benefit of the persons and areas affected mining related operations in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government.

**JURISDICTION:**

Its manner of operation comes under the jurisdiction of the relevant State Government.

The various state DMF rules and the Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) guidelines stipulate some “high priority” issues for DMFs, including:

1. Drinking water.
2. Health
4. Education
5. Livelihood and skill development.
7. Sanitation.

**PRADHAN MANTRI KHANIJ KSHETRA KALYAN YOJANA (PMKKKY):**

The programme is meant to provide for the welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).

**OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME:**

1. To implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government.
2. To minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts.
3. To ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: DMF and objectives of PRADHAN MANTRI KHANIJ KSHETRA KALYAN YOJANA (PMKKKY)
World Cotton Day being observed from 7th October to 11th October 2019 in Geneva.

ORGANISED BY:
The World Trade Organisation (WTO) in collaboration with the Secretariats of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC)

HOSTED BY:
WTO is hosting the event at the request of the Cotton – 4 countries, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali

OBJECTIVES OF THE EVENT:

- To give exposure and recognition to cotton and all its stakeholders in production, transformation and trade.
- To engage donors and beneficiaries and strengthen development assistance for cotton.
- To seek new collaborations with the private sector and investors for the cotton related industries and production in developing countries and promote technological advances, as well as further research and development on cotton.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY:

- The Day will celebrate the many advantages of cotton, from its qualities as a natural fibre, to the benefits people obtain from its production, transformation, trade and consumption.
- It will also serve to shed light on the challenges faced by cotton economies around the world because cotton is important to least developed, developing and developed economies worldwide.
- A single tonne of cotton provides year-round employment for five people on average.
Cotton is a drought-resistant crop ideal for arid climates, it occupies just 2.1% of the world’s arable land, yet it meets 27% of the world’s textiles need.

In addition to its fibre used in textiles and apparel, food products are also derived from cotton like edible oil and animal feed from the seed.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of World Cotton Day

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**PROPOSED OIL REFINERY PROJECT IN MONGOLIA**

**CONTEXT**

Ceremony for commissioning the infrastructure facilities constructed to support the proposed oil refinery project in Mongolia.

**ABOUT THE PROJECT**

- India has announced an additional US $236 million Line of Credit from India to Mongolia beyond the committed US$ 1 billion.
- The Mongol refinery project is the largest project undertaken by India under Lines of Credit (LoC) programme.
- The refinery is expected to have a capacity of 1.5 mmtpa (million metric tons per annum), with diesel and gasoline as the primary products and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), fuel oil and jet fuel being produced as secondary products.
- The Engineers India Ltd, Public Sector Undertaking of the Ministry of Petroleum and natural gas is providing project management consultancy services for this prestigious refinery project in Mongolia near Sainshand in southern Dornogovi province.
- India would be happy to partner with Mongolia to develop its infrastructure as per the priorities decided by the people & Govt. of Mongolia.
- India remains committed to working with the Govt. & people of Mongolia to further strengthen our Strategic Partnership for mutual prosperity.
Apart from the refinery, India has also developed infrastructure that would support the operations at Sainshand.

- Construction of 27 kilometres of railway line, 17.5 kilometres of road and 19 kilometres of power transmission line to connect the refinery to existing networks is almost complete and help the refinery operations immediately after production commences.

**BENEFITS:**

- The refinery is expected to be completed by 2022 and will help Mongolia to cut some of its dependence on Russian fuel.
- Though Mongolia is self-sufficient in oil and has its own oil fields, almost all of its crude oil is exported and all of its finished petrochemical products are imported.
- The refinery will reduce Mongolia’s import dependence and will ensure energy security for the country.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: about the oil refinery project, govt. policies and economic growth

Sources: Pib

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MOUS SIGNED BETWEEN INDIA AND FOREIGN BROADCASTERS

**CONTEXT**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has given ex-post facto approval for the MoUs between India and Foreign Broadcasters in the field of Radio and Television.

**BENEFITS:**

The MoUs with the Foreign Broadcasters will help:

1. Public broadcaster in exploring new visions;
2. New Strategies to address the demands of new technologies and stiff competition;
3. Media liberalization; and  

**MAJOR IMPACT:**

- Broadcasting of programmes to be obtained through mutual exchange, co-production will lead to equity and inclusiveness among viewer/listeners of DD and AIR.
- Exchanges of technical Know-how, expertise and training of manpower would help the public broadcaster to meet the emerging challenges in the field of broadcasting.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: challenges in the field of broadcasting

**Sources:** *the Hindu.*

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**UNICEF LAUNCHED**

**THE CRYPTOCURRENCY FUND**

**CONTEXT**

New venture of UNICEF will now be able to receive, hold and disburse donations of cryptocurrencies ether and bitcoin. For the first time ever the United Nations organizations, UNICEF will use cryptocurrencies.

**AIM:**

The aim of the UNICEF’s Cryptocurrency Fund is to fund open source technology benefiting children and young people around the world.

**HOW ITS WORK?**
Under the structure of the UNICEF Cryptocurrency Fund, contributions will be held in their 
cryptocurrency of contribution and granted out in the same cryptocurrency.

**FUNDING:**
Ethereum Foundation is the first contributor to the UNICEF Cryptocurrency Fund. This fund will 
benefit 3 grantees of the UNICEF Innovation Fund and also a project coordinated by the Global 
Imaging Genetics of Adolescents (GIGA) initiative to connect schools across the world to the internet.

**UNICEF**
The United Nations Children's Fund is a United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian 
and developmental aid to children around the world.

**ABOUT THE AGENCY**

- Headquarters: New York, New York, United States
- Head: Henrietta H. Fore
- Founded: 11 December 1946, New York, New York, United States
- Founders: United Nations General Assembly, Ludwik Rajchman
- Subsidiaries: UNICEF Ireland, Girls' Education Movement
- Parent organizations: United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Economic and Social 
  Council
- Organization aim: To provide emergency food and healthcare to children

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: the Cryptocurrency Fund and unicef

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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‘COMPREHENSIVE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM’ (CCIT)

CONTEXT

Vice President appeals to world community to ensure early conclusion of UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

WHAT IS IT?

- The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism is a proposed treaty which intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, arms, and safe havens.
- It is a draft proposed by India in 1996 that is yet to be adopted by the UNGA.

WHAT DOES IT CALL FOR?

- Universal definition of terrorism: no good terrorist or bad terrorist.
- Ban on all groups regardless of country of operation, cut off access to funds and safe havens.
- Prosecution of all groups including cross border groups
- Amending domestic laws to make cross-border terror an extraditable offence
- It also addresses, among other things, the issue of Pakistan’s alleged support for cross-border terrorism in south Asia.

CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY VARIOUS COUNTRIES:

- **US + Allies:**
  - Concerns over definition of terrorism, including acts by US soldiers in international interventions without UN mandate

- **Latin American countries:**
  - Concerns over international humanitarian laws being ignored
  - There are also concerns that convention will be used to target Pakistan and restrict rights of self-determination groups in Palestine, Kashmir etc.
Foreign terrorist fighters:

- Several delegations expressed concern at the phenomenon of “foreign terrorist fighters” (FTF) and the use of social media and the Internet by terrorist organizations to recruit new adherents and spread propaganda.
- In this regard, delegations generally expressed their support to the framework arising from Security Council resolution 2178 (2014).
- In particular, the importance of addressing “life cycle” issues concerning the FTF phenomenon was underlined.

CAUSES OF TERRORISM:

- economic and political conditions
- international and internal conflict,
- foreign occupation,
- State failure,
- lack of development
- military interventions against sovereign countries were also among the root causes of terrorism.
- The need to take a holistic, whole-of-society approach was often mentioned; it was observed, in particular, that development is in itself a weapon against terrorism.
- lack of integration in society is one of the driving factors of terrorism,

WAY AHEAD

- Societal unity must be fostered.
- The importance of education to tolerance and mutual understanding.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: driving factors of terrorism and development as weapon against terrorism

Sources: the Hindu.
THE TUMPEK KANDANG CEREMONY
AT BALI ZOO

CONTEXT

The Tumpek Kandang ceremony is a tribute to God of Creator and Preserver (God Shiva). It is celebrated in Bali Zoo on October 12 2019.

PLACE:

Indonesia

PURPOSE:

The ceremony was to pray for an eternal safety and a healthy state of the animals, also to hope for a disease-free condition.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CEREMONY:

- To respect the meaningful bond that grow in a relationship between human and other well-beings, especially animals, which by some means, the celebration also gave hope to wildlife preservation.
- All animals were well-fed with special treats and the temple master sprinkled each of them with holy water.
- This ceremony is also a way to appreciate compassion towards all animals at Bali Zoo.
- On a different note, Tumpek Kandang is also associated with Tri Hita Karana, a Balinese philosophy of life.
- The philosophy teaches us three causes of well-being, one of them is Palemahan which is a Balinese word to remain care about our surroundings and that surely include animals.
- The unique vibe and colorful atmosphere of Tumpek Kandang succesfully attracted many domestic and international tourists that happened to be at Bali Zoo during the ceremony was held.
- The spirit of this ceremony is to keep the balance between human and animals since they have mutually beneficial relationship.
BALI ZOO

OBJECTIVE VISION

“BALI ZOO IS ONE OF THE BEST ZOO IN ASIA PACIFIC. IT IS THE PREMIER CHOICE OF RECREATIONAL PARK OFFERING FUN EDUCATION ON WILDLIFE.”

MISSION

- Provide Best Animal Welfare as Our Commitment and Responsibility to Animal Conservation
- Provides Unique and Memorable Experience to Visitors
- Extend Strong Brand Presence in Market
- Financial Stability & Cash Flow
- Adhering to Government Regulations
- Create a Happy Workplace to Employees Where They Can Personally Learn & Grow

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Tumpek Kandang ceremony

Sources: the Hindu.

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REMBRANDT

CONTEXT

India and the Netherlands will commemorate Rembrandt’s 350th death anniversary with a showcase that will celebrate the two countries’ culture and heritage.

WHO WAS REMBRANDT?

- Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606 – 1669) was a Dutch draughtsman, painter and printmaker.
- He is generally considered one of the greatest visual artists in the history of art and the most important in Dutch art history.
• Rembrandt made 25 drawings based on Mughal miniatures from India during 1656 to 1661, at the height of his career.
• This is in spite of the fact that the Dutch artist never set foot on Indian soil.
• These miniatures include paintings of Shah Jahan, Akbar, Jahangir and Dara Shikoh.
• They may also have influenced the costumes and other aspects of his works.

REMBRANDT HARMENSZOON VAN RIJN

Born: 15 July 1606
Place: Leiden, Dutch Republic (now the Netherlands)
Died: October 4, 1669 (aged 63)
Nationality: Dutch
Education: Jacob van Swanenburg, Pieter Lastman
Known for: Painting, printmaking, drawing
Movement: Dutch Golden Age Baroque
Notable work: Self-portraits

The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp (1632)
Belshazzar’s Feast (1635)
The Night Watch (1642)
Bathsheba at Her Bath (1654)
Syndics of the Drapers’ Guild (1662)
The Hundred Guilder Print (etching, c. 1647–1649)

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: REMBRANDT HARMENSZOON

Sources: the Hindu.
A Chinese company has signed an agreement to lease an entire island in the Solomon Islands.

HISTORY OF TULAGI ISLAND:

- Now Tulagi, part of the Solomon Islands, served as a South Pacific headquarters for Britain and then Japan.
- During Second World War, its natural deepwater harbour across from Guadalcanal made it a military gem soldiers fought and died for.
- Tulagi, an island about two square kilometres with a population of 1,200, is the site of a former Japanese naval base and was the scene of fierce fighting in World War II.

WORLD WAR II

- The Japanese occupied Tulagi on May 3, 1942, with the intention of establishing a seaplane base nearby (see Japanese Tulagi landing). The ships in Tulagi harbor were raided by planes from USS Yorktown the following day in a prelude to the Battle of the Coral Sea.
- U.S. forces, primarily the 1st Marine Raiders, landed on August 7 and captured Tulagi as part of Operation Watchtower after a day of hard fighting.
- After its capture by Naval and Marine forces, the island hosted a squadron of PT boats for a year which included LTJG John F. Kennedy's PT-109, as well as other ancillary facilities. A small 20-bed dispensary was operated on Tulagi until its closure in 1946. The island also formed part of Purvis Bay, which hosted many US Navy ships during 1942 and 1943.
POSTWAR

The present-day Tulagi has a fishing fleet.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

Country: Solomon Islands
Province: Central
Island group: Nggela (Florida) Islands
Area: 2.08 km² (0.80 sq mi)
Population: 1,251

ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

- The agreement with state-owned China Sam Enterprise group mentions developing special economic zone and a refinery on the island.
- The Solomons cut ties to Taipei and allied with Beijing just a few days before the Tulagi deal. A second Pacific nation, Kiribati, followed suit the same week.
- But the island’s port and its potential for dual use as a Chinese military base is certain to raise concerns with the United States and Australia.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS:

- The agreement includes provisions for a fishery base, an operations centre, and “the building or enhancement of the airport.
- The development of “a special economic zone or any other industry that is suitable for any development.”
- A military installation would carry strategic and symbolic significance.
- China Sam is interested in building an oil and gas terminal.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims: Tulagi Island

For mains: Chinese ambitious naval expansion

Sources: the Hindu.

Figure 5 Tulagi is north of Guadalcanal Island
World Iodine Deficiency Day or also known as Global Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) is observed on 21 October.

**AIM:**

To create awareness of the adequate use of iodine among the people and the day also highlights the consequences of iodine deficiency.

**WHAT IS IODINE AND WHY IT IS NECESSARY FOR OUR BODY?**

- Iodine is required for the synthesis of the thyroid hormones, thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3).
- It is essential for the normal growth and development and well-being of the human being.
- The micronutrient is required around 100-150 micrograms in the body.
- It also helps in protein metabolism, increases metabolic rate of the body; regulate the growth of bones and development of brain.
- Basically, thyroid hormones are linked to protein, fat and carbohydrate metabolism in cells.

**Iodine helps in regulating various functions of our body like:**

- Body temperature
- Breakdown of fat
- Growth
- Reproduction
- Muscle and nerve function
- Heart rate etc.

**WHAT IS IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDERS?**

- Deficiency in Iodine is a major cause of preventable mental retardation.
- The deficiency is especially damaging during pregnancy and in early childhood. In acute forms of IDDs will lead to cretinism, stillbirth, and miscarriage.
- Even a mild deficiency of iodine will cause a significant loss of learning ability.
- Mental retardation
- Goitre
- Still birth
- Hypothyroidism
- Subnormal intelligence
- Neuromuscular weakness
- Defect in vision, hearing and speech
- Spasticity
- Intrauterine death etc.

**SOURCES OF IODINE**

- Milk
- Meat
- Sea Fish
- Shellfish
- Eggs
- Cereal grains
- Salt
- Yogurt
- Sea vegetables
- Vegetables and Fruits etc.

**NEED:**

- Disorders caused due to iodine deficiency have become a major public health problem worldwide.
- It was observed that almost one-third of the world population is at the risk of iodine deficiency disorders.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 54 countries are still iodine deficient.

**WAY AHEAD**

- Sustainable salt iodization programmes are necessary to strengthen.
- It is necessary to take iodine in our diet. But excess of everything is bad. It should be taken in proper quantity as required by our body.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: World Iodine Deficiency Day

**Sources:** the Hindu.
October 2019 marks 25 years of Pulse Polio Programme in India.

**ABOUT POLIO:**

- Polio also known as poliomyelitis is a highly contagious viral disease caused due to the attacks the nervous system and children younger than 5 years old are more likely to contract the virus than any other group.
- Poliovirus usually spreads from person to person through infected faecal matter entering the mouth. Poliovirus also spreads by food or water containing human faeces and less commonly from infected saliva.

**HOW PULSE POLIO PROGRAMME BEGAN?**

- “It all began with a single thought that if ballot papers can reach each person, two life saving drops of vaccination too can reach every child”.
- The success of administering polio vaccination drops to 12 lakh children through 4000 ‘polio kendras’ on 2nd October, 1994 in the city of Delhi, led to a countrywide movement and Pulse Polio Program was taken countrywide a year later in 1995.

**STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN POLIO FREE STATUS IN INDIA:**

- Maintaining community immunity through high quality National and Sub National polio rounds each year.
- An extremely high level of vigilance through surveillance across the country for any importation or circulation of poliovirus and VDPV is being maintained. Environmental surveillance (sewage sampling) have been established to detect poliovirus transmission and as a surrogate indicator of the progress as well for any programmatic interventions strategically in Mumbai, Delhi, Patna, Kolkata Punjab and Gujarat.
All States and Union Territories in the country have developed a Rapid Response Team (RRT) to respond to any polio outbreak in the country.

An Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) has also been developed by all States indicating steps to be undertaken in case of detection of a polio case.

To reduce risk of importation from neighbouring countries, international border vaccination is being provided through continuous vaccination teams (CVT) to all eligible children round the clock. These are provided through special booths set up at the international borders that India shares with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan Nepal and Myanmar.

A rolling emergency stock of OPV is being maintained to respond to detection/importation of wild poliovirus (WPV) or emergence of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus (cVDPV).

**PULSE POLIO PROGRAMME 2019:**

- As part of the Pulse Polio Program 2019 more than 17 crore children of less than five years across the country will be administered polio drops.
- The pulse polio programme conducted every year aims to protect children from the polio disease by conducting two nationwide mass polio vaccination campaigns and two to three sub-national campaigns each year.
- The pulse polio programme 2019 is aimed at sustaining the polio eradication from the country.
- India was declared polio-free country in the year 2014.
- India’s last reported cases of wild polio were in West Bengal and Gujarat on 13 January 2011.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: The pulse polio programme and Steps Taken by the Government to Maintain Polio Free Status in India

Sources: the Hindu.

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**UNGA 2019**

**CONTEXT**

The 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is currently on at the UN headquarters in New York.
WHAT IS UNGA?

Popularly known as the parliament of the world, where all the 193 UN member states are represented, the UNGA is the deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN.

BACKGROUND

- Methodist Central Hall, London, the location of the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946.
- The first session of the UN General Assembly was convened on 10 January 1946 in the Methodist Central Hall in London and included representatives of 51 nations.
- The next few annual sessions were held in different cities: the second session in New York City, and the third in Paris.
- It moved to the permanent Headquarters of the United Nations in New York City at the start of its seventh regular annual session, on 14 October 1952.
- In December 1988, in order to hear Yasser Arafat, the General Assembly organized its 29th session in the Palace of Nations, in Geneva, Switzerland.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

President: Tijjani Muhammad-Bande
Headquarters: New York, New York, United States
Founder: United Nations
Founded: 1945, New York, United States
Abbreviation: GA; UNGA; AG
Subsidiaries: UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS:

- Takes a decision on important matters such as peace and security, discusses various global issues and budgetary matters.
- Decides on matters such as the admission of new members.
- Decisions are taken through a vote. Admission of new members and budgetary matters require a two-thirds majority, while the decision on other issues are taken by a simple majority.
- Each sovereign state gets one vote and the votes are not binding on the membership, except in budgetary matters.
- The Assembly has no binding votes or veto powers like the UN Security Council.
- The UNGA can express world opinion, promote international cooperation in various fields and make recommendations to the UNSC and elect the Security Council’s non-permanent members.
WHICH COUNTRIES IS NOT A PART OF UNGA?

Among the world’s 196 countries, 193 are UN member states and three nations-

1. Palestine,
2. the Vatican City
3. Taiwan

Is not a part of the international organization as their country status is not recognized globally due to political and religious reasons?

Division of The General Assembly By Membership In The Five United Nations Regional Groups

- The African Group
- The Asia-Pacific Group
- The Middle and Eastern European Group
- The Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC)
- The Western European and Others Group (WEOG)
- No group

ACCORDING TO THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAY:

- Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States;
- Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General;
- Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament;
- Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it;
- Discuss, with the same exception, and make recommendations on any questions within the scope of the Charter or affecting the powers and functions of any organ of the United Nations;
- Initiate studies and make recommendations to promote international political cooperation, the development and codification of international law, the realization of human rights and
fundamental freedoms, and international collaboration in the economic, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and health fields;
  - Make recommendations for the peaceful settlement of any situation that might impair friendly relations among countries;
  - Consider reports from the Security Council and other United Nations organs.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: the role and functions of UNGA

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS RESOURCE CENTRE (NHSRC)**

**CONTEXT**

Designation of National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC) as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Priority Medical Devices and Health Technology Policy

**VISION**

We are committed to facilitate the attainment of universal access to equitable, affordable and quality healthcare, which is accountable and responsive to the needs of the people of India.

**MISSION**

Technical support and capacity building for strengthening public health systems in India

**WHY DO WE NEED SUCH COLLABORATIONS?**

Such global collaborations in the area of health technology will ensure that scientific and technological advances, research and development as well as innovative technologies play a
substantial supportive role in healthcare and enable us to reach the public health goals and achieve universal health coverage.

**ABOUT NHSRC:**

- Set up under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to serve as an apex body for technical assistance.
- Established in 2006.
- Mandate is to assist in policy and strategy development in the provision and mobilization of technical assistance to the states and in capacity building for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) at the centre and in the states.

**COMPOSITION:**

- It has a 23 member Governing Body, chaired by the Secretary, MoHFW, Government of India with the Mission Director, NRHM as the Vice Chairperson of the GB and the Chairperson of its Executive Committee.
- Of the 23 members, 14 are ex-officio senior health administrators, including four from the states. Nine are public health experts, from academics and Management Experts.
- The Executive Director, NHSRC is the Member Secretary of both the Governing body and the Executive Committee.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: need of NHSRC

Sources: the Hindu.

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**THE COUNCIL OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**CONTEXT**

The 13th Conference of Central Council of Health and Family Welfare were inaugurated.
AIM:

The conference also aims to promote steps towards the target of National Health Policy 2017, that is, to allocate 2.5% of GDP to health by 2025. The purpose of the conference is to build a consensus on National wealth priorities.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is an Indian government ministry charged with health policy in India.
- It is also responsible for all government programs relating to family planning in India.
- The Minister of Health and Family Welfare holds cabinet rank as a member of the Council of Ministers.
- The current minister is Harsh Vardhan. The Ministry regularly publishes the Indian Pharmacopoeia since 1955 through Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) an autonomous body under the ministry for setting standards for drugs, pharmaceuticals and healthcare devices and technologies in India.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Formed: 1976

Jurisdiction: India Republic of India

Headquarters: Cabinet Secretariat Raisina Hill, New Delhi

Agency executive: Harsh Vardhan, Cabinet Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State

Flagship programs: Ayushman Bharat, National Control of Tuberculosis Program, National Nutrition Mission, etc.

The conference is to be conducted on 4 pillars of healthcare namely

- Universal Health Coverage
- Mission mode interventions
- Quality and accessible affordable healthcare services
- Adequate Infrastructure

COMPOSITION

The ministry is composed of two departments: Departments of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Health Research

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: The Council of Health and Family Welfare

Sources: the Hindu.

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UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION (UPU)

CONTEXT

In a unilateral decision, Pakistan has stopped exchange of postal mails with India since August 27.

BACKGROUND:

Other than the UPU, three agreements cover postal exchange between India and Pakistan — Exchange of Value Payable Article, 1948; Exchange of Postal Article, 1974; and International Speed Post Agreement, 1987.

Who regulates postal exchange between one country and another?

The United Nations’ Universal Postal Union (UPU) frames rules for international mail exchange, and fixes rates for international postal services.

Can one UPU member-country unilaterally stop postal exchange with another?

Under UPU rules, when a country decides to suspend exchange with a country, it must notify the operator of the other country (in India’s case, India Post) and, if possible, the duration for which services are being stopped. The UPU’s International Bureau too has to be notified.

ABOUT UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION (UPU):

- A specialized agency of United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to worldwide postal system.
- Established in 1874 and is second oldest international organization worldwide after International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was established in 1865.
- Headquartered in Berne, Switzerland.
- Have 192 member countries.
- It is primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players among member countries.
- UPU has four units: the Congress, the Council of Administration, the International Bureau, and the Postal Operations Council.
- Regulates 40 lakh postal outlets worldwide.
- India joined the UPU on July 1, 1876 and Pakistan on November 10, 1947.

**FUNCTIONS:**

- Helps to ensure truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
- Sets rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations for growth in mail, financial and parcel services volumes and also to improve quality of service for customers.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: functions of Universal Postal Union (UPU)

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE**

**CONTEXT**

India is hosting the second Assembly of ISA. Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is hosting the event.

**ABOUT ISA:**

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of more than 120 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, now extended to all members of UN.

- The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.

**OBJECTIVES:**
The ISA’s major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.

**AGENCY OVERVIEW**

Headquarters location: Gurugram

Founded: 2015

Founded at: Paris, France

Membership: All members of UN

Director General: H.E. Upendra Tripathy

Region served: All members of UN

Purposes: Sustainability, Natural environment, Public transport

**WHAT IT DOES?**

As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.

**GEOGRAPHICAL IMPORTANCE**

- The area of Earth located in between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn is called the tropical (torrid) zone.

- The points on the Tropic of Cancer are the northernmost points up to which the Sun can pass directly overhead.

- Similarly, the southernmost points are on the Tropic of Capricorn which follows the same criteria. Location at the north of the Tropic of Cancer shows the Sun appearing at the south of the zenith.

- The sunniest countries of the world are on the African continent, ranging from Somalia- Horn of Africa-, east to Niger, west and north to Egypt.

**DO YOU KNOW?**

Palau, an archipelago of over 500 islands in Oceania, became the 76th signatory country to join the International Solar Alliance. "President of the Republic of Palau H.E. Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr. signed the Framework Agreement of the Int'l Solar Alliance."
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: functions of International Solar Alliance

Sources: the Hindu.

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INDO-MONGOLIAN JOINT EXERCISE

NOMADIC ELEPHANT- XIV

CONTEXT


Period:

14 days

Place:

Bakloh

HIGHLIGHTS

The Mongolian Army is being represented by officers and troops of the elite 084 Air Borne Special Task Battalion while Indian Army is being represented by a battalion of the RAJPUTANA RIFLES Regiment.

OBJECTIVE:

- The joint exercise will enhance defence co-operation and military relations between the two nations.
- It is an ideal platform for the armies of both the nations to share their experiences & best practices and gain mutually during the joint training.

www.iasupsc.com
WHAT’S IN THE EXERCISE?

- To evolving various tactical drills in counter-terror environment like Convoy Protection Drill, Room Intervention Drills, Ambush/ Counter Ambush Drills, while jointly conducting counter terrorist operations under UN mandate.
- The joint training will also lay emphasis on conducting operations by a cohesive subunit, comprising of troops from both the armies, in an adverse operational conditions thus enhancing the interoperability between the two armies.
- The training planned by both the contingents will go a long way in capacity building for conducting joint operations by the two armies.
- Both the Armies will also share their valuable experiences in countering such situations as also refine drills and procedures for joint operations.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: defence co-operation and military relations between the other nations.

Sources: pib.

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VEER KUTUMB RALLY

CONTEXT

Rally organised by the Indian Army as part of its activities to observe 2019 as the ‘Year of the Next of Kin’, in jammu & Kashmir.

AIM:
To reach out to veterans, veer naris, widows and their families.

WHAT’S IN THE RALLY?

- Large number of ex-servicemen and Veer Naris took part in the rally during which they were briefed about their rights.
- Taking many steps for the welfare of Ex-Servicemen and Veer Naris and the pension of veer naaris.
The last exercise, EX EASTERN BRIDGE-IV was held in 2017 at Jamnagar, India.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: about veer kutumb rally

Sources: the Hindu.

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EX EASTERN BRIDGE-V

CONTEXT


PLACE:

Masirah, Oman

HIGHLIGHTS:

- IAF contingent comprises of MiG-29 and C-17 aircraft.
- MiG-29 will be exercising with Royal Air Force Oman’s Eurofighter Typhoon, F-16 and Hawk.

SIGNIFICANCE

- The exercise will enhance inter-operability during mutual operations between the two Air Forces and will provide an opportunity to learn from each other’s best practices.
- For the first time, MiG-29 fighter aircraft will be participating in an International Exercise outside India.
- The participation of Indian Air Force in the exercise
will also promote professional interaction, exchange of experience and operational knowledge.

- It will also provide a good opportunity to the air-warriors to operate in an international environment.

**OTHER EXERCISES BETWEEN INDIA AND OMAN**

- Naseem Al-Bahr is the naval exercise conducted between both the countries.
- AL Nagah is the joint bilateral exercise between the armies of two countries.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: military exercise of India with other nations

**Sources:** pib

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**SEDITION LAW**

**CONTEXT**

Recently, a Bihar court directed the filing of an FIR against 49 eminent persons who signed an open letter to the Prime Minister expressing concerns over mob lynching.

However, many experts opined that this move is shocking, disappointing, and completely disregards the true meaning of the law.

**CHARGES OF SEDITION-RECENT CONCERNS:**

- There have been many incidents in recent times where “misguided” people have been termed “anti-national”.
- Law enforcement agencies forget the fact that the sentiment could have been demonstrated through a slogan, a cheer, a statement, protest against a nuclear power project, or an innocuous post on social media. In all these cases, the state, across regimes, has filed charges of sedition.
- Authorities often forget the fact that sedition can’t be applied to instances of criticism of the government or a political functionary.
More importantly, words alone are not enough for such a charge to be slapped. Incitement to violence is the most crucial ingredient of the offence of sedition.

Going through the numbers that the National Crime Records Bureau puts out every year, it is clear that despite the rise in sedition cases, convictions happen in barely a few.

Even if these people are not convicted, the slapping of these charges is a way the governments over the years have been sending a strong message to its own people—obey or be ready to face consequences.

**WHAT IS SECTION 124-A OF THE INDIAN PENAL CODE?**

Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law shall be punished with imprisonment for life or any shorter term, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine.

**WHY SHOULD IT BE SCRAPPED?**

- Draconian laws such as the Section 124-A only serve to give a legal veneer to the regime’s persecution of voices and movements against oppression by casting them as anti-national.
- Short term measures to be put up in place:
  - All speech-related offences should be made bailable offences; this would lessen the harmful impact of using arrest and custody as a way of harassing anyone exercising their rights under Article 19(1)(a).
  - The offences should be made non-cognisable so that there is at least a judicial check on the police acting on the basis of politically motivated complaints.
  - In the case of hate speech, it is important to raise the burden of proof on those who claim that their sentiments are hurt rather than accept them at face value. And finally, it is crucial that courts begin to take action against those who bring malicious complaints against speech acts.

**OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE SUPREME COURT:**

- In 1962, the Supreme Court decided on the constitutionality of Section 124A in Kedar Nath Singh v State of Bihar.
- It upheld the constitutionality of sedition, but limited its application to “acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence”.
- It distinguished these from “very strong speech” or the use of “vigorous words” strongly critical of the government.
- In 1995, the Supreme Court, in Balwant Singh v State of Punjab, acquitted persons from charges of sedition for shouting slogans such as “Khalistan Zindabaad” and “Raj Karega Khalsa” outside a cinema after Indira Gandhi’s assassination.
- Instead of looking at the “tendency” of the words to cause public disorder, the Court held that mere sloganeering which evoked no public response did not amount to sedition, for
which a more overt act was required; the accused did not intend to “incite people to create disorder” and no “law and order problem” actually occurred.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** SEDITION law and SECTION 124-A OF THE INDIAN PENAL CODE

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**DNA TECHNOLOGY BILL**

**CONTEXT**

The DNA Technology Regulation Bill, which seeks to control the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of a person, has been referred to a parliamentary standing committee for examination.

**NEED FOR THE LEGISLATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE:**

The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world. Therefore, the new bill aims to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL:**

As per the Bill, national and regional DNA data banks will be set up for maintaining a national database for identification of victims, suspects in cases, undertrials, missing persons and unidentified human remains.

**PUNISHMENT:**

According to it, those leaking the DNA profile information to people or entities who are not entitled to have it, will be punished with a jail term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs. 1 lakh. Similar, punishment has also been provided for those who seek the information on DNA profiles illegally.

**USAGE:**
As per the bill, all DNA data, including DNA profiles, DNA samples and records, will only be used for identification of the person and not for “any other purpose”.

The bill’s provisions will enable the cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

The Bill establishes a DNA Regulatory Board to accredit the DNA laboratories that analyse DNA samples to establish the identity of an individual.

**BENEFITS OF THE BILL:**

- By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country.
- There is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable and the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.

**DNA TECHNOLOGY- SIGNIFICANCE:**

- DNA analysis is an extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.
- A hair sample, or even bloodstains from clothes, from a scene of crime, for example, can be matched with that of a suspect, and it can, in most cases, be conclusively established whether the DNA in the sample belongs to the suspected individual. As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.
- It is expected that the expanded use of DNA technology would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

**CONCERNS:**

**Prone to misuse:**

- Information from DNA samples can reveal not just how a person looks, or what their eye colour or skin colour is, but also more intrusive information like their allergies, or susceptibility to diseases.
- As a result, there is a greater risk of information from DNA analysis getting misused.

**Safety issues:**

- There’s also the question of whether the DNA labs accredited by the Regulatory Board are allowed to store copies of the samples they analyse.
- And if so, how the owners of those samples can ensure the data is safe or needs to be removed from their own indices.

**Issues over storage:**
It’s not clear if DNA samples collected to resolve civil disputes will also be stored in the databank (regional or national), although there is no index specific for the same.

If they will be stored, then the problem cascades because the Bill also does not provide for information, consent and appeals.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of the DNA technology Bill

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**ANNUAL CRIME IN INDIA REPORT 2017**

**CONTEXT**

After a delay of two years the annual Crime in India Report 2017 was published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT**

Delhi had the highest crime rate in the country with 1050 crimes committed per one lakh of the population as listed under the Indian Penal Code.

**CRIME AGAINST WOMEN:**

- 3,59,849 cases of crime against women were reported in the country in 2017 an increase of 6% with respect to 2016 figures
- Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 56,011 cases followed by Maharashtra with 31,979 cases and West Bengal 30,002
- Majority of cases under crimes against women were registered under ‘Cruelty by Husband or his

**DO YOU KNOW?**

As many as 2,194 murders were reported across 19 cities in India, down 6% over 2014. Delhi reported the most—479 murders in 2016, with a murder rate of 2.9 per 100,000 populations.
Relatives’ (27.9%) followed by ‘Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty’ (21.7%), ‘Kidnapping & Abduction of Women’ (20.5%) and ‘Rape’ (7.0%)

RIOTING:
- 58,880 incidents of rioting were reported, of which the maximum incidents were reported from Bihar – 11,698, followed by Uttar Pradesh – 8,990 and Maharashtra – 7,743.

SC/ST PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES ACT:
- The incidents registered under this act saw an increase from 5,082 in 2016 to 5,775 in 2017.
- Incidents of crime related to Scheduled Tribes dipped from 844 in 2016 to 720 in 2017.

KIDNAPPING/ABDUCTION:
- A total of 95,893 cases of kidnapping and abduction were registered during 2017, showing an increase of 9.0% over 2016 (88,008 cases).

FALSE/FAKE NEWS AND RUMOURS
- The NCRB for the first time collected data on circulation of “false/fake news and rumours.”
- Under the category, maximum incidents were reported from Madhya Pradesh (138), Uttar Pradesh (32) and Kerala (18).

ABOUT NCRB
- NCRB was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators, based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981).
- It was set up by merging the Directorate of Coordination and Police Computer (DCPC), Inter State Criminals Data Branch of CBI, Central Finger Print Bureau of CBI, and Statistical Branch of BPR&D.
- NCRB was entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project in the year 2009.
- The project connects 15000+ police stations and 6000 higher offices of police in the country.
- In 2017, NCRB launched National Digital Police Portal- It allows search for a criminal / suspect on the CCTNS database apart from providing various services to citizens like filing of complaints online and seeking antecedent verification of tenants, domestic helps, drivers.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: NCRB and Key highlights of the report
Sources: the Hindu.

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Village Secretariat Programme

CONTEXT

Village Secretariat system launched in Andhra Pradesh.

AIM TO LAUNCH

To strengthen village ecosystem

KEY FACTS:

- Under the new system, the AP government, one Village Secretariat has been set up for every population of 2,000, with each one comprising close to a dozen village officials (from different departments like police, revenue, etc).
- The idea behind it, according to the state government, is to ensure that its services reach people on the ground, and also to strengthen the existing Panchayat Raj system. 
- Village Secretariats would act as a bridge between the government and the people by rendering over 500 types of services at their doorstep.
- These institutions would showcase government programmes and make pictorial representations of government schools and hospitals under the caption ‘then and now’ to show how reforms have changed their functioning.
- The Secretariats will provide 500 kinds of services and will work as a liaison between the government and people.

CRITICISM:

While the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has maintained that this will make government services more accessible, the system, however, is in complete contrast to the earlier trajectory of the state, which had been pushing for e-governance or online services instead under former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims: Key features of the programme

For Mains: Significance and the need for this programme

Sources: the Hindu.

15 POINT REFORM CHARTER FOR BETTER FUNCTIONING OF PARLIAMENT

CONTEXT

Expressing concern over the functioning of parliamentary institutions in the country and erosion of public trust in them, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu has unveiled a 15-point reform charter.

THE 15-POINT CHARTER INCLUDES:

- Parties need to ensure attendance of at least 50% of their legislators all through the proceedings of the Houses by adopting a roster system.
- Review of anti-defection law.
- Review of the whip system which is “stifling reasonable dissent even on non-consequential matters”.
- Set up special courts for time-bound adjudication of criminal complaints against legislators.
- Pre and post legislative impact assessment.
- Address problem of rising number of legislators with criminal background.
- Governments should be responsive to opposition and opposition to be responsible and constructive while resorting to available parliamentary instruments
- Consensus on the proposal for simultaneous elections.
- Steps should be taken for the effective functioning of the Parliamentary Committees.
- The representation of women in legislatures needs to be raised.
CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS:

The present pitfalls of our parliamentary democracy are too well known to be elaborated. Briefly, these include:

- Declining number of sittings of legislatures.
- Persistent disruptions.
- Declining quality of debates.
- Growing number of legislatures with criminal record.
- High degree of absenteeism.
- Inadequate representation of women.
- Rising money and muscle power in elections.
- Lack of inner democracy in functioning of the political parties.
- Poor knowledge, low argumentative power of the masses, negative influences of poverty and economic disparities.
- Faulty ‘First Pass the Post (FPTP) election system.
- Society’s perpetual habit of accepting all permeable state to control public and private affairs.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims: THE 15-POINT CHARTER

For Mains: how will you criticize the 15-POINT CHARTER?

Sources: pib.

PARYATAN PARV 2019

CONTEXT

The Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Information & Broadcasting inaugurated the nationwide “Paryatan Parv 2019”.

OBJECTIVE:
To encourage Indians to visit various tourist destinations of the country and also to spread the message of ‘Tourism for All’.

The idea of Paryatan Parv is to propagate the message of ‘Dekho Apna Desh’.

**COMPONENTS**

The three components of Paryatan Parv, are:

1. **Dekho Apna Desh:**
   To encourage Indians to visit their own country, in the run up to the parv, several activities have been organised across the Country like Photography contest covering tourism attractions and experiences, promotion on Social Media, Tourism related Quiz, Essay, Debate and Painting Competitions for Students. General public engagement for the event will be promoted through the MyGov platform.

2. **Tourism for All:**
   Tourism Events at sites across all States in the country are being organised. The activities at these sites will include illumination in and around the Sites, Cultural Programmes of Dance, Music, Theatre, Story Telling, Sensitisation Programmes for Stakeholders around the Sites, Tourism Exhibitions, Showcasing Culture, Cuisine and Handicrafts / Handlooms, Guided Heritage Walks, etc.

3. **Tourism & Governance:**
   Interactive Sessions & Workshops with Stakeholders on varied themes have been organized across the Country as a part of the Paryatan parv activities.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Paryatan Parv 2019

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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“**AUDIO ODIGOS**”

**CONTEXT**

Ministry of Tourism launches Audio Guide facility App “Audio Odigos” for 12 sites of India (including Iconic Sites).
FEATURES:

- Audio odigo offers Government of India verified content, with visuals & voice over support.
- With Audio Odigos, tourists will now enjoy a more enriching experience and take back historical insights of the Indian culture and heritage.
- The Audio Odigos app contains an inbuilt map of the site for a smooth navigation during the tour.
- Listeners will be offered various versions of history like Synopsis, Detailed History and Podcasts.
- The audio can be chosen in their preferred language & version of the history.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: features of “Audio Odigos” app

Sources: the Hindu.

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DIAGNOSTIC KITS DEVELOPED UNDER ‘MAKE IN INDIA’ INITIATIVE

CONTEXT

Two diagnostic kits developed by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) – Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) under the ‘Make in India’ initiative, namely the Bluetongue sandwich ELISA (sELISA) and the Japanese Encephalitis IgM ELISA kit for the control of Swine and Detection of Antigen.

WHAT IS JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS?

Japanese Encephalitis is a re-emerging viral zoonotic disease leading to death of children every year in the country.

WHAT IS BLUETONGUE (BT)?
Bluetongue (BT) virus is an insect-transmitted viral disease of domestic and wild ruminants that includes the camelid species.

**BENEFITS:**

- The release of these two Kits will definitely be beneficial for not only the farming community, but the society as a whole.
- This indigenous technology will not just help save foreign exchange as the newly developed kits cost ten times lesser than the imported ones but also has the potential to earn foreign exchange.
- As compared to the commercial kit available in the market at a price of Rs. 52,000; the ICAR-IVRI developed is available for the farmers at a minimal price of Rs. 5,000 only.
- Each kit is meant for testing around 45 samples.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: the Bluetongue sandwich ELISA (sELISA) and the Japanese Encephalitis IgM ELISA diagnostic kit

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**THE GANDHIAN CHALLENGE**

**CONTEXT**

On the 150th birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, AIM, NITI Aayog’s Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and UNICEF India, including Generation Unlimited, have launched ‘The Gandhian Challenge’.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- To provide a platform for every child across India to ideate innovative solutions for a sustainable India of their dreams, using Gandhi’s principles
- The winners of The Gandhian Challenge will be awarded by NITI Aayog’s Atal Innovation Mission and UNICEF on the occasion of Children’s Day in November.
The contest – open for every child in India from 2 October to 20 October – also celebrates 70 years of partnership between Government of India and UNICEF India to enable Every Right for Every Child.

ABOUT AIM:
AIM is the Government of India’s flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. AIM’s objective is to develop new programmes and policies for fostering innovation in different sectors of the economy.

SIX MAJOR INITIATIVES OF AIM:

1. **Atal Tinkering Labs** - Creating problem-solving mindset across schools in India.
2. **Atal Incubation Centers** - Fostering world class start-ups and adding a new dimension to the incubator model.
3. **Atal New India Challenges** - Fostering product innovations and aligning them to the needs of various sectors/ministries.
4. **Mentor India Campaign** - A national Mentor network in collaboration with public sector, corporates and institutions, to support all the initiatives of the mission.
5. **Atal Community Innovation Center** - To stimulate community centric innovation and ideas in the unserved/underserved regions of the country including Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
6. **ARISE** - To stimulate innovation and research in the MSME industry.

ABOUT UNICEF INDIA AND GENERATION UNLIMITED:
UNICEF, an integral part of the United Nations, works with governments, communities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other partners worldwide to advance children’s rights, and is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: The Gandhian Challenge And major initiatives of aim

Sources: the Hindu.

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VAYOHSRESHTHA SAMMAN

CONTEXT
These are given to eminent senior citizens and Institutions involved in rendering distinguished services for the cause of elderly persons.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The series of awards were instituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the year 2005 and were elevated to the level of national awards in 2013.
- Generally, the awards are conferred by the President of India on the 1st October i.e. on the occasion of International Day of Older Persons (IDOP).
- **This year Tamil Nadu is given the award for the best State in implementing the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007**
- Tamil Nadu State has set up maintenance tribunals under the Act in each sub-division, but half of the cases are resolved through conciliation.
- The municipal council of Unhel, in Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, will receive the award for the best urban local body for its provision of medical services, income generation schemes and pension to seniors.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Vayoshreshtha Samman

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**KANYASHREE SCHEME**

**CONTEXT**

The state government of West Bengal is setting up Kanyashree University in Nadia district and Kanyashree colleges across the state so as to empower girls.

**ESTABLISHED IN:**

2013
The United Nations, in 2017, awarded the West Bengal government the first place for Public Service for its “Kanyashree” scheme.

**WHAT IS IT?**

- Kanyashree is a conditional cash transfer scheme aiming at improving the status and wellbeing of the girl child by incentivising schooling of teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18.
- It received the United Nations Public Service Award last year.

**COMPONENTS OF THE SCHEME**

1. Annual Scholarship of Rs. 500/- (Rupees Five hundred only)
2. One time Grant of Rs. 25,000/- (Rupees Twenty-five thousand only)

**TARGET BENEFICIARY**

- All girl children within the age of 13 to 19 years from families with annual income up to Rs 120000/-
- Girls regularly attending institutions for education or vocational/sports training
- Girls of Child Care Institutes registered under J.J. Act within the age of 18-19 years
- For the one-time grant, girls who are completing 18 years on or after 1st April 2013
- Approximately 18 Lakhs girl students for annual scholarship each year
- Approximately 3.5 Lakhs girls for one time grant each year

**PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHEME:**

- Through the initiative, cash was deposited into the bank account of girls for every year they remained in school and were unmarried.
- This initiative led to a “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: need and objective of the scheme

Sources: the Hindu.
The four countries with alarming levels of hunger are Chad, Madagascar, Yemen, and Zambia. Forty-three countries out of 117 countries that were ranked have serious levels of hunger.

India is ranked 102 of 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2019, behind its neighbours Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

**Theme of the Year 2019:**
Climate Change and Hunger

**Highlights of the Report:**

- Seventeen countries, including Belarus, Ukraine, Turkey, Cuba and Kuwait, shared the top rank with GHI scores of less than five.
- The share of wasting among children in India rose from 16.5% in the 2008-2012 periods to 20.8% in 2014-2018, according to the report.
- Countries like Yemen and Djibouti, which are conflict-ridden and facing severe climate issues respectively, fared better than India on that front, according to the report.
- Neighbouring countries like Nepal (73), Sri Lanka (66), Bangladesh (88), Myanmar (69) and Pakistan (94) are also in the ‘serious’ hunger category, but have fared better at feeding its citizens than India, according to the report.

**Concerns Related to India because of Large Population**

- India’s GHI indicator values have an outsized impact on the indicator values for the region.
- India’s child wasting rate is extremely high at 20.8 percent—the highest wasting rate of any country in this report for which data or estimates were available.
Its child stunting rate, 37.9 percent, is also categorized as very high in terms of its public health significance.

In India, just 9.6 percent of all children between 6 and 23 months of age are fed a minimum acceptable diet.

As of 2015–2016, 90 percent of Indian households used an improved drinking water source while 39 percent of households had no sanitation facilities.

In 2014 the prime minister instituted the “Clean India” campaign to end open defecation and ensure that all households had latrines.

Even with new latrine construction, however, open defecation is still practiced.

This situation jeopardizes the population’s health and consequently children’s growth and development as their ability to absorb nutrients is compromised.

WHAT IS GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX?

The report is a peer-reviewed publication released annually by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.

The GHI scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—

1. insufficient caloric intake,
2. child undernutrition,
3. child mortality

Using Four Component Indicators:

1. UNDERNOURISHMENT:
The share of the population that is under-nourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake

2. CHILD WASTING:
The share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting acute undernutrition

3. CHILD STUNTING:
The share of children under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting chronic undernutrition

4. CHILD MORTALITY:
The mortality rate of children under the age of five
WAY AHEAD:

- To have succeeded in reducing hunger and undernutrition, there will always be a need to monitor the food security situation even in thriving economies and to provide support in these societies to those who struggle to access adequate nutritious food.
- In the case of climate change, there is a tremendous degree of uncertainty. As discussed in the following chapter, we know many of the actions we must take to mitigate, prepare for, and adapt to climate change.
- It will take humanity’s ingenuity, dedication, and perseverance to ensure achievement of Zero Hunger while tackling the unprecedented challenge of climate change.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: 2019 GHI RESULTS AND CONCERNS RELATED TO INDIA
“Mukhya Mantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana” has been launched in Uttar Pradesh, along with a web portal.

**AIM:**
To empower the girl child. The scheme of the state government will help in achieving the goals set by the central government.

**MUKHYA MANTRI KANYA SUMANGALA YOJANA:**
- Under the scheme, a cash amount of Rs. 15,000 will be provided to every family in which a girl child takes birth.
- The state government will direct transfer funds in the account of the registered girls in a phased manner when a girl child will complete various achievements, like vaccination, admission in class 1, 5, and 9, and graduation.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**
For prelims and mains: about the scheme

**Sources:** pib
"Arogya Manthan" is a two-day event organized by the National Health Authority, to mark the completion of one year of Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the Arogya Manthan is to provide a platform to meet for all the important stakeholders of PM-JAY to meet and discuss the challenges faced in the implementation of the scheme in the past year and to forge new understanding and pathways to improving implementation.

**PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED AT AROGYA MANTHAN:**

- Prime Minister launched a new mobile application for the Ayushman Bharat, the world’s largest health insurance scheme.
- Also launched the ‘Ayushman Bharat Start-Up Grand Challenge’ and released a commemorative stamp on the occasion.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: PM-JAY, Arogya Manthan, Ayushman Bharat

**Sources:** pib

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**SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALITY INDEX (SEQI)**

**CONTEXT**

NITI Aayog releases the first edition of School Education Quality Index (SEQI).
**AIM:**

To bring an ‘outcomes’ focus to education policy by providing States and UTs with a platform to identify their strengths and weaknesses and undertake requisite course corrections or policy interventions.

**ABOUT THE SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALITY INDEX (SEQI):**

1. Developed by NITI Aayog to evaluate the performance of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the school education sector.
2. The index is developed through a collaborative process, including key stakeholders such as Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), the World Bank and sector experts.

It consists of 30 critical indicators that assess the delivery of quality education. These indicators are categorized as below:

**Category 1: Outcomes:**

1. Domain 1: Learning outcomes
2. Domain 2: Access outcomes
3. Domain 3: Infrastructure and facilities for outcomes
4. Domain 4: Equity outcomes

**Category 2:**

Governance processes aiding outcomes.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDEX:**

Schooling should result in successful learning outcomes. In this regard, SEQI acts as a credible system of assessment and helps to design necessary remedial actions.

**HOW ARE THEY RANKED?**

- To facilitate a like-for-like comparison, States and UTs have been grouped as Large States, Small States and UTs.
- States’ and UTs’ performance on Learning Outcomes is driven by their results on the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2017.
- Their performance on Access Outcomes is primarily driven by enrolment ratios at the secondary level and transition rates from upper-primary to secondary level.
In terms of Infrastructure & Facilities for Outcomes, States’ and UTs’ performance is strongly linked to the presence of Computer Aided-Learning (CAL) at the elementary level and vocational education at the secondary and senior-secondary level.

**PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS STATES:**

- Kerala has emerged on top among 20 large states in terms of quality of school education, followed by Rajasthan and Karnataka, while the most-populous Uttar Pradesh was ranked at the bottom position during 2016-17.
- Among 20 large states in the country 18 have improved their overall performance between 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, which is otherwise referred to as the incremental performance in the report.
- The highest incremental performance has been recorded in Kerala. As against 77.6% score in 2015-2016, the state has recorded 82.2% in 2016-2017.
- The overall performance has declined in Karnataka and Uttarakhand.
- All seven union territories have shown an improvement in their overall performance scores.
- The performance and ranks have decreased in Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDEX

**Sources:** pib

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**INDIA’S FIRST E-WASTE CLINIC WILL COME UP IN BHOPAL**

**CONTEXT**

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have joined hands to set up the country’s first e-waste clinic in Bhopal that would enable segregation, processing and disposal of waste from both household and commercial units.
HIGHLIGHTS

- The clinic is being conceived in compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016
- Electronic waste will be collected door-to-door or could be deposited directly at the clinic in exchange for a fee.
- The CPCB will provide technical support at the unit.
- The facility would ensure scientific handling and disposal of electronic waste generated from households and commercial establishments.

WHAT IS E-POLLUTION?

Electronic pollution is the form of pollution caused by the discarded electrical or electronic devices. ... Informal processing of e-waste in developing countries can lead to adverse human health effects and environmental pollution.

E-WASTE GENERATION–THE CAUSES AND THE CONSEQUENCES

1. Upgrade and innovation in technology
2. Lifestyle changes
3. End of the intended usage

HOW IS E WASTE HARMFUL?

FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

- When e-waste is warmed up, toxic chemicals are released into the air damaging the atmosphere.
- The damage to the atmosphere is one of the biggest environmental impacts from e-waste.
- When electronic waste is thrown away in landfills their toxic materials seep into groundwater, affecting both land and sea animals.

FOR OUR HEALTH

E-waste-connected health risks may result from direct contact with harmful materials such as lead, cadmium, chromium, brominated flame retardants or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), from inhalation of toxic fumes, as well as from accumulation of chemicals in soil, water and food.

- Reproductive issues
- Developmental problems
- Damage to the immune system
- Interference with regulatory hormones
- Damage to the nervous system
- Kidney damage
- Hamper’s brain development in children
- May lead to lung cancer
- Chronic beryllium disease
- Skin ailments
- Cadmium accumulations on liver and kidney
- Asthmatic bronchitis
- DNA damage
- Muscle weakness
- Endocrine system disruption

**WHICH STATES ARE THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF E-WASTE IN INDIA?**

- Maharashtra top e-waste generating state with maximum of 19.8% e-waste in the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi and Karnataka in the amount of e-waste generated.
- Mumbai, the business capital of the country, produces the most e-waste at 96,000 metric tons (MT) every year.

**HOW MUCH E WASTE IS PRODUCED AND RECYCLED IN INDIA?**

- The total value of all raw materials present in e-waste is estimated at approximately $61.05 billion in 2016, which is more than the GDP of most countries in the world, pointed out the joint study.
- E-waste generated in India is about 2 million TPA (tonnes per annum) and ranks fifth among e-waste producing countries, after the US, China, Japan and Germany.
- The quantity that is recycled is about 4,38,085 TPA (only 0.036 MT of its e-waste).

**WHICH COUNTRY IS THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF E-WASTE?**

In total, it's estimated that almost 50 million tons of e-waste will be generated in 2018. China leads the way, with 7.2 million tons per annum, while the USA (6.3), Japan (2.1), India (2.0) and Germany (1.9) trail behind.

**WHAT COUNTRIES RECEIVE E-WASTE?**

China, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Ghana receive tons of electronic waste from Western countries every year.

**WHICH COUNTRY IS BEST IN WASTE MANAGEMENT?**
Germany has the best recycling rate in the world. Austria comes in second, followed by South Korea and Wales. All four countries manage to recycle between 52% and 56% of their municipal waste.

**HOW E-WASTE IS RECYCLED IN INDIA?**

India treated only 0.036 MT of its e-waste.

**STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT**

- Laws to manage e-waste have been in place in India since 2011, mandating that only authorised dismantlers and recyclers collect e waste.
- **E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016 was enacted on October 1, 2017. Over 21 products (Schedule-I) were included under the purview of the rule.**
- A new arrangement called **Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO)** has been introduced to strengthen EPR further. The producers have to meet targets, which should be 20 per cent of the waste generated by their sales.
- Despite new rules that have come into place to safely process this hazardous material, continues to be broken down, at huge health and environmental cost polluting ground water and soil, by the informal sector.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has initiated an e-waste awareness programme under Digital India, along with industry associations from 2015, to create awareness among the public about the hazards of e-waste recycling by the unorganised sector, and to educate them about alternate methods of disposing their e-waste.

**WAY AHEAD**

- To carry out awareness programmes to make the masses aware of what they are expected to do with their appliances once they don’t want to use them.
- A balance between the three institutions – government, manufacturers, and society – is what India needs to manage its e-waste better.
- The report suggests that lowering the amount of electronics entering the waste stream and improving end-of-life handling are essential for building a more circular economy, where waste is reduced, resources are conserved and are fed back into the supply chain for new products.
- Collection centres should be set up and ensures that waste is recycled and disposed of in an environment-friendly manner.
- All collection centres, dismantling units and recyclers must register with state pollution control boards and comply with their norms.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: how the E-Waste Harms Human Health?

**Sources:** downtoearth
E-DANTSEVA WEBSITE AND MOBILE APPLICATION

CONTEXT

E-Dantseva website and mobile app is the first ever national digital platform on oral health information and knowledge dissemination, in India.

AIMS:

To sensitize the public about the significance of maintaining optimum oral health and equips them with the tools and knowledge to do so, including awareness on the nearest oral health service facility.

ABOUT E-DANTSEVA PORTAL:

- E-DantSeva contains information about the National Oral Health Program.
- Detailed list of all the dental facility and colleges, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material.
- A unique feature called the ‘Symptom Checker’, which provides information on symptoms of dental/oral health problems, ways to prevent these, the treatment modes.
- Also directs the user to find their nearest available dental facility (public and private sectors both).
- The website also provides GPRS route/images/satellite images of the facility for easier access to the general population.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: about the National Oral Health Program and E-DANTSEVA PORTAL

Sources: pib
MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

CONTEXT

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launches Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship Programme with IIM Bangalore.

DESIGNED UNDER:

Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)

AIMS:

To provide academic inputs and field experience to understand and contribute to the creation of a district level skill development ecosystem.

LAUNCHED ON A PILOT BASIS IN:

75 districts across Gujarat, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand

ELIGIBILITY:

- Fellows for the programme have to be in 21-30 years age-group.
- Have a graduation degree from a recognized university and be citizens of India.
- Proficiency in official language of state of fieldwork will be mandatory.

WHAT IS MGNF?

- The MGNF programme has an in-built component of on-ground practical experience with the district administration.

WHAT’S IN THE PROGRAMME?

- Fellows will work under the close supervision of state skill development missions (SSDM) and will spend time and effort in understanding skilling challenges and gaps in the district.
- They are expected to enrich skilling programmes by bringing in fresh thinking to local planning, execution, community interaction and outcome management.
- Fellows will receive a stipend of Rs. 50,000 in the first year and Rs. 60,000 in the second year.
On completion of their engagement, they will be awarded a Certificate in Public Policy and Management from IIM Bangalore.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: key features of the programme

**Sources:** pib

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**WHO INDIA COUNTRY COOPERATION STRATEGY**

**CONTEXT**


**WHAT IS WHO COUNTRY COOPERATION STRATEGIES (CCS)?**

- One of the important mechanisms of the WHO is the WHO Country Cooperation Strategies (CCS).
- The CCS is a document to guide WHO’s work in countries.
- CCS is a medium-term vision for WHO’s technical cooperation with a given Member State, and supports the country’s national health policy, strategy or plan.
- The CCS time frame is flexible to align with national cycles and processes.
- It is the basis for aligning WHO’s collaboration with other United Nations bodies and development partners at the country level.

**ROLE OF INDIA:**

- India, one of the prominent NAM Member States, gives primacy to healthcare in the development agenda.
- India became a party to the **WHO Constitution on 12 January 1948.**
As part of Indian commitment to provide better healthcare for its population, India’s Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan recently launched the ‘The WHO India Country Cooperation Strategy 2019–2023: A Time of Transition’.

The Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) provides a strategic roadmap for WHO to work with the Government of India towards achieving its health sector goals, in improving the health of its population and bringing in transformative changes in the health sector.

The strategy document also builds on other key strategic policy documents including India’s National Health Policy 2017.

The many pathbreaking initiatives India has introduced — from Ayushman Bharat to its National Viral Hepatitis programme and promotion of digital health amongst others.

WHO INDIA CCS HAS FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Four areas identified for strategic cooperation of WHO with the country encompass

Strategic Priority 1: Accelerate progress on UHC
- Implementing Ayushman Bharat: Health and Wellness Centres and hospital insurance scheme
- Monitoring and evaluation of health sector performance
- Improving access to priority health services such as immunizations, maternal and child health, tuberculosis, hepatitis
- Digital health ecosystem
- Eliminating neglected tropical diseases and control of vaccine-preventable and vector-borne diseases

Strategic Priority 2: Promote health and wellness by addressing determinants of health
- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) action plan roll-out
- Environmental health, including air pollution
- Mental health promotion and suicide prevention
- Nutrition and food safety
- Road safety
- Tobacco control
- Integration of NCD and environmental risk factors in the digital health information platform

Strategic Priority 3: Better protect the population against health emergencies
- Disease surveillance and outbreak detection and response, including International Health Regulation
- Roll-out of integrated disease surveillance programme using the real-time integrated health information platform (IHIP)
- Preparedness for, and response to all, emergencies
- Containment of antimicrobial resistance
Strategic Priority 4: Enhance India’s global leadership in health

- Improving access to medical products of assured quality made in India
- Development and information sharing of innovations in health practices and technologies including IHIP
- Strengthening India’s leadership in digital health

NEED:
- Needs to be given on other equally pertinent health areas of environmental and occupational health, accidents and road injuries, and good nutrition and food safety.
- Emphasizing the need of inter-ministerial collaboration for a healthy nation.

SIGNIFICANCE:
- The period of this CCS is expected to bring rapid and significant changes to India’s Health sector and to improve access to quality health care, especially to the vulnerable and underserved populations.
- The India CCS is one of the first that fully aligns itself with the newly adopted WHO 13th General Programme of Work and its ‘triple billion’ targets, the Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO South-East Asia Region’s eight Flagship Priorities.
- It also expands to address complex challenges—such as the prevention of NCDs, the control of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the reduction of air pollution, and the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses.
- The WHO India CCS thus outlines how the WHO can support the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and other allied Ministries to drive impact at the country level.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: WHO India CCS strategic priorities 2019-2023

Sources: https://www.who.int › india ›

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National Diabetes and Diabetic Retinopathy Survey report for 2015-19 has been released.

THE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY:
Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (New Delhi)

CONDUCTED PERIOD:
2015-2019

THE SURVEY RELEASED BY:
The health ministry

KEY FINDINGS:
- Prevalence of diabetes in India has been recorded at 11.8% in the last four years with almost the same percentage of men and women suffering from the disease.
- The prevalence of diabetes among males was 12%, whereas among females it was 11.7%. Highest prevalence of diabetes (13.2%) was observed in the 70-79 years' age group.
- The prevalence of any form of diabetic retinopathy (DR) in diabetic population aged up to 50 years was found to be 16.9%.
- Prevalence of blindness among diabetics was 2.1% and visual impairment was 13.7%.

ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO):
- There are estimated 72.96 million cases of diabetes in adult population of India.
- The prevalence in urban areas ranges between 10.9%-14.2% and prevalence in rural India is at 3.0-7.8% among population aged 20 years and above with a much higher prevalence among individuals aged over 50 years.

BACKGROUND:
- Diabetes and diabetic retinopathy have been emerging as a significant non-communicable disease leading to ocular morbidity (blindness).
- It is estimated that diabetic retinopathy was responsible for 1.06% of blindness and 1.16% of visual impairment globally in 2015.
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: KEY FINDINGS of the report

Sources: the Hindu.

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SURAKSHIT MATRITVA
AASHWASAN (SUMAN)

CONTEXT

Union Minister for Health along with several State Health Ministers launched SUMAN initiative for Zero Preventable Maternal and Newborn Deaths.

AIM:

To achieve the target of reducing the maternal mortality and child mortality

SUMAN, AN INITIATIVE FOR QUALITY HEALTH CARE AT NO COST

- Assuring dignified, respectful and quality health care at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services for every woman and newborn visiting the public health facility in order to end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths
- Under it, pregnant women, mothers up to 6 months after delivery, and all sick newborns will be able to avail free healthcare benefits.
- The government will also provide free transport from home to health institutions.
- The pregnant women will have a zero expense delivery and C-section facility in case of complications at public health facilities.

NED OF THE HOUR:
According to government data, India’s maternal mortality rate has come down from 254 per 1,00,000 live births in 2004-2006 to 130 in 2014-16.

- The infant mortality rate in India has also reduced from 66 per 1,000 live births in 2001 to 34 in 2016.
- Along with prioritizing maternal and infant health, the government is also focusing on improving mental health facilities in the nation.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- The SUMAN scheme aims to bring down the maternal and infant mortality rates in the nation and to stop all preventable maternal and newborn deaths.
- The scheme will provide a positive and stress-free birth experience to the mother and newborn.
- The government also ensured that dignified care is provided to the patients with early initiation and support for breastfeeding, free and zero expense services for sick newborns and neonates and zero dose vaccination.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: SIGNIFICANCE of the scheme

**Sources:** jagranjosh

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**MOTHER TONGUE FOR PRE-SCHOOL IN INDIA**

**CONTEXT**

Children between the ages of three and six years should begin their educational journey in their own mother tongues, learn through play and not be subjected to tests of any kind, says the NCERT’s first-ever preschool curriculum.

**THE FIRST-EVER PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM WAS RELEASED BY:**
AIM:

Providing a strong foundation for all-round development and lifelong learning are the two central objectives of preschool education.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The NCERT’s new curriculum is aimed at all pre-school education, defined as the education of 3 to 6-year-olds, whether at anganwadis, nursery schools, kindergartens, playschools or Montessori schools.
- pre-schools (defined as all schools which teach children between the ages of three and six) must avoid early formal instruction.
- children should be assessed individually through informal and systematic observations of their play and activities.
- It recommends that Children between the ages of three and six years should be taught in their own mother tongues.
- Also, the focus on learning should be through play instead of being subjected to rote learning, tests and examinations.
- The draft National Education Policy has recommended that the Right to Education Act be extended to students in the three years of preschool before Class I.

GUIDELINES:

- In case there are more than one language as mother tongue, teachers may allow as many languages as are in the classroom to be used for expression with gradually exposing the child to school language.
- Teachers require access to materials that allow them to provide a platform in the students’ mother tongue.
- To achieve early learning outcomes for children as the end of each phase, the pedagogical process to be followed by teachers which includes “play”, “interactions” and “environment”.
- Children learn in a way that encourages investigation, exploration, problem-solving and critical thinking.

ROLE OF MOTHER TONGUE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT:

- Learning to speak in the mother tongue is very important for a child’s overall development.
- Being fluent in the mother tongue, which is also known as the native language, benefits the child in many ways.
- It connects him to his culture, ensures better cognitive development, and aids in the learning of other languages.
- The importance of your child being taught in their home language is that they will understand better at school and will be more comfortable when learning.
- Children learn better and faster in a language they can understand (preventing delays in learning).
They enjoy school more, they feel more at home.
Pupils tend to show increased self-esteem.
Parent’s participation is increased.

REASON BEHIND IT:

- A child’s mother tongue or home language is internationally recognized as most appropriate in the early years.
- The commercialisation of pre-schooling is detrimental for children’s motivation to learn.
- Children need a bilingual or multilingual environment for smooth transition.

WHAT IS CURRICULUM?

The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program.

THE GOAL OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum consists of three goals:

1. maintaining good health and well being,
2. developing communication skills and encouraging “involved learning”
3. connecting children to their immediate environment

THE NEED FOR SUCH A CURRICULUM

- “Emerging needs and new developments” in preschool education as the reason that such a curriculum is needed.
- To ensure that the present curriculum is holistic, developmentally appropriate, indigenous, and most importantly play and activity-based.”
- The guiding principles for this curriculum include neurobiological research that has shown that pathways in the brain are set in their early years, respecting each child’s different ability to learn, the importance of play and activity and interactive teaching among other factors.
- The curriculum has been developed with an assumption based on “empirical and theoretical” understanding that children are ready for preschool by age three.

CONCLUSION:

- The purpose of evaluation at the pre-school stage is not to label a child as ‘pass’ or ‘fail’.
- Instead, assessment should provide direction for learning new skills and focus on the child’s strengths rather than deficits, it added.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: Significance of the move and Role of Mother Tongue in Child Development

Sources: indianexpress.

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“FOOD SAFETY MITRA” (FSM) SCHEME FOR STRENGTHENING ‘EAT RIGHT INDIA’ MOVEMENT

CONTEXT

“Food Safety Mitra” (FSM) scheme, has been launched to strengthen food safety administration and scale up the ‘Eat Right India’ movement.

WHAT IS FSM SCHEME?

A scheme to support small and medium scale food businesses to comply with the food safety laws and facilitate licensing and registration, hygiene ratings and training.

ABOUT FSM:

- Food Safety Mitra (FSM) scheme will support small and medium scale food businesses to comply with the food safety laws and facilitate licensing and registration, hygiene ratings and training.
- Apart from strengthening food safety, this scheme would also create new employment opportunities for youth, particularly with food and nutrition background.
- The FSMs would undergo training and certification by FSSAI to do their work and get paid by food businesses for their services.

EAT RIGHT JACKET:
The ‘Eat Right Jacket’ launched along with Food safety Mitra, will be used by the field staff. This jacket has a smart design to hold tech devices like tablets/smartphone, a QR code and RFID tag for identification and tracking. Apart from providing safety to field staff on duty, this would bring in efficiency, professionalism and transparency in food safety administration and bring in a sense of ownership & visibility of FSOs.

EAT RIGHT JHOLA:

- The ‘Eat Right Jhola’, a reusable cloth bag shall replace plastic bags for grocery shopping in various retail chains.
- Since on repeated use, bags are often contaminated with microorganisms and bacteria, proper and regular washing of cloth bags is essential to ensure safety and hygiene.
- These cloth bags are being provided on rental basis through a private textile rental service company.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Significance of the scheme

Sources: indianexpress.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH

CONTEXT

To ensure that not a single child in the country misses out on vaccination, the government will launch the ‘Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0’ on October 31 with a special focus on improving coverage in areas with “low” immunisation.

KEY FACTS:

- Through ‘IMI 2.0’, the health ministry aims to reach each and every child below the age of two years and all pregnant women still uncovered/partially covered in 271 districts of the country and 652 blocks of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
IMI 2.0 will include four rounds of vaccination, with each round involving a seven-day immunisation drive to be conducted each month.

The IMI programme is supported by 12 ministries and departments and is being monitored by the cabinet secretary at the national level.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH:

To strengthen and re-energize the programme and achieve full immunization coverage for all children and pregnant women at a rapid pace, the Government of India launched “Mission Indradhanush” in December 2014.

GOAL OF MISSION INDRADHANUSH:

The ultimate goal of Mission Indradhanush is to ensure full immunization with all available vaccines for children up to two years of age and pregnant women.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Significance of the scheme

Sources: PIB

NEW GUIDELINES RELEASED FOR PERITONEAL DIALYSIS SERVICES

CONTEXT

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has come out with a set of guidelines for establishing peritoneal dialysis services under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme.

WHAT IS IT?
The new guidelines, among other things, envisage providing training to community health workers to provide support to persons on peritoneal dialysis at home or in primary health care settings.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE GUIDELINES:**

- The guidelines aim to serve as a comprehensive manual to states that intend to set up peritoneal dialysis services and for providers of peritoneal dialysis as a ‘best practice’ document to ensure delivery of high quality and cost effective services.
- It also aims to achieve equity in patient access to home-based peritoneal dialysis, reduce the overall cost of care to the system by focusing on efficient leveraging of resources, and bring in consistency of practice, pricing and a full range of product availability.

**HOW IS PERITONEAL DIALYSIS PERFORMED?**

- During peritoneal dialysis, a cleansing fluid (dialysate) is circulated through a tube (catheter) inside a part of the abdominal cavity (peritoneal cavity).
- The dialysate absorbs waste products from blood vessels in the abdominal lining (peritoneum) and then is drawn back out of the body and discarded.

**PRADHAN MANTRI NATIONAL DIALYSIS PROGRAMME:**

- Rolled out in 2016 as part of the National Health Mission (NHM) for provision of free dialysis services to the poor.
- The Guidelines for Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme envisage provision of dialysis services under NHM in PPP (Public Private Partnership) mode.

**NEED FOR GOVT INTERVENTION:**

- Every year about 2.2 Lakh new patients of End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) get added in India resulting in additional demand for 3.4 Crore dialysis every year.
- With approximately 4950 dialysis centres, largely in the private sector in India, the demand is less than half met with existing infrastructure.
- Since every Dialysis has an additional expenditure tag of about Rs.2000, it results in a monthly expenditure for patients to the tune of Rs.3-4 Laks annually.
- Besides, most families have to undertake frequent trips, and often over long distances to access dialysis services incurring heavy travel costs and loss of wages for the patient and family members accompanying the patient.
- This therefore leads to financial catastrophe for practically all families with such patients.
- It has been felt that both in terms of provision of this important life saving procedure and also for reducing...
impoverishment on account of out of pocket expenditure for patients, a Dialysis program is required.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Significance and need of the scheme

Sources: pib

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ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENTS
(APAS)

CONTEXT

CBDT inks the 300th Advance Pricing Agreement. APA Programme is currently in its seventh year.

WHAT ARE APAS?

- An APA is an agreement between a taxpayer and the tax authority determining the Transfer Pricing methodology for pricing the tax payer’s international transactions for future years.
- The international transactions covered in these agreements include provision of software development services, contract manufacturing, provision of IT enabled services and support services.
- Three APAs were entered into in September (two unilateral and one bilateral), which has taken the total number of APAs signed by CBDT to 300.
- These APAs pertain to various sectors of the economy like retail, garments, and consumer foods.

PURPOSE:

An APA provides certainty with respect to the tax outcome of the tax payer’s international transactions.

STATUTORY BASIS:
The Finance Act, 2012, inserted sections 92CC and 92 CD in the ITA to provide the legal basis for APA in India.

**AN APA CAN BE ONE OF THE THREE TYPES:**

1. **UNILATERAL:**
   Unilateral APA is an APA that involves only the taxpayer and the tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located.

2. **BILATERAL:**
   Bilateral APA (BAPA) is an APA that involves the taxpayer, associated enterprise (AE) of the taxpayer in the foreign country, tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located and the foreign tax authority.

3. **MULTILATERAL:**
   Multilateral APA (MAPA) is an APA that involves the taxpayer, two or more AEs of the taxpayer in different foreign countries, tax authority of the country where the taxpayer is located and the tax authorities of AEs.

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**CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECT TAXES (CBDT)**

**ORGANIZATION**

It is the senior-most IRS civil servant in the Government of India. The Chairperson of CBDT is the ex officio Special Secretary to the Government of India and also cadre controlling authority of the Indian Revenue Service.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF C.B.D.T.**

The Central Board of Revenue as the apex body of the Department, charged with the administration of taxes, came into existence as a result of the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1924. Initially the Board was in charge of both direct and indirect taxes. However, when the administration of taxes became too unwieldy for one Board to handle, the Board was split up into two, namely the Central Board of Direct Taxes and Central Board of Excise and Customs with effect from 1.1.1964. This bifurcation was brought about by constitution of two Boards u/s 3 of the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963.

**COMPOSITION AND FUNCTIONS OF CBDT**

The Central Board of Direct Taxes consists of a Chairman and following six Members:

- Chairman
- Member (Income-tax)
- Member (Legislation & Computerisation)
■ Member (Personnel & Vigilance)
■ Member (Investigation)
■ Member (Revenue)
■ Member (Audit & Judicial)

**JURISDICTION (ZONAL)**

- Chairman – Delhi & North West Region
- Member (IT) – South Zone (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala)
- Member (L&C) – Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat & Maharashtra (except Mumbai)
- Member (R) – West Bengal, North East Region, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand
- Member (P&V) – Mumbai
- Member (A&J) – Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Lucknow & Kanpur
- Member (Inv.) – All DGsIT(Inv.), All CCsIT(Central) and DGIT(I&CI)

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**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** Advance Pricing Agreements, Central Board Of Direct Taxes (CBDT)

**Sources:** Director (ITCC), CBDT

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**THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI)**

**CUT THE REPO RATE**

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**CONTEXT**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut the repo rate or key lending rate by 25 basis points while maintaining an accommodative stance.

**WHAT IS IN NEWS?**

- The reverse repo rate was reduced to 4.9%.
• This is the fifth consecutive rate cut by the apex bank this year, aggregating to 135 bps.
• The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) also cuts GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal year 2019-20 to 6.1% from 6.9% earlier.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

A repo rate cut allows banks to reduce interest rates for consumers and lowers equal monthly instalments on home loans, car loans and personal loans.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MPC:

- Central banks around the world are loosening monetary policy to offset a global slowdown made worse by U.S.-China trade tensions
- RBI will take a fresh look at cooperative bank regulations and take it up with the government
- The RBI has allowed domestic banks to freely offer foreign exchange (forex) prices to NRIs
- The continuing slowdown warrants intensified efforts to restore the growth momentum.
- On the crisis in the Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank (PMC), the RBI governor said one incident cannot be and should not be used to generalise the health of the co-operative banking sector.
- PCA (Prompt Corrective Action) is an opportunity for the bank to correct itself.
- Appealed members of the public and all depositors that our banking system remains sound and stable, there is no reason for unnecessary panic.
- RBI has decided to create a separate category of NBFC, viz., Non-Banking Financial Company-Micro Finance Institution (NBFC-MFI).
- It acknowledged “the negative output gap has widened further”

PRESENT SCENARIO:

- Inflation is well within the target giving space to the RBI to focus on growth
- Crude oil prices are back in the comfort zone, retreating from the spike in mid-September, and food prices are projected to remain soft on the back of a good monsoon.
- Crux:
  - If the projection of 6.1% for 2019-20 is to be met, the economy has to grow by about 7% in the second half which does not look very likely.
  - The problem is that the central bank can only facilitate lower rates and push banks to lend. It cannot force borrowers to borrow and this is evident from the soft trends in credit offtake in the last few months.

ROLE OF RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

Across the globe it is the government in-power which issues the currency notes and that currency is known as the "Legal Tender" i.e. accepted by all in that country. In India it is the role of the Central
bank of the country i.e Reserve Bank of India that prints currency notes and it bears the Governor's signature on it.

**THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF RBI ARE:**

1. **Supply of money:** To control the supply of money in the economy i.e how much money is available for the industry or the economy?

2. **The cost of credit:** Meaning, and what is the price that the economy has to pay to borrow that money

These two things (Supply of money and cost of credit) are closely monitored and controlled by RBI. The inflation and growth in the economy are primarily impacted by these two factors.

**TYPES OF INTEREST RATES FIXED BY RBI**

**CASH RESERVE RATIO (CRR):**

- In India, banks are required to retain a certain percentage of their deposits as liquid cash. However, banks prefer to deposit this liquid cash with the Reserve Bank of India, which is equivalent to having cash in hand.
- The percentage of the deposits that should be kept aside by banks is called Cash Reserve Ratio.

**STATUTORY LIQUIDITY RATIO (SLR):**

- Banks have to invest certain percentage of their deposits in specified financial securities like Central Government or State Government securities. This percentage is known as SLR.
- This money is predominantly invested in government approved securities (bonds), Gold, which mean the banks can earn some amount as 'interest' on these investments as against CRR where they do not earn anything.

**REPO RATE:**

Repo rate is the rate at which the central bank of a country (Reserve Bank of India in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.

- Repo rate is used by monetary authorities to control inflation.
- These loans are for short durations up to 2 weeks.
- Similarly, when banks need money they approach RBI. The rate at which banks borrow money from the RBI by selling their surplus government securities to RBI is known as "Repo Rate." Repo rate is short form of Repurchase Rate. Generally, these loans are for short durations up to 2 weeks.
- Higher repo rate may slowdown the growth of the economy.
If the repo rate is low then banks can charge lower interest rates on the loans taken by us.

**REVERSE REPO RATE:**

- Reverse repo rate is the rate of interest offered by RBI, when banks deposit their surplus funds with the RBI for short periods.
- When banks have surplus funds but have no lending (or) investment options, they deposit such funds with RBI. Banks earn interest on such funds.

**IMPACT OF REPO RATE /CRR/SLR RATE CUT: RISE IN**

- Money supply
- Growth
- Liquidity
- Purchasing power
- control over interest rates in order to maintain price stability

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: TYPES OF INTEREST RATES FIXED BY RBI

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**NATIONAL E-ASSESSMENT FOR INCOME TAX PAYERS**

**CONTEXT**

Income Tax Department will usher in a paradigm shift in its working by introducing “National e-Assessment Centre (NeAC)” to impart greater efficiency, transparency and accountability in the assessment process.
OBJECTIVES:
1. Better taxpayer service.
2. Reduction of taxpayer grievances in line with Prime Minister’s vision of ‘Digital India’

ABOUT FACELESS E-ASSESSMENT:
- Centre Government had recently notified e-Assessment scheme to facilitate faceless assessment of income tax returns through completely electronic communication between tax officials and tax payers.
- This is another initiative by CBDT in the field of ease of compliance for our tax payers.

THE NEW PROCESS:
- Under the new system of faceless e-Assessment, tax payers will receive notices on their registered emails as well as on registered accounts on the web portal www.incometaxindiaefiling.gov.
- In with real time alert by way of SMS on their registered mobile number, specifying the issues for which their cases have been selected for scrutiny.
- The replies to the notices can be prepared at ease by the tax payers at their own residence or office and be sent by email to the National e-Assessment Centre by uploading the same on the designated web portal.

BENEFITS OF E-ASSESSMENT:
- NeAC eliminates human interface between Assessing Officer and Assessee
- New System optimises the utilisation of resources through economies of scale
- NeAC introduces team based assessment with dynamic jurisdiction
- Ease of compliance for taxpayers
- Brings transparency and efficiency, thus improves quality of assessment and monitoring
- Functional specialisation as only one agency dealing with faceless assessment
- Expeditious disposal of cases
- Standardisation and quality management

**NATIONAL E-ASSESSMENT CENTRE (NEAC):**

- NeAC will be an independent office that will look after the work of e-Assessment scheme which is recently notified for faceless e-assessment for income tax payers.
- There are 8 Regional e-Assessment Centres (ReAC) set up at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata Ahmedabad, Pune, Bengaluru and Hyderabad which would comprise Assessment unit, Review unit, Technical unit and Verification units.
- Each ReAC will be headed by Chief Commissioner of Income Tax (CCIT).
- Cases for the specified work shall be assigned by the NeAC to different units by way of automated allocation systems.
- In view of the dynamic and all India jurisdiction of all officers of NeAC and ReAC, this kind of connective and collaborative effort of officers is likely to lead to better quality of assessments.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: FACELESS E-ASSESSMENT

Sources: pib

INDIA SLIPS 10 PLACES IN GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX
India has moved down 10 places to rank 68th on an annual global competitiveness index, largely due to improvements witnessed by several other economies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- While Singapore has replaced the U.S. as the world’s most competitive economy.
- Global Competitiveness Index compiled by Geneva-based World Economic Forum (WEF).
- This year’s better performers appear to be benefiting from global trade tensions through trade diversion, including Singapore (1st) and Viet Nam (67th), the most improved country in 2019.

WHAT IS GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS REPORT?

- The Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) is a yearly report published by the World Economic Forum.
- It is a set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country, conditions of public institutions and technical.
- Since 2004, the Global Competitiveness Report ranks countries based on the Global Competitiveness Index, developed by Xavier Sala-i-Martin and Elsa V. Artadi.
- Before that, the macroeconomic ranks were based on Jeffrey Sachs’s Growth Development Index and the microeconomic ranks were based on Michael Porter’s Business Competitiveness Index.

WHAT DOES IT MEASURE?

- The Global Competitiveness Index integrates the macroeconomic and the micro/business aspects of competitiveness into a single index.
- The report "assesses the ability of countries to provide high levels of prosperity to their citizens".
- This in turn depends on how productively a country uses available resources.
- Therefore, the Global Competitiveness Index measures the set of institutions, policies, and factors that set the sustainable current and medium-term levels of economic prosperity."
- The Global Competitiveness Report 2019 reveals an average across the 141 economies covered of 61 points. This is almost 40 points short of the “frontier”.
- It is a global competitiveness gap that is particularly concerning; given the world economy faces the prospect of a downturn.
- The report’s survey of 13,000 business executives highlights deep uncertainty and lower confidence.

THE TWELVE PILLARS OF COMPETITIVENESS:

1. Institutions
2. Appropriate infrastructure
3. Stable macroeconomic framework
4. Good health and primary education  
5. Higher education and training  
6. Efficient goods markets  
7. Efficient labor markets  
8. Developed financial markets  
9. Ability to harness existing technology  
10. Market size—both domestic and international  
11. Production of new and different goods using the most sophisticated production processes  
12. Innovation

**TOP 10 COUNTRIES: GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX 2019**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>84.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>83.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>83.1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOME OF THE KEY FINDINGS OF WEF STUDY ARE:**

- India is ranked also high at 15th place in terms of corporate governance, while it is ranked second globally for shareholder governance.
- In terms of market size, India is ranked third, while it has got the same rank for renewable energy regulation.
- The healthy life expectancy, where India has been ranked 109th out of total the 141 countries surveyed for the index, is one of the shortest outside Africa and significantly below the South Asian average.
- With a ratio of female workers to male workers of 0.26, India has been ranked very low at 128th place.
- India is also ranked low at 118th in terms of meritocracy and incentivisation and at 107th place for skills.
In overall ranking, India is followed by some of its neighbours including Sri Lanka at 84th place, Bangladesh at 105th, and Nepal at 108th and Pakistan at 110th place.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: KEY FINDINGS OF WEF STUDY

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**WORLD BANK CUTS INDIA’S GROWTH PROJECTION TO 6%**

**CONTEXT**

The World Bank declares India’s growth rate is projected to fall to 6%.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WORLD BANK REPORT:**

- In the first quarter of 2019-20, the economy experienced a significant and broad-based growth deceleration with a sharp decline in private consumption on the demand side and the weakening of growth in both industry and services on the supply side, the report said.
- Reflecting on the below-trend economic momentum and persistently low food prices, the headline inflation averaged 3.4% in 2018-19 and remained well below the RBI’s mid-range target of 4% in the first half of 2019-2020.
- This allowed the RBI to ease monetary policy via a cumulative 135 basis point cut in the repo rate since January 2019 and shift the policy stance from neutral to accommodative.
- “The general government deficit is estimated to have widened by 0.2 percentage points to 5.9% of the GDP in 2018-19.
- This is despite the central government improving its balance by 0.2 percentage points over the previous year.
- The general government debt remained stable and sustainable – being largely domestic and long term-at around 67% of GDP.

**POOREST HOUSEHOLDS AT RISK:**
The report, said disruptions brought about by the introduction of the GST and demonetisation, combined with the stress in the rural economy and a high youth unemployment rate in urban areas may have heightened the risks for the poorest households.

The significant slowdown in the first quarter of the fiscal year and high frequency indicators, thereafter, suggested that the output growth would not exceed 6% for the full fiscal year, the bank said.

The report said the consumption was likely to remain depressed due to slow growth in rural income, domestic demand (as reflected in a sharp drop in sales of automobiles) and credit from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

**WAY FORWARD:**

- The main policy challenge for India is to address the sources of softening private consumption and the structural factors behind weak investment, the bank said.
- “This will require restoring the health of the financial sector through reforms of public sector banks’ governance and a gradual strengthening of the regulatory framework for NBFCs, while ensuring that solvent NBFCs retain access to adequate liquidity.”
- “It will also require efforts to contain fiscal slippages, as higher-than-expected public borrowings could put upward pressure on interest rates and potentially crowd-out the private sector”.
- According to the bank, the main sources of risk included external shocks that result in tighter global financing conditions, and new NBFC defaults triggering a fresh round of financial sector stress.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WORLD BANK REPORT

Sources: the Hindu.

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**INDIA INNOVATION INDEX 2019**

**CONTEXT**

NITI Aayog with Institute for Competitiveness as the knowledge partner released the India Innovation Index (III) 2019.
INDIA INNOVATION INDEX (III) 2019

The index attempts to create an extensive framework for the continual evaluation of the innovation environment of 29 states and seven UTs in India.

It intends to perform the following three functions-

1. Ranking of states and UTs based on their index scores
2. Recognizing opportunities and challenges, and
3. Assisting in tailoring governmental policies to foster innovation

AIM:

- To create a holistic tool which can be used by policymakers across the country to identify the challenges to be addressed and strengths to build on when designing the economic growth policies for their regions

HOW IT IS CALCULATED:

The Index is calculated as the average of the scores of its two dimensions – Enablers and Performance.

1. **Enablers:** The Enablers are the factors that underpin innovative capacities, grouped in five pillars: (1) Human Capital, (2) Investment, (3) Knowledge Workers, (4) Business Environment, and (5) Safety and Legal Environment.

2. **Performance:** The Performance dimension captures benefits that a nation derives from the inputs, divided in two pillars: (6) Knowledge Output and (7) Knowledge Diffusion.

THE STATES HAVE BEEN BIFURCATED INTO THREE CATEGORIES:

1. Major States,
2. North-East And Hill States,
3. Union Territories / city states / small states.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT:

- Karnataka is the most innovative major state in India. Karnataka’s number one position in the overall ranking is partly attributed to its top rank in the Performance dimension.
Sikkim and Delhi take the top spots among the north-eastern & hill states, and union territories/city states/small states respectively.

The three of the top five major states are from southern India.

The report mentions that regional imbalance is a result of an equally skewed concentration of educational and research institutions across the country.

**AMONG NE & HILL STATES:**

Sikkim is the best performer with a score of 15.49.

**TOP FIVE MAJOR CITIES:**

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Telangana, Haryana.

**TOP FIVE UTS/CITY STATES:**

Delhi, Chandigarh, Goa, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands

**TOP FIVE NE & HILL STATES:**

Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Jammu and Kashmir

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- The study examines the innovation ecosystem of Indian states and union territories.
- The aim is to create a holistic tool which can be used by policymakers across the country to identify the challenges to be addressed and strengths to build on when designing policies.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: India Innovation Index 2019 and significance of the report

**Sources:** the Hindu.
The Culture Department of Uttar Pradesh government is going to organize the country’s first training and performance programme of world famous KHON Ramlila in collaboration with Thailand government.

**PLACE:**

AYODHYA, UTTAR PRADESH

**ABOUT THE PROGRAMME:**

The participating artists will get training from experts in Thailand as part of the cultural exchange program between the two countries. The artists will perform at Grand Deepotsav function in Ayodhya.

**WHAT IS KHON RAMLILA?**

- KHON Ramlila is a masked form of Ramlila art of Thailand.
- It is a form of masked dance depicting the scenes of Ramlila.
- It has no dialogues and background voices narrate the whole story of Ramayana.
- It is also famous for its beautiful attire and golden masks.
- It is included in the list of UNESCO’s Intangible cultural heritage.
- The Ramakien (literally ‘Glory of Rama’) is Thailand’s national epic, derived from the Hindu epic Ramayana.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: about khon ramlila

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**BHAONA**

**CONTEXT**

Assamese Bhaona to make an English debut in Abu Dhabi.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

It is for the first time that Bhaona would be presented in English for an international audience to popularise the Vaishnava theatrical performance for global art connoisseurs, and familiarise them with Assamese culture and traditions.

**WHAT IS IT?**

- Bhaona is a mythology-based theatrical performance.
- Bhaona is a traditional form of entertainment, with religious messages, prevalent is Assam, India.
- A 500-year old traditional Assamese art form propagated by Vaishnavite saint and reformer Sankardeva.
- The plays of bhaona are popularly known as Ankiya Nats and their staging is known as bhaona.

**WHO CREATED THIS ART FORM?**
It is a creation of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva, written in the early sixteenth century. He created the form to convey religious messages to villagers through entertainment. Later Srimanta Madhavdeva also wrote some plays.

WHY SANKARDEVA NEEDED TO CREATE THIS ART?

Sankardeva needed to connect with his Assamese masses, who did not expect the divine characters of his plays to speak in the common man’s language. So he created the Brajavali, a literary language limited to theatrical usage.

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BHAONA

- Bhaona is generally staged at xatras and namghars in Assam. There are some special characteristics of Bhaona like the plays, dialogues, costumes, ornaments, entry and foot-steps of the characters.
- These characteristics help to differentiate Bhaona from other plays.
- The bhaonas are written in the Assamese and Brajavali languages.

DO YOU KNOW?

- Sattriya is one of the eight Indian Classical dance traditions. The dance was introduced in 15th Century by a great Vaishnava Saint Mahapurush Shankardev in Assam.
- It was primarily a monastery dance and later on evolved as a distinctive dance form and spread across Assam.
- It has been for centuries, nurtured and preserved with great commitment by the Sattras i.e. Vaishnava maths or monasteries.
- Because of its religious character and association with the Sattras, this dance style has been aptly named Sattriya.

DIFFERENT CHARACTERS

Sutradhar or Sutradhari:

He is an integral part of bhaona; he recites slokas, sings, dances and explains in prose what is what at every stage of Bhaona.

Bhaoriya:

The actors performing characters as per script.

Gayan:

The singers.

Bayan:

They plays khol, Taal etc. from the beginning to the end of bhaona.

TYPES OF BHAONA
1. Baresahariya Bhaona
2. Mukha Bhaona
3. Boka Bhaona

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: about bhaona

Sources: the Hindu.

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**CONTEXT**

An instrument on Chandrayaan-2, CLASS, designed to detect signatures of elements in the Moon’s soil, had detected charged particles during the mission. This happened in September, during the orbiter’s passage through the “geotail”.

**WHAT IS GEOTAIL?**

A region in space that allows the best observations and the region exists as a result of the interactions between the Sun and Earth.

**HOW IS IT FORMED?**

- The Sun emits the solar wind, which is a continuous stream of charged particles.
- These particles are embedded in the extended magnetic field of the Sun. Since the Earth has a magnetic field, it obstructs the solar wind plasma.
- This interaction results in the formation of a magnetic envelope around Earth.
- On the Earth side facing the Sun, the envelope is compressed into a region that is approximately three to four times the Earth radius.
- On the opposite side, the envelope is stretched into a long tail, which extends beyond the orbit of the Moon.
- It is this tail that is called the geotail.
Once every 29 days, the Moon traverses the geotail for about six days.

Once every 29 days, the Moon traverses the geotail for about six days.

When Chandrayaan-2, which is orbiting the Moon, crosses the geotail, its instruments can study the properties of the geotail.

For the CLASS instrument seeking to detect element signatures, the lunar soil can be best observed when a solar flare provides a rich source of X-rays to illuminate the surface.

Secondary X-ray emission resulting from this can be detected by CLASS to directly detect the presence of key elements like Na, Ca, Al, Si, Ti and Fe.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: what is geotail? HOW IS GEOTAIL HELPING CHANDRAYAAN-2 learn about moon

Sources: Indian Express.

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NASA'S SATELLITE – ICON

CONTEXT
NASA launched a satellite named ICON, to explore the mysterious, dynamic region where air meets space.

ABOUT “ICON”:

The refrigerator-size ICON satellite will study the airglow formed from gases in the ionosphere and also measure the charged environment right around the spacecraft which is at a level of 580 kilometers above the Earth’s surface.

WHY TO STUDY IONOSPHERE?

- The ionosphere is the charged part of the upper atmosphere extending several hundred miles (kilometers) up. It’s in constant flux as space weather bombards it from above and Earth weather from below, sometimes disrupting radio communications.
- “This protected layer, it’s the top of our atmosphere.
- It’s our frontier with space, there’s too much going on in this region to be caused by just the sun.
- Hurricanes, tornadoes and other extreme weather conditions on Earth are also adding energy.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: NASA’s satellite – ICON and ionosphere

Sources: the Hindu.

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GUIDELINES
FOR NANOPHARMACEUTICALS

CONTEXT

Guidelines for evaluation of Nanopharmaceuticals has been released
PREPARED BY:
The guidelines was prepared as a joint project by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in the Union Ministry of Science and Technology and Indian Council of Medical Research and Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

NEED FOR GUIDELINES:

- Nanocarrier based targeted drug delivery is an emerging field with introduction of nanopharmaceuticals in the market. These nanoformulations have higher efficacy, lower toxicity and are safer than the conventional drugs.
- Indian researchers would be facilitated to undertake research in line with the regulatory guidelines and is expected that Industry would be keen to participate from the beginning of the research pipeline towards product development and commercialisation.
- Further, private investments would also be attracted since these guidelines would strengthen the regulatory system.

WHAT ARE NANOPHARMACEUTICALS?

They are a relatively new class of therapeutic-containing nanomaterials that often have unique “nanoproperties” (physiochemical properties) due to their small size (compared with their bulk-phase counterparts) a high surface-to-volume ratio and the possibility of modulating their properties.

SIGNIFICANCE:

- These guidelines mark one of the most important steps for delineating quality, safety and efficacy assessment of the novel nanoformulations.
- The guidelines will pave the way for significant benefits through such cutting edge technology and contribute to the mission on “Affordable Health Care for All”.
- Private investments would also be attracted since these guidelines would strengthen the regulatory system.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: What are Nanopharmaceuticals and its significance?

Sources: the Hindu.

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DIRAC METALS
Researchers from IIT Bombay have discovered special properties in a class of materials called “semi-Dirac metals”- such materials would be transparent to light of a given frequency and polarisation when it is incident along a particular direction. The material would be opaque to the same light when it falls on it from a different direction.

**DISCOVERED BY:**

IIT Bombay

**DIRAC METALS: NEW CLASS OF QUANTUM MATERIALS**

- Semi Dirac metals are the new class of quantum materials.
- Dirac materials are a particular type of 2D materials that could be used to make electronics, and could also be useful in desalination and DNA sequencing.
- The quality of conduction in normal metals like gold and silver depends on the way energy depends on the momentum of electrons.
- Dirac metals differ from normal metals in that the energy depends linearly on the momentum.
- This difference is responsible for their unique properties.
- Semi-Dirac metals behave like Dirac metals in one direction and like normal metals in the perpendicular directions.

![Diagram showing the energy vs. crystal momentum for metal, Dirac material, and insulator.](image)

**WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT SEMI-DIRAC METAL?**
Within any material, charge carriers, such as electrons, acquire an effective mass which is different from their bare mass depending on the nature of the material.

The effective mass and the number of states available for the electron to occupy when it is excited by an electric field, determine the conductivity and other such properties.

This is also true of a semi-Dirac metal.

In particular, the effective mass becomes zero for conduction along a special direction.

Examples of semi-Dirac metals are systems such as TiO2/V2O3 nanostructures.

There are many known applications for transparent conducting films – the common example being touch screens used in mobiles.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RECENT BREAKTHROUGH:**

- The energy-momentum dispersion relation can be linear, leading to large velocities and vanishingly small effective masses.
- The velocities can be over a 100 times more than normal metals, thus increasing the mobility and currents that can be carried across devices made of these so-called Dirac materials.
- In the semi-Dirac metals, these properties are direction dependent.
- The direction-dependence of the microscopical properties gives the material special optical properties.

**APPLICATIONS**

- The researchers show theoretically that semi-Dirac materials can display such thermoelectric properties.
- The study of thermoelectrics dwells on the heat-to electricity conversion efficiency, for which there has been recent and tremendous interest due to the advent of nanomaterials and quantum materials.
- Thermoelectricity is a clean energy technology that uses waste heat to produce electricity typically in low power applications.
- There are many known applications for transparent conducting films – the common example being touch screens used in mobiles.
- This technology is used in efficient cars, where it is used to keep lights on and to warm seats.
- Space crafts like Voyager which are too far from the sun to use solar energy can make use of thermo electricity.

**WHAT ARE QUANTUM MATERIALS?**

- These are the materials where the extraordinary effects of quantum mechanics give rise to exotic and often incredible properties.
- While all materials exhibit quantum mechanical properties at some level, quantum mechanics exhibit special properties like quantum fluctuations, quantum entanglement, quantum coherence and topological behavior.
- These stacked 2D materials have generated considerable recent interest as designer photonic and optoelectronics quantum materials.
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: What Are Dirac Metals and Applications of Dirac materials?

Sources: the Hindu.

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DELIHI-LUCKNOW TEJAS EXPRESS

CONTEXT

This is the first train which is not operated directly by the Railways. IRCTC will be operating this train.

INDIA'S FIRST PRIVATE AND CORPORATE TRAIN

- The train is scheduled to be flagged off on 4 October 2019.
- IRCTC has promised Tejas passengers compensation for delays – Rs100 will be paid if the delay is for over an hour and Rs250 if delay is more than 2 hours.
- The IRCTC has announced a slew of offers, including free travel insurance worth Rs25 lakh and on-board infotainment services, doorstep baggage collection, local food and no tatkal quota, to make the travel on its first train attractive ahead of its first commercial run on October 5.
- The Tejas Express cuts the time travelled between the two cities to 6.15 hours from the 6.40 hours taken by the Swarn Shatabdi, currently the fastest train on the route.

TEJAS EXPRESS

- The Tejas Express is India's first semi-high speed fully air-conditioned train introduced by Indian Railways.
Who is the CEO of Indian Railway?

Ashwani Lohani belongs to the Indian Railways Service of Mechanical Engineers of the 1980 batch. Air India Chairman and Managing Director Ashwani Lohani was today appointed chairman of the Railway Board after the incumbent A K Mital resigned from the post.

Who is the secretary of railway?

Piyush Goyal is the current Union Minister for Railways.

It features modern onboard facilities with automatic doors.

Tejas means "sharp", "lustre" and "brilliance" in many Indian languages.

These trains are among the fastest trains in India along with Rajdhani Express, Gatimaan Express, Shatabdi Express, Vande Bharat Express and Duronto Express and get the highest priority on the Indian railway network.

**BACKGROUND**

- The inaugural run of Tejas Express was on 24 May 2017 from Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus to Karmali, Goa.
- It covered 552 km in 8 hours and 30 minutes.[3]
- On 2 March 2019, second Tejas Express of the country was flagged off between Chennai Egmore and Madurai Junction by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- It covered 497 km in 6 hours and 30 minutes.
- Tejas Express on New Delhi - Chandigarh route is expected to commence its services soon after its first announcement in 2016 whereas the Lucknow - New Delhi route running currently as the train has been included in the current Trains at Glance.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: TEJAS EXPRESS and Indian railways system

Sources: the Hindu.
Union government started New Delhi-Katra ‘Vande Bharat’ Express to give boost to religious tourism in Jammu.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Katra is a small town located 42 km from the city of Jammu which serves as the base camp for pilgrims who visit Vaishno Devi.
- The coaches of this train are indigenously manufactured at the Chennai Rail coach factory.
- Vande Bharat Express has been tested at 180 kmph and can run up to maximum speed of 160 kmph on passenger service. All Coaches are equipped with automatic doors; GPS based audio-visual passenger information system, onboard hotspot, wi-fi for entertainment purposes, and very comfortable seating.
- This is the second ‘Vande Bharat’ express after the New Delhi – Varanasi semi-high speed train was started in February this year.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Vande Bharat’ Express and Indian railways system

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**Air India becomes first in the world to use Taxibot on A320 Aircraft**

**CONTEXT**

Air India became the first airline in the world to use a Taxibot on a A320 aircraft with passengers onboard.

**WHAT IS TAXIBOT?**
Taxibot is a robot-used aircraft tractor for taxiing an aircraft from parking bay to runway and vice versa.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- With Taxibot it is possible to tow an aircraft from the parking bay to the runway with its engines switched off.
- It is a pilot controlled semi-robotic towbarless aircraft tractor used as alternate taxiing equipment.
- Taxibot saves precious fuel and reduces engine wear and tear.
- Taxibots will significantly bring down the consumption of fuel by as much as 85% used during taxiing of an aircraft.
- Taxibots will also help in decongesting boarding gates and the apron area by providing efficient pushbacks.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: benefits of taxibot

Sources: the Hindu.

INDIA SIGNS THE KARTARPUR SAHIB CORRIDOR AGREEMENT WITH PAKISTAN

CONTEXT

The Agreement is intended to facilitate pilgrims to visit Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur through Kartarpur Sahib Corridor.

ABOUT KARTARPUR SAHIB CORRIDOR:
Union Cabinet passed a resolution on 22 November 2018 to celebrate the historic occasion of 550th Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Devji in a grand and befitting manner, throughout the country and across the globe.

In a landmark decision, the Union Cabinet also approved the building and development of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor from Dera Baba Nanak to the International Boundary, to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, round the year, in a smooth and easy manner.

India has signed the Agreement with Pakistan on the modalities for operationalisation of the Kartarpur Sahib Corridor at Zero Point, International Boundary, Dera Baba Nanak.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AGREEMENT:

- Indian pilgrims of all faiths and persons of Indian origin can use the corridor;
- The travel will be Visa Free;
- Pilgrims need to carry only a valid passport;
- Persons of Indian Origin need to carry OCI card along with the passport of their country;
- The Corridor is open from dawn to dusk. Pilgrims travelling in the morning will have to return on the same day;
- The Corridor will be operational throughout the year, except on notified days, to be informed in advance;
- Pilgrims will have a choice to visit as individuals or in groups, and also to travel on foot;
- India will send the list of pilgrims to Pakistan 10 days ahead of travel date. Confirmation will be sent to pilgrims 4 days before the travel date;
- The Pakistan side has assured India to make sufficient provision for ‘Langar’ and distribution of ‘Prasad’.

ISSUES:

- The main issue that has been a point of discussion is the insistence of Pakistan to levy US Dollars 20 as service charge per pilgrim per visit.
- India has consistently urged Pakistan to not levy any fee on the pilgrims.
- It was stressed time and again, including in the previous three Joint Secretary Level meetings and at the diplomatic level that this is not in consonance with the religious and spiritual sentiments of Indian pilgrims.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: ISSUES related to Kartarpur Sahib Corridor and Agreement with Pakistan

Sources: the Hindu.
Invasive weeds affect population of herbivores which are prey to the big cats.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- There is increase in influx of tigers from forests across the border in Maharashtra.
- It was way back in 1992 at the Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biodiversity that biological invasion of alien species of plants was recognized as the second worst threat to the environment after habitat destruction.

WHAT ARE INVASIVE SPECIES?

- Those species whose introduction into an ecosystem successfully out-competes native organisms and harms ecosystems.
- An alien species is a species introduced outside its natural past or present distribution; if this species becomes problematic, it is termed an invasive alien species (IAS).
- An invasive species is a species that is not native to a specific location and has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF INVASIVE SPECIES:

1. Rapid reproduction and growth,
2. High dispersal ability,
3. Phenotypic plasticity (ability to adapt physiologically to new condition)
4. Tolerance of a wide range of environmental conditions (Ecological competence)
5. Ability to live off of a wide range of food types (generalist)
6. Association with humans
7. Prior successful invasions

EXAMPLES OF INVASIVE SPECIES:
Asian Carp. Asian carp are fast-growing, aggressive, and adaptable fish that are outcompeting native fish species for food and habitat in much of the mid-section of the United States. ...

- Brown Marmorated Stink Bug
- Zebra Mussels

**WHAT IS AN INVASIVE PLANT?**

An invasive plant has the ability to thrive and spread aggressively outside its native range. Like Mosses, herbs, shrubs, flowering plants, trees, vines, etc.

**IMPACTS OF INVASIVE SPECIES AND PLANTS:**

**ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

Agriculture, forestry and fishing are of huge importance to the economies of developing countries. Invasive species affect the productivity of these systems, and limit the ability of producers to access export markets. This hinders sustainable economic growth and development. The impacts of invasive species include:

- Value and quality of land degraded
- Lower crop productivity
- High cost of controlling pests, weeds and diseases
- Routes to domestic and global markets blocked
- Livestock forced into marginal, sub-optimal grazing lands
- A woman outside a hut in Ethiopia

**SOCIAL IMPACTS**

Invasive species are a major threat to the livelihoods of the people who live in the areas they colonize. Through disrupting ecosystems, invasive plants, insects and diseases impair many of the things humans need to sustain a good quality of life – including food and shelter, health, security and social interaction. The impacts of invasive species include:

- Livelihood options narrowed
- Food security decreased
- Recreational and social opportunities limited
- Risks to human and animal health
- Increased social challenges
- A thin cow surrounded by prickly pear cactus

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Biodiversity is essential for the functioning of the ecosystems that provide vital resources such as food, water, fuel, building material and traditional medicines for millions of people. Invasive species alter and degrade the environment, and have a negative effect on both native species and the people who live and work there. The impacts of invasive species include:
- Reduced biodiversity
- Decreased availability and quality of key natural resources
- Water shortages
- Increased frequency of wildfires and flooding
- Pollution caused by overuse of chemicals to control infestations

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: INVASIVE SPECIES and how do these invasive plants and species affects our environment and human life?

**Sources:** [https://www.invasive-species.org/impacts](https://www.invasive-species.org/impacts)

**CONTEXT**

About 10 countries including India contributed to the plastic litter in the Great Nicobar Island. They were Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, India, Myanmar, China and Japan.
HIGHLIGHTS

- Major portion of the litter (40.5%) was of Malaysian origin.
- It was followed by Indonesia (23.9%) and Thailand (16.3%).
- The litter of Indian origin only amounted to 2.2%
- The overwhelming contribution from Indonesia and Thailand was likely due to its proximity to the island; the plastic is likely to have made its way to the island because of water currents via the Malacca Strait, which is a major shipping route.
- The huge quantities of marine debris observed on this island might be due to improper handling of the solid waste from fishing/mariculture activity and ship traffic.
- Plastic pollution has emerged as one of the severest threats to ocean ecosystems and its concentration has reached 5,80,000 pieces per square kilometre.
- Plastic represents 83% of the marine litter found. The remaining 17% is mainly textiles, paper, metal and wood.

THE GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND:

Great Nicobar: largest island of the Nicobars
Native name: Tokieong Long
Location: Bay of Bengal
Area: 921 km² (356 sq mi)
Coastline: 202 km (125.5 mi)
Highest point: Mount Thullier
Literacy rate: 84.4%
Tribes: Shompens
Population: 8067

HISTORY

- In the 15th century, Great Nicobar Island was recorded as "Cui Lan Island" during the voyages of Zheng He in the Mao Kun map of the Wu Bei Zhi.
- Great Nicobar Island was severely affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake tsunami with

DO YOU KNOW?

The name of the INDIRA point was changed from Pygmalion Point on 18 October 1985 in commemoration of Indira Gandhi. It was formerly known by various names that include Pygmalion Point, Parsons Point, and for a brief period India Point.
many deaths, and was cut off from all outside contact for more than a day.

**DEMOGRAPHY**

- The island is home to the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, Indira Point – the southernmost point of India and INS Baaz naval air station near Campbell Bay under the joint-services Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) of the Indian Armed Forces.
- It is the southernmost air station of the Indian Armed Forces.
- The island is home to the Shompen people.
**GEOGRAPHY**

- The island of Sumatra is located 180 km (110 mi) to the south of Great Nicobar.
- The island covers 921 km² (356 sq mi) but is sparsely inhabited, with a population of 8067, largely being covered by rainforest and known for its diverse wildlife.
- The island includes the Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve (GNBR) comprising of the Galathea National Park and the Campbell Bay National Park.
- The island harbors a wide spectrum of ecosystems from tropical wet evergreen forests, mountain ranges, and coastal plains.
- The island is also home to giant robber crabs, crab-eating macaques, the rare megapode as well as leatherback turtles.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: plastic pollution and ocean ecosystem, environmental pollution: air, water and soil.

Sources: the Hindu.

**DELHI’S ODD-EVEN RULE**

**CONTEXT**

Odd-even road rationing scheme will be implemented in Delhi from November 4 to 15.

**NEED FOR THE SCHEME:**

- The capital city of India is facing worst phase of pollution and it could lead to devastating effect if pollution remains untreated or inadequately treated.
- Although number of steps have been taken in this regard, strict implementation has been lackluster and inadequate.
- Further most of the actions themselves lack sound strategy and sustainability.
- Thus, is urgent need for evolving sustainable and effective measures.

**WHAT EXACTLY IS THE ODD-EVEN VEHICLE RULE?**
Private vehicles will be allowed to run across the city based on their registration numbers. For example, if a vehicle’s registration number ends with an odd digit, it will be allowed on the road on January 1, while that ending with an even number can be driven on the second, and so on.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

- This system was implemented in Beijing in 2008 just before the summer Olympics.
- While the rule was initially said to be temporary, it turned out to be so effective the government made it permanent.
- Similar road-rationing rules are imposed in many places around the world like Paris, Mexico and Bogota to curb road jams and pollution.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: need for odd-even vehicle rule and its impact

Sources: the Hindu.

UN REPORT ON LEAD CONCENTRATION IN PAINTS

CONTEXT

As World Lead Prevention Week starts on October 20, 2019, a new United Nations (UN) report has revealed that many of its members do not have proper laws inhibiting the concentration of lead in items like paints.

PERMISSIBLE LIMIT:

- Ninety ppm is the concentration limit recommended by the Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint published by the UNEP in 2018.
- It is the lowest and most protective regulatory limit for lead paints that has been set in India and some other countries.
KEY FINDINGS:

1. Only 13 countries have laws which prescribe that lead concentration should not be more than 90 particles per million (ppm).
2. These 13 countries are part of 73 countries out of the UN’s 193 members, which, as of September 30, 2019, had confirmed that they had legally binding controls on lead in paint, according to the UNEP report.
3. The largest economic burden of lead exposure was borne by low- and middle-income countries.

LEAD AND its CONCENTRATION:

- Lead is added to paints for various reasons, including enhancing the colour, reducing corrosion and decreasing the drying time.
- However, lead can reach soil, dust and groundwater through weathering or peeling of the pain.

SEVERAL ADVERSE HEALTH IMPACTS:

- Lead exposure accounted for 1.06 million deaths from long-term effects and 24.4 million disability adjusted life years known as DALYs in 2007.
- Lead can cause permanent damage to the brain and nervous system, resulting in decreased IQ and increased behavioural problems.
- It can also cause anaemia, increase the risk of kidney damage and hypertension, and impair reproductive function.
- Young children and pregnant women (whose developing foetus can be exposed) are especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of lead. Even relatively low levels of exposure can cause serious and irreversible neurological damage.

WHAT TO BE DONE?

- The cost of eliminating the use of lead compounds in decorative paint is much lower than removing these paints from surfaces in homes.
- By contrast, the economic cost is low for eliminating the use of lead compounds in new decorative paints. In fact, many manufacturers have already successfully reformulated their paint products to avoid the intentional addition of lead.
- According to the paint industry, the reformulation of residential and decorative paints to eliminate lead additives is feasible, and the technical and cost impacts are manageable.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: World Lead Prevention Week, Key Findings of the UN Report on concentration of lead
First National Protocol on Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India, has been launched on the occasion of International Snow Leopard Day.

AIM:
To increase the population of snow leopard in coming years

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The 4th Steering Committee meeting of the GSLEP is being attended by Ministers from Nepal, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia along with senior officials from nine of the Snow Leopard countries.
- Development efforts to be made in the Snow Leopard habitats and take into consideration green economic development, innovative conservation financing and population assessment of global Snow Leopards.
- Efforts in combating poaching and illegal wildlife trade of Snow Leopards.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: about National Protocol on Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India and International Snow Leopard Day

Sources: the Hindu.
‘STATIONS’ CLEANLINESS SURVEY REPORT

CONTEXT

‘Stations’ Cleanliness Survey Report’ (Cleanliness assessment of Non-suburban and Suburban Stations 2019) has been released.

HOW ARE THE STATIONS RANKED?

The total score is out of 1000 and each component (Process Evaluation, Direct Observation, Citizen Feedback) weighs 33.33% of the total score.

BACKGROUND:

Railways have been conducting third party audit and cleanliness ranking of 407 major stations annually since 2016. This year the survey was expanded to include 720 stations and suburban stations were also included for the first time.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND FINDINGS OF THE REPORT:

1. Top three cleanest railways stations are from the western state of Rajasthan- Jaipur, Jodhpur and Durgapura.
2. Top three railway zones- North Western Railway followed by South East Central Railway and East Central Railway.
3. Andheri, Virar and Naigaon railway stations were the top three among 109 suburban stations.

EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD:

- Cleanliness programme is being conducted over 6500 stations across Indian Railways to showcase the efforts putting in by Indian Railways to keep trains, stations and railway premises clean.
- Indian Railways has also banned single use plastic across its premises today onwards.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
The Centre is mulling an ambitious plan to create a green wall on North- Western part of India.

**ABOUT THE PROPOSED WALL:**

- It will be a 1,400km long and 5km wide green belt from Gujarat to the Delhi-Haryana border, on the lines of the “Great Green Wall” running through the width of Africa, from Dakar (Senegal) to Djibouti, to combat climate change and desertification. If approved, this may turn out to be a legacy programme in India’s efforts to deal with land degradation and the eastward march of the Thar desert.
- India seeks replicate the idea as a national priority under its goal to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- The green belt may not be contiguous, but would roughly cover the entire degraded Aravali range through a massive afforestation exercise.

**THE NEED FOR AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WALL:**

- A legacy programme like converting such a huge tract of land as a green belt in high-intensive land-degraded states will be great boost towards meeting India’s target.
- The idea of forming a green belt from Porbandar to Panipat will not only help in restoring degraded land through afforestation along the Aravali hill range that spans across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi, but also act as a barrier for dust coming from the deserts in western India and Pakistan.
- The Aravalli range, which separates western India’s Thar desert from the relatively green plains to its east, has lost so much green cover that it is losing its ability to act as a natural barrier against the heat and dust that blows in from the west. The greener it remains, say ecologists, the less likely that the desert will expand into the rest of the Indian landmass.

**BACKGROUND:**
India has, at present, 96.4 mha of degraded land which is 29.3% of the country's total geographical area (328.7 mha).

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** NEED FOR AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GREEN WALL

**Sources:** the Hindu.

**CONTEXT**

Van Dhan Internship Programme of TRIFED launched.

**FEATURES OF THE PROGRAMME:**

- Organised by TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- 18 interns (to be called Minister’s interns) from some of the reputed Institutes of Rural Management/ Management Institutions/ Institutes of Social Work/ Social Services of the country are participating.
- These Interns will help the tribal population in becoming self reliant and entrepreneurs.
- They will support the TRIFED activities on livelihood promotion, value addition of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFTs), marketing and credit linkages.
- They will develop tools and techniques on institutional development including mechanism for determination of a just price or producer price of Minor Forest Products.

**ABOUT VAN DHAN VIKAS KENDRAS INITIATIVE:**

The initiative aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans. It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level.

**SIGNIFICANCE:**
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%.

**IMPLEMENTATION:**

- Implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal Department at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal Agency at the National Level.
- At State level, the State Nodal Agency for MFPs and the District collectors are envisaged to implement at grassroots level.
- Locally the Kendras are proposed to be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in the cluster.

**COMPOSITION:**

As per the plan, TRIFED will facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, a cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each, in the tribal areas.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of the Van Dhan Vikas initiative

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**AWARENESS TO INITIATIVE RUCO**  
**(REPURPOSE USED COOKING OIL)**

**CONTEXT**

To mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Secretary, Petroleum and Natural Gas Dr M.M.Kutty today flagged off the publicity vans in Delhi, to generate awareness among the people about the OMCs’ initiative of converting Used Cooking Oil to Biodiesel.
PURPOSE:

- To spread awareness and educate people about the ill effects of used cooking oil and ways to dispose it off for converting it to biodiesel.
- The publicity vans will also carry the poster messages across 100 cities to spread the awareness.
- This awareness initiative of the OMCs would be a continuous process in coming days.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Consumers can give their Used Cooking Oil to authorised aggregators of Used Cooking Oil who will in turn give it to the Biodiesel Manufactures for production of Biodiesel which will be used for blending with Diesel.

ABOUT RUCO:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.
- Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil. For instance: McDonald’s has already started converting used cooking oil to biodiesel from 100 outlets in Mumbai and Pune.
- FSSAI wants businesses using more than 100 litres of oil for frying, to maintain a stock register and ensure that UCO is handed over to only registered collecting agencies.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: RUCO

Sources: the Hindu.

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PALEOCHANNEL

CONTEXT
The Union Water Ministry has excavated an old, dried-up river in Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) that linked the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The discovery was made last December by a team of scientists from the CSIR-NGRI (National Geophysical Research Institute) and the Central Groundwater Board.
- A palaeochannel is a remnant of an inactive river or stream channel that has been filled or buried by younger sediment.
- Paleochannels typically act as pathways for groundwater movement and provide a potential source of groundwater. Their presence can be helpful in identifying areas suitable for recharge.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Paleochannels

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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“**GANGA AAMANTRAN ABHIYAN**”

**CONTEXT**

The ‘Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan’ is a pioneering and historic exploratory open-water rafting and kayaking expedition on the Ganga River. Starting at Devprayag and culminating at Ganga Sagar, the expedition will cover the entire stretch of over 2500 kms of the Ganga River.

**OBJECTIVE:**

To spread the message of River Rejuvenation and Water Conservation on a massive scale by undertaking social campaign through an sporting activity. The expedition will also draw attention to the ecological challenges being faced by Ganga.
WHAT’S TO BE DONE?

- A nine-member team of swimmer and rafters from the three Services of the Indian Armed Forces, joined by 3 members from NDRF, 2 members each from WII and CSIR-IITR, will perform.
- The team, during the expedition will take up public awareness campaign on the locations at which they will stop.
- They will organise mass cleaning drives, interact with students of the village/city and will further the message of river conservation.

VARIOUS AWARENESS EXERCISES ALONG THE EXPEDITION:

- Bal Ganga Mela, painting and slogan competition on the theme of water conservation and Ganga rejuvenation
- Interaction with colleges & universities by NMCG officials
- Educating students/youth on water footprint, wetlands and biodiversity conservation
- Test the water campaign by IITR, water testing kits
- Celebrating festivals during the expedition
- Exclusive tie-up with Rotary International for public outreach within community and schools
- Public outreach by WII, IITR, GIZ, Ganga Praharis, IAF, Army, Ganga Vichar Manch during the expedition.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Various Awareness Exercises Along with Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan’ to attain River Rejuvenation and Water Conservation

Sources: pib

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**GRADED RESPONSE ACTION PLAN (GRAP)**

**CONTEXT**
Soon, some stricter measures to fight air pollution will come into force in Delhi’s neighbourhood, as part of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).

**AS PER THE PLAN:**

- Measures aimed at stopping the use of diesel generator sets will extend beyond Delhi to the NCR, where many areas see regular power cuts.
- Measures will be incremental. As pollution rises, and it is expected to as winter approaches, more measures will come into play depending on the air quality.

**WHAT IS GRAP?**

- Approved by the Supreme Court in 2016.
- It works only as an emergency measure.
- As such, the plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions.
- When the air quality shifts from poor to very poor, the measures listed have to be followed since the plan is incremental in nature.

**HAS IT BEEN HELPFUL?**

1. It has created a step-by-step plan for the entire Delhi-NCR region and getting on board several agencies including pollution control boards, industrial area authorities, municipal corporations, regional officials of the India Meteorological Department, and others.
2. It has been successful in fixing accountability and deadlines. For each action to be taken under a particular air quality category, executing agencies are clearly marked.
3. Coordination among as many as 13 agencies from four states is simplified to a degree because of the clear demarcation of responsibilities.
4. Three major policy decisions that can be credited to EPCA and GRAP are the closure of the thermal power plant at Badarpur, bringing BS-VI fuel to Delhi before the deadline set initially, and the ban on Pet coke as a fuel in Delhi NCR.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: What is GRAP? Has It Been Helpful to fight air pollution?

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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‘Clean Air Cities Declaration’ was unveiled at the C40 World Mayors Summit in Copenhagen, an event that occurs once every three years and is designed to implement “substantive clean air policies by 2025”.

ABOUT C40 CLEAN AIR CITIES DECLARATION:

- Through this Declaration, mayors commit to using their power and influence to reduce air pollution and work towards meeting the World Health Organization’s Air Quality Guidelines.
- This means cities will continually reduce their local emissions, and advocate for reductions in regional emissions, resulting in continuous declines in air pollution levels that move towards the WHO guidelines.

SIGNATORIES OF THE DECLARATION PLEDGE TO:

- Set ambitious pollution reduction targets within two years that meet or exceed national commitments, putting them on a path towards meeting World Health Organization guidelines;
- Implement substantive clean air policies by 2025 that address the unique causes of pollution in their cities; and
- Publicly report progress on achieving these goals.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1. If the 35 signatories reduce annual average PM2.5 levels to WHO guidelines (10 ug/m3) it could avoid 40,000 deaths each year.
2. C40 research shows that if all 40 cities cleaned their transport, buildings and industry this would reduce GHG emissions by 87%, PM2.5 by nearly 50% and would avoid over 220,000 premature deaths per year.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: ABOUT C40 CLEAN AIR CITIES DECLARATION
Sources: the Hindu.

In addition to regular air quality parameters like PM2.5, PM10, Sulfur Dioxide, Ozone, Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Monoxide, the system also monitors the existence of Benzene, Toluene and Xylene. It also measures Sun's UV Index and Mercury levels.

**NATIONAL AIR QUALITY INDEX’ (AQI):**

- Was launched in 2014 to disseminate information on air quality
- Initiative under Swachh Bharat Mission
- The measurement of air quality is based on eight pollutants
- AQI has six categories of air quality. These are: Good, Satisfactory, Moderately Polluted, Poor, Very Poor and Severe.
- AQI is considered as ‘One Number- One Colour-One Description’ for the common man to judge the air quality within his vicinity.

**8 POLLUTANTS MEASURED BY AQI**

1. Particulate Matter (size less than 10 µm) or (PM10),
2. Particulate Matter (size less than 2.5 µm) or (PM2.5),
3. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2),
4. Sulphur Dioxide (SO2),
5. Carbon Monoxide (CO),
6. Ozone (O3),
7. Ammonia (NH3), and
8. Lead (Pb)
NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

National Ambient Air Quality Standards are the standards for ambient air quality set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The CPCB has been conferred this power by the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

Ambient Air Quality Standards contains 12 pollutants (8 pollutants contained in AQI and 4 others given below)

1. Benzene
2. Benzo(A) Pyrene (BAP)
3. Arsenic
4. Nickel

SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING AND RESEARCH (SAFAR)

- Initiative introduced by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) to measure the air quality of a metropolitan city
- Indigenously developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and is operationalized by the India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- It gives out real-time air quality index on a 24×7 basis with color-coding (along with 72 hours advance forecast).
- SAFAR is an integral part of India’s first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi.

OBJECTIVE:

- increase awareness among the general public regarding the air quality in their city
- helps the policy-makers to develop appropriate mitigation measures and systematic actions

POLLUTANTS MONITORED BY SAFAR

1. 5
2. PM10
3. Ozone
4. Carbon Monoxide (CO)
5. Nitrogen Oxides (NOx)
6. Sulfur Dioxide (SO2)
7. Benzene
8. Toluene
9. Xylene
10. Mercury

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
**For prelims and mains:** Policies, programmes and acts related to air pollution

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**ODISHA LAUNCHES, MEAL IN EXCHANGE FOR PLASTIC WASTE INITIATIVE**

**CONTEXT**

Odisha’s Kotpad Notified Area Council (NAC) launched a unique initiative to deal with plastic waste. The programme entails a meal for anyone who brings a kilogram of used polythene bags, plastic bottles and cups, it is being carried out under the State government’s ‘Aahar’ scheme.

**AIM:**
The initiative aims to sensitize people and create awareness among the people about plastic waste.

**WHY WE NEED, THIS TYPE OF INITIATIVE:**
“Plastic waste chokes drains, traps birds and kills livestock apart from causing serious health hazards to humans. Plastic waste is hazardous as it poses a serious threat to live stocks to protect the environment and the health of people.

**NAC’S OTHER INITIATIVES:**
- NAC has launched the initiative on the lines of the Chhattisgarh government.
- A similar barter system was launched in Telangana’s Mulugu district recently.
- The District Collector announced 1 kg rice in exchange for 1 kg of plastic waste.
- The district aims to make it plastic-free by 2020.
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Policies, programmes and acts related to air pollution

Sources: the Hindu.

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TYPHOON HAGIBIS

CONTEXT

Hagibis, which means “speed” in the Philippine language, is a super typhoon swirling around Japan.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- It led to Chikuma River breaching their banks inundating residential neighborhoods and the torrential rain triggered landslides.
- The typhoon caused a total of 48 landslides in 12 prefectures and at the storm’s peak, more than seven million people were placed under non-compulsory evacuation orders.
- After it made its landfall, a magnitude 5.7 earthquake shook Tokyo shortly after.
- It made landfall in Izu Peninsula, south-west of Tokyo and moved up the east coast.

NAMING OF STORM

Hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are all basically the same thing, but are given different names depending on where they appear.

- Hurricanes are tropical storms that form over the North Atlantic Ocean and Northeast Pacific.
- Cyclones are formed over the South Pacific and Indian Ocean.
- Typhoons are formed over the Northwest Pacific Ocean.
- Willy-willy is formed in south-west Australia.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HURRICANE, A TYPHOON, AND A CYCLONE
Aside from slightly different wind speeds, there is no difference between a hurricane, a typhoon, and a cyclone. They are all different names for the same kind of intense low pressure system.

Most people are familiar with two different types of weather systems:

1. Low pressure systems, also called "cyclones," spin counter-clockwise in the northern hemisphere
2. High pressure systems, also called "anticyclones," spin clockwise in the northern hemisphere.

Tropical cyclones form all around the world, generally about 300 miles (480 kilometers) north or south of the equator. When they form in the Atlantic or Eastern Pacific, the storms are called hurricanes. In the western North Pacific, they are called typhoons and in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean, they are called cyclones.

CONDITIONS TO FORM HURRICAN:

- Water that is at least 80 degrees Fahrenheit (26.6 Celsius)
- Relatively moist air
- Very warm surface temperatures
- A continuous evaporation and condensation cycle
- Wind patterns of varying directions that collide (converging winds)
- A difference in air pressure between the surface and high altitude

DISTINCT LEVELS OF PROGRESSION AS A STORM BECOMES A HURRICANE:

1ST STAGE TROPICAL DISTURBANCE

The first stage is a tropical disturbance, which is essentially a significant cluster of showers and thunderstorms.

2nd STAGE TROPICAL DEPRESSION

As it becomes a tropical depression, it is slightly more organized and the winds pick up to 25 to 38 mph (40 to 61 km/h).

3rd STAGE TROPICAL STORM

It is classified as a tropical storm when winds reach 39 to 73 mph (62 to 117 km/h).

4th STAGE HURRICANE

Once the winds reach 74 mph, it is classified as a hurricane and its intensity is measured by the Saffir-Simpson Scale.
Some storms are called super-typhoons when wind speeds reach 150 mph (241 km/h), according to the U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center. "Super-typhoons are much more intense than regular typhoons; they have a higher wind speed," said Harold Brooks, a research meteorologist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

WHAT IS SAFFIR-SIMPSON SCALE?

The Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale was developed in 1971 by civil engineer Herbert Saffir and meteorologist Bob Simpson, who at the time was director of the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

Category 1: wind 74-95 mph (119-153 km/h)
Category 2: winds 96-110 mph (154-177 km/h)
Category 3: 111-129 mph (178-208 km/h)
Category 4: 130-156 mph (209-251 km/h)
Category 5: exceeding 157 mph (252 km/h)

STORM STRUCTURE

- The main parts of a hurricane are the rainbands, the eye and the eyewall.
- Air spirals in toward the center in a counter-clockwise pattern in the Northern Hemisphere (clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere) and out the top in the opposite direction.
- In the very center of the storm, air sinks, forming an "eye" that is mostly cloud-free and extends 20 to 40 miles (32 to 64 km) in diameter.
- The eye is surrounded by the eyewall, a ring of towering thunderstorms that inflict some of the storm’s most severe punishment.
- Curved bands of clouds and thunderstorms trail away from the eye wall in a spiral fashion.
- These rainbands can produce heavy bursts of rain and wind, as well as tornadoes.

EFFECT OF GLOBAL WARMING:

"Average tropical cyclone maximum wind speed is likely to increase, although increases may not occur in all ocean basins," an Intergovermental Panel on Climate Change report noted.

- In recent years, scientists have debated whether human-caused global warming is affecting hurricanes by making them stronger or causing them to occur more frequently. (Related: "Rising Temperatures May Cause More Katrinas.")
- In theory, warmer atmospheric temperatures should lead to warmer sea surface temperatures, which should in turn support stronger hurricanes.
- The number of Category 4 and 5 hurricanes worldwide nearly doubled from the early 1970s to the early 2000s. Moreover, both the duration of tropical cyclones and their strongest wind speeds have increased by about 50 percent over the past 50 years.
- There is also emerging science suggesting that warming could make storms drop more rain and progress slower.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** Naming of Storm. Difference between a Hurricane, a Typhoon, and A Cyclone. SAFFIR-SIMPSON SCALE

**Sources:** the Hindu.
Question 1:

Consider the following statements regarding the report by the World Resources Institute (WRI) on Global food wastage

1. Nearly half of the food that is produced each year goes uneaten.
2. The uneaten food is responsible for emitting planet-warming greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
3. Cereals are the food group that faces the maximum wastage.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is correct.
D. All of the above.

Question 2:

Consider the following statements regarding the recently launched NISHTHA programme.

1. NISHTHA is a capacity building programme for “Improving Quality of School Education through Integrated Teacher Training”.
2. The initiative is first of its kind wherein standardized training modules are developed at national level for all States and UTs.
3. NISHTHA is under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Samagra Shiksha.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 1, 3
C. 2, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 3:

Consider the following statements regarding Rooftop solar in India.
1. Recently NITI Ayog released SARAL – ‘State Rooftop Solar Attractiveness Index’, the first of its Kind index to provide a comprehensive overview of state-level measures adopted to facilitate rooftop Solar deployment

2. Gujarat has been placed at first position in the SARAL index.

3. The government has set a target of generating 40 GW of renewable energy from grid connected solar rooftops by 2022.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is Correct.
D. All of the Above.

Question 4:

Consider the following statements regarding "OPEN-DEFECATION FREE" (ODF).

1. A village is ODF when: (i) there are no visible faeces in the village, and (ii) every household as Well as public/community institution uses safe technology options for faecal disposal.

2. After a village declares itself ODF, states are required to carry out verification of the ODF Status of such a village

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are correct.
D. None of the above.

Question 5:

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative in order to

A. To enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.
B. To collect sample and test the used cooking oil.
C. To maintain quality of the cooking oil by making the oil usage standard.
D. None of the above.

Question 6:
"VEER KUTUMB RALLY" has been organized by the Indian Army as part of its activities to observe 2019 as the ‘Year of the Next of Kin’, in which state

A. Assam  
B. Jammu & Kashmir  
C. Bihar  
D. Madhya Pradesh

Question 7:

Consider the following statements regarding Mount Leo Pargyil

1. Leo Pargyil is the third highest peak of Himachal.  
2. It lies in the Zanskar range.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

A. Only 1 is correct.  
B. Only 2 is correct.  
C. Both are correct.  
D. None of the above.

Question 8:

Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP) aims to

1. Protecting tiger species and their prey from the threat of poaching.  
2. Preserving tiger habitats, including core habitats, buffer zones and corridors.  

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2  
B. 1, 3  
C. 2, 3  
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 9:

Consider the following statements:
1. Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a composite indicator measuring changes in the volume of Production of a basket of industrial products over a period of time, with respect to a chosen base Period.
2. Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is compiled and published on a monthly basis by the Central Statistical Office with a time lag of six weeks from the reference month

Select the correct statement(s).

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are correct.
D. None of the above.

Question 10:
Consider the following statements:

1. The Tumpek Kandang ceremony had been celebrated in Bali Zoo on October 12 2019. It is a tribute to God of Creator and Preserver (God Shiva)
2. The Tumpek Kandang ceremony was to pray for an eternal safety and a healthy state of the animals, also to hope for a disease-free condition.
3. The Tumpek Kandang ceremony celebrated to respect the meaningful bond that grow in a relationship between human and other well-beings, especially animals, which by some means, the celebration also gave hope to wildlife preservation.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 11:
Consider the following statements regarding "FASTags for vehicles".

1. A FASTag uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to make cashless payments through a prepaid account linked to it.
2. Allows the government to track the movement of vehicles across the country, and to make payments of tolls cashless without stopping at toll booths.
3. FASTags will be mandatory for all vehicles at all National Highways from 1 December 2019.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 12:
Consider the following statements regarding "Economic Nobel prize"

1. The prize, officially known as the 'Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences In Memory Of Alfred Nobel'.
2. The prize was created by Riksbanken, the Swedish central bank, in 1968.
3. So far, 81 Nobel laureates in economic sciences have been awarded.
4. Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Michael Kremer have jointly won the Economics Nobel for the year 2019 for their "experimental approach to alleviating global poverty".

Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1, 2, 3
B. 2, 3, 4
C. All of the above.
D. None of the above.

Question 13:
Consider the following statements:

1. Air India became the first airline in the world to use a Taxibot on a A320 aircraft with passengers onboard.
2. Taxibot is a robot-used aircraft tractor for taxiing an aircraft from parking bay to runway and vice versa.
3. Taxibots will significantly bring down the consumption of fuel used during taxiing of an aircraft.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3
Question 14:
Consider the following statements regarding "Global Hunger Index"

1. Global Hunger Index report is a peer-reviewed publication released annually by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.
2. The Global hunger Index scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake, child undernutrition, and child mortality.
3. India is ranked behind its neighbours Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh in the Global Hunger Index 2019.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 15:
Consider the following statements about National Supercomputing Mission.

1. The mission is jointly steered by Department of Science and Technology and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY).
2. The mission envisages installing vast supercomputing grid comprising of over 70 high-performance computing facilities spread across the county.
3. These supercomputers will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 16:
Consider the following statements regarding Index of Eight Core Industries.
1. The Eight Core Industries comprise 50 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
2. Refinery Products has the maximum weight in Index of Eight Core Industries.
3. The growth of the Eight Core Industries has been declining steadily since 2015.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is correct.
D. All of the Above.

Question 17:

Consider the following statements:

1. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn was a Dutch draughtsman, painter and printmaker. He is generally considered one of the greatest visual artists in the history of art and the most important in Dutch art history.
2. Rembrandt made 25 drawings based on Mughal miniatures from India, at the height of his career. This is in spite of the fact that the Dutch artist never set foot on Indian soil.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are Correct.
D. None of the above.

Question 18:

The Culture Department of Uttar Pradesh government is going to organise the country's first training and performance programme of world famous KHON Ramlila, "Khon Ramlila" is originated in which country.

A. Nepal
B. Myanmar
C. Bhutan
D. Thailand

Question 19:
Consider the following statements regarding World Trade Organization (WTO).

1. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
2. WTO can cut the cost of doing business internationally.
3. All the African countries are the members of WTO.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 3
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 2
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 20:
Shingle Island, recently seen in news is located in

A. Gulf of Mannar
B. Gulf of Kachchh
C. Gulf of Kambhat
D. Bay of Bengal

Question 21:
Recently, AIM NITI Aayog, UNDP India Jointly Launches “Youth Co:Lab” with aim to:

A. To accelerate social entrepreneurship and innovation in young India.
B. To spread awareness regarding professional courses in young India.
C. To provide awareness regarding health among youth.
D. None of the above.

Question 22:
In context to "Eat Right India" Movement, consider the following statements:

1. It was launched by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
2. The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.
3. To engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.

Select the correct statements:
Question 23:

Consider the following statements about "Kanyashree scheme"

1. The state govt. of Haryana operating this scheme.
2. A conditional cash transfer scheme aiming at improving the status and wellbeing of the girl child.
3. This initiative led to a “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

A. 1,2  
B. 2,3  
C. 1,3  
D. 1,2,3

Question 24:

Recently launched “Project Beehive” is related to

A. Automation of the entire Corps in India.  
B. Change policing and police station people friendly. 
C. Search operation for terrorists in jammu & Kashmir. 
D. None of the above.

Question 25:

Consider the following statements about "The first-ever curriculum was released by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for pre-school" 

1. It recommends that Children between the ages of three and six years should be taught in their own mother tongues.
2. The focus on learning should be through play instead of being subjected to rote learning, tests and examinations.
3. The draft National Education Policy has recommended that the Right to Education Act be extended to students in the three years of preschool before Class I.
Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1,2
B. 2,3
C. 1,3
D. 1,2,3

**Question 26:**

NITI Aayog with Institute for Competitiveness as the knowledge partner released the "India Innovation Index" (III) 2019, the most innovative state in India 2019 is

A. Gujrat
B. Maharashtra
C. Karnataka
D. Tamil Nadu

**Question 27:**

Consider the following statements about **Low Earth Orbit (LEO).**

1. It is an Earth-centered orbit with an altitude of 2,000 km or less.
2. The International Space Station conducts operations in LEO.
3. Major disadvantage of low Earth orbit is that it requires high amount of energy for satellite placement.
4. Spy satellites cannot use LEO.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

A. 1, 2
B. 1, 2, 3
C. 3, 4
D. 2, 3, 4

**Question 28:**

Consider the following statements regarding **PACE setter Fund.**

1. It is a fund jointly capitalized by the Governments of India and Japan.
2. It provides early-stage grant funding to accelerate the commercialization of innovative off-grid clean energy products.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
Question 29:
Consider the following statements regarding ‘Angikaar campaign’.

1. Angikaar has been launched for social behaviour change, focusing on issues such as water & energy conservation, waste management, health, tree plantation, sanitation and hygiene.
2. The target group includes beneficiaries of Swachh Bharat Mission.
3. The campaign will converge with schemes and Missions of other Ministries dealing with health, sanitation and hygiene.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 1, 3
C. 2, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 30:
Consider the following statements

1. World Iodine Deficiency Day is observed on 21 October to create awareness of the adequate use of iodine among the people. The day also highlights the consequences of iodine deficiency.
2. Disorders caused due to iodine deficiency have become a major public health problem worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 54 countries are still iodine deficient.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are correct.
D. None of the above.

Question 31:
Consider the following statements regarding CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority).
1. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) are meant to promote afforestation and regeneration activities as a way of compensating for forest land diverted to non-forest uses.

2. According to CAMPA Act’s provision, a company diverting forest land must provide alternative land to take up compensatory afforestation.

3. The loss of forest ecosystem must also be compensated by paying for net present value (NPV).

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 1, 3
C. 2, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 32:
“Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar” is instituted by the Centre to recognize the Work in the field of

A. Border Security
B. Cyber Security
C. Disaster management
D. Specific act of bravery or special service by the citizen

Question 33:
In context to "Pulse Polio Programme in India" consider the following statements:

1. The pulse polio programme conducted every year aims to protect children from the polio disease by conducting two nationwide mass polio vaccination campaigns.
2. The pulse polio programme 2019 is aimed at sustaining the polio eradication from the country.
3. Till now India is not polio-free country, still some cases are reported.

Which of the above statements are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 34:
Consider the following statements regarding ‘UMMID’ (Unique Methods of Management and treatment of Inherited Disorders) initiative.

1. It is to tackle inherited genetic diseases of new born babies.
2. UMMID aims to create awareness about genetic disorders amongst clinicians and establish molecular diagnostics in hospitals.
3. It aims to establish National Inherited Diseases Administration Kendra’s to provide counselling, prenatal testing and diagnosis, and multidisciplinary care in Government Hospitals.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 1, 3
C. 2, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 35:

After a delay of two years the "Annual Crime in India Report 2017" was published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), according to this report which of the following had the highest crime rate in the country.

A. Chandigarh
B. Delhi
C. Jammu and Kashmir
D. Uttar Pradesh

Question 36:

Consider the following statements about "United Nations General Assembly" (UNGA).

1. Among the world’s 196 countries, 193 are UN member states and three nations - Palestine, the Vatican City and Taiwan are not a part of the international organization.
2. Takes decision on important matters such as peace and security, discusses various global issues and budgetary matters.
3. The UNGA can express world opinion, promote international cooperation in various fields and make recommendations to the UNSC and elect the Security Council’s non-permanent members.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1,3
D. 1,2,3

Question 37:

Head on Generation (HOG) technology, recently seen in news is related to

A. Pollution control
B. Lithium-Ion Batteries
C. Railways
D. Artificial Intelligence

Question 38:

"Mukhya Mantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana" has been launched in Uttar Pradesh, consider the following statements regarding it.

1. Mukhya Mantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana aims to empower the girl child.
2. Under the scheme, cash amount of Rs.15,000 will be provided to every family in which a girl child takes birth.
3. Mukhya Mantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana also covers full scholarship for better education of a new born girl child.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1,2
B. 2,3
C. 1,3
D. 1,2,3

Question 39:

Consider the following:

1. The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights wants the Department of Primary and Secondary Education to ban schools from assigning homework to students in classes I to V.
2. Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005 provided for establishment of Commissions for Protection of Child rights both at National level and State level.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are correct.
D. None of the above.

Question 40:
Consider the following statements regarding a separate state flag.

1. Supreme Court has said that there is no prohibition in the Constitution for the State to have its own flag.
2. Under the Constitution, a flag is enumerated in the concurrent list.
3. The Flag Code of India, 2002 does not impose prohibitions on a State flag.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 41:
Diwan-i-Khairat, established by Firoz Shah Tughlaq is

A. Department of slave
B. Rest house for merchants
C. Hospitals for travellers
D. Office for charity

Question 42:
Consider the following:

1. The European Parliament has awarded the Sakharov Prize for human rights to Uighur intellectual Ilham Tohti, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment in China for “separatism”.
2. The Uighurs are a minority Turkic ethnic group originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. Only 1 is Correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Both are correct.
D. None of the above.
Question 43:
Consider the following statements regarding the report by the World Resources Institute (WRI) on Global food wastage:

1. Nearly half of the food that is produced each year goes uneaten.
2. The uneaten food is responsible for emitting planet-warming greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
3. Cereals are the food group that faces the maximum wastage.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is correct.
D. All of the above.

Question 44:
Consider the following statements regarding “Kartarpur Sahib Corridor Agreement”

1. The Agreement is intended to facilitate pilgrims to visit Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur through Kartarpur Sahib Corridor.
2. Indian pilgrims of all faiths and persons of Indian origin can use the corridor.
3. Pilgrims will have to take visa for travel the corridor.

Select the correct statement(s).

A. 1,2
B. 2,3
C. 1,3
D. 1,2,3

Question 45:
Consider the following statements about PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation) Platform.

1. It is a multi-modal platform that is aimed at addressing common man’s grievances.
2. The PRAGATI platform uses video-conferencing and geo-spatial technology.
3. It is a three-tier system which consists of PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1,2  
B. 2,3  
C. 1,3  
D. 1,2,3

**Question 46:**

Consider the following statements regarding **Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS).**

1. PGS is a process of certifying organic products, which ensures that their production takes place in accordance with laid-down quality standards.
2. PGS is locally focused quality assurance systems and involves the participation of producers and consumers.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.  
B. Only 2 is correct.  
C. Both are correct.  
D. None of the above

**Question 47:**

Consider the following statements regarding the recently launched **Rural Sanitation Strategy.**

1. The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), launched the 5 Year Rural Sanitation Strategy (2019-2024).
2. It focuses on sustaining the sanitation behaviour change that has been achieved under the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G)
3. It ensures that everyone uses a toilet, and every village has access to solid and liquid waste management.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1,2  
B. 2,3  
C. 1,3  
D. 1,2,3

**Question 48:**
Consider the following statements regarding "Air Quality Index" (AQI), India.

1. "Air Quality Index" was launched in 2014 to disseminate information on air quality.
2. AQI is considered as 'One Number - One Colour - One Description' for the common man to judge the air quality within his vicinity.
3. AQI is only meant to measure the level of pollution caused by stubble burning only.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3

Question 49:

Kathmandu Declaration, sometimes seen in news is related to

A. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
B. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
C. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)
D. Group of 77 (G-77)

Question 50:

Consider the following statements regarding All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report for 2018-19.

1. It is a biennial web-based, pan-India exercise on the status of Higher Education in the country.
2. The survey covers all the Institutions in the country engaged in imparting of higher education.
3. Gender gap has been increasing significantly in higher education, according to 2018-19 report.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect?

A. 1, 2
B. 2, 3
C. 1, 3
D. 1, 2, 3
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION'S NUMBERS</th>
<th>ANSWERS</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil), an initiative that will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to biodiesel.</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Rally organised by the Indian Army as part of its activities to observe 2019 as the ‘Year of the Next of Kin’, in Jammu &amp; Kashmir. To reach out to veterans, veer naris, widows and their families.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>D</td>
<td><strong>KHON Ramlila</strong> is a masked form of Ramlila art of Thailand. It is a form of masked dance depicting the scenes of Ramlila. It has no dialogues and background voices narrate the whole story of Ramayana.</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Dead coral reefs</strong> in Shingle Island after the recent blooming of microalgae.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>B</td>
<td><strong>The state government of West Bengal</strong> is setting up Kanyashree University in Nadia district and Kanyashree colleges across the state so as to empower girls.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>The Army’s Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME)</strong> has launched a major initiative under Project Beehive for automation of the entire Corps. The objective is to enable real-time monitoring and response of its 2,000 workshops across the country.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>C</td>
<td><strong>Karnataka</strong> is the most innovative major state in India. Karnataka’s number one position in the overall Ranking is partly attributed to its top rank in the Performance dimension.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td><strong>India was declared polio-free country in the year 2014. India’s last reported cases of wild polio were in West Bengal and Gujarat on 13 January 2011.</strong></td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>35</td>
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<td><strong>Delhi has the highest crime rate in the country with 1050 crimes committed per one lakh of the population as listed under the Indian Penal Code.</strong></td>
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<td>36</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>C</td>
<td><strong>Railway Ministry is upgrading all existing Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches with the Head on Generation (HOG) technology.</strong></td>
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<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1. Established the Diwan-i-Khairat — office for charity. 2. established the Diwan-i-Bundagan — department of slave 3. established Sarais (rest house) for the benefits of merchants and other travellers 4. Adopted the Iqtadari framework. 5. Established four new towns, Firozabad, Fatehabad, Jaunpur and Hissar. 6. established hospitals known as Darul-Shifa, Bimaristan or Shifa Khana.</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td><strong>The travel will be Visa Free; Pilgrims need to carry only a valid passport.</strong></td>
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<td>50</td>
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</tbody>
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