CURRENT AFFAIRS SYNOPSIS
JANUARY 2020

A complete source of knowledge on regional, national and international issues
More than 50 sample UPSC prelims questions with answer key

NAGOBA JATARA
HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX
CURATIVE PETITION
INDIA RANKED FIFTH-BIGGEST GEOPOLITICAL RISK OF 2020 BY EURASIA GROUP
GLOBAL TRENDS/ REPORTS ON VARIOUS ISSUES
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: 09/FEBRUARY/2020

A. SIDHARTH

M.A., PH.D IN GEOGRAPHY
### National and International events

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2. Indian Science Congress  
3. India ranked fifth-biggest geopolitical risk of 2020 by Eurasia Group  
4. UNESCO creative cities network (UCCN)  
5. Iran nuclear deal  
6. Statue of Unity enters 8 Wonders of SCO list  
7. 2020 as Year of the Nurse and Midwife : WHO

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2. Guru Gobind Singh  
3. Savitribai Phule  
4. Lord Curzon  
5. Balshashtri Jambhekar  
6. Lala Lajpat Rai

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India will host the 36th International Geological Congress, aimed at the development of Earth Sciences, in the National Capital Region (NCR) from March.

**THEME OF THE SCIENCE PROGRAMME:**

‘Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Future’

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Described as the “Olympics of Geosciences,” the event will witness debates and discussions on a wide range of issues affecting the world, such as sustainable development, climate change, water and mineral resources.
- The event will offer a host of opportunities to the mining & mineral, and the allied industries of the country, apart from the scientists, researchers and academia.
The first session of IGC took place in France in 1878. Since its inception, 35 Congresses have been hosted by 24 countries throughout the world. India is the only Asian country to host the Congress twice. The 22nd session of IGC was held in New Delhi in 1964.

70 exciting field trips covering the geological superlatives of India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are in store for the delegates.

The next edition – the 36th – will be organised in Delhi, India, March 2-8, 2020.

The Congress has 45 themes, covering practically all aspects of Planet Earth, has 60 field trips, a GeoExpo, and a variety of other programs.

**WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS?**

- International Geological Congress (IGC) is the prestigious global platform for advancement of Earth Science.
- The first session of IGC assembled in 1878 in France with an aim to provide the global geological community with an opportunity to create an organizational framework for meeting at regular intervals.
- It envisaged a spirit of fraternal cooperation that transcends boundaries, languages and has the ability to bring together the geoscientific community across the continents and oceans.
- Founded as a non-profit scientific and educational organization in 1878, IGC came under the aegis of International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 1961.
- Since then the meetings of IGC are held in collaboration and under scientific sponsorship of IUGS.
- The International Geological Congress is a mega event organized every four years.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Major Objectives of International Geological Congress

**Sources:** the Hindu, (http://www.iugs.org)
CONTEXT:

107th Indian Science Congress is being held at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) in Bengaluru, Karnataka. 107th Indian Science Congress will be held at University of Agricultural Sciences, GKVK Campus, Bangalore, Karnataka from 3-7th January, 2020

THEME:

“Science & Technology: Rural Development”

BACKGROUND:

Indian Science Congress is organised by the Indian Science Congress Association every year in the first week of January.

INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS ASSOCIATION:

The Indian Science Congress Association was started in the year 1914 in Kolkata and has a membership of more than 30,000 scientists.

ORIGIN:

❖ It owes its origin to the foresight and initiative of two British chemists, namely, Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P. S. MacMahon.
❖ It occurred to them that scientific research in India might be stimulated if an annual meeting of research workers somewhat on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science could be arranged.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

1. To advance and promote the cause of science in India.
2. To hold an annual congress at a suitable place in India.
3. To publish such proceedings, journals, transactions and other publications as may be considered desirable.
4. To secure and manage funds and endowments for the promotion of Science including the rights of disposing of or selling all or any portion of the properties of the Association.
5. To do and perform any or all other acts, matters and things as are conductive to, or incidental to, or necessary for, the above objects.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
Eurasia Group reported that India is one of the world’s top geopolitical risks for 2020. The political risk consultancy India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi was listed as the fifth biggest geopolitical risk of 2020.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Eurasia Group is one of the United States most influential risk assessment companies.
- The report said that the Indian PM Narendra Modi has spent much of his second term to promote the controversial social policies, include the revocation of the special status for Jammu and Kashmir through an Act, at the expense of an economic agenda.
- It also highlighted that the impacts will be shown in 2020, with intensified communal and sectarian instability, foreign policy and economic setbacks.
- The list was topped by-elections in the US and followed by events and developments like the US-China technology tug of war on 5G and the trade war between China and the US.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: About the Report

Sources: the Hindu.
The government of Hanoi recently held a ceremony to formally announce that the Vietnamese capital city is joining the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). To date, the UCCN has granted membership to 246 cities around the world.

**WHAT IS IT?**

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.
- The Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.

Joining the Network, cities commit to sharing their best practices and developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society in order to:

- Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
- Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
- Improve access to and participation in cultural life, in particular for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Fully integrate culture and creativity into sustainable development plans.
As of November, 2019, there are five Indian cities in UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as follows:


**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: UCCN,

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL**

**CONTEXT:**

Iran has completely withdrawn from JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) nuclear deal. The announcement came after the US troops killed General Qassem Soleimani.

**WHAT WAS THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL?**

Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.

- Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
- The JCPOA established the Joint Commission, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

**WHY DID IRAN AGREE TO THE DEAL?**
It had been hit with devastating economic sanctions by the United Nations, United States and the European Union that are estimated to have cost it tens of billions of pounds a year in lost oil export revenues. Billions in overseas assets had also been frozen.

WHY HAS US PULLED OUT OF THE DEAL?

Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran’s support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists, like Hamas and Hezbollah. They note it also doesn’t curb Iran’s development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030. They say Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA:

ON OIL AND GAS:

The impact on world oil prices will be the immediately visible impact. Iran is presently India’s third biggest supplier (after Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and any increase in prices will hit both inflation levels as well as the Indian rupee. It would impact the development of Chahbahar port.

INSTC:

It will also affect these plans, especially if any of the countries along the route or banking and insurance companies dealing with the INSTC plan also decide to adhere to U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran.

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION:

China may consider inducting Iran into the SCO. If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is led by China and Russia, India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American, and will run counter to some of the government’s other initiatives like the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral with the U.S., Australia and Japan.

GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS:

1. Down trends in global economy.
2. Fuel prices would reach high points.
3. Iran may block Strait of Hormuz which is a strategic choke point which inturn would affect global trade.
4. Giant economy like India, China and Russia will suffer.
5. US may cancel airlines from US to India because they pass over Iran which would affect airspace industry.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
STATUE OF UNITY ENTERS 8 WONDERS OF SCO LIST

CONTEXT:

The 182-meter tall Statue of Unity in Gujarat enters Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s 8 Wonders of SCO list. The announcement was made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar announced on 13 January. SCO aims to promote tourism among member nations.

STATUE OF UNITY:

- The Statue of Unity stands the tallest statue in the world.
- It is a monumental tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who is independent India’s first home minister and deputy prime minister. PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the Statue of Unity or Sardar Patel’s statue on the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s 143rd birth anniversary.
- He was fondly known as the Iron Man of India.
  It stands in the mid of the Narmada River, on the islet of Sadhu Bet. Sardar Patel is credited for unifying all of the 562 princely states in pre-independence India to form what is today the Republic of India.
- The statue is made up of 1,900 tonnes of bronze, 1,850 tonnes of bronze cladding, 70,000 metric tonnes of cement and 24,500 metric tonnes of steel.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: SCO list

Sources: the Hindu.
The World Health Organisation (WHO) has designated the year 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and midwife”, in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The declaration of “Year of the Nurse and midwife” will help to strengthen nursing and midwifery for Universal Health Coverage.
- Strengthening nursing will help to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the (SDG) 3 – ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages, SDG 5-promoting gender equity and SDG 8- contributing to economic development.
- Nurses and midwives constitute more than 50% of the health workforce in many countries.

- The declaration will also help to endorse “The NursingNow!” a three-year campaign (2018-2020) to improve health globally by raising the status of nursing.
- Moreover, WHO is also leading the development of the first-ever State of the World’s Nursing report which will be launched in 2020

**MAIN DEVELOPMENTS ON THE ROAD TO THIS UNIQUE EVENT AND THE KEY DATES:**
30 January 2019 – The World Health Organization provisionally designates 2020 as the “year of the nurse and midwife”, in honour of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale

24 May 2019 – Designation of 2020 as the first ever International Year of the Nurse and Midwife is confirmed by the World health Assembly, providing a “once in a generation opportunity” to showcase the professions

28 June 2019: Nightingale Challenge launched – It asks every health employer around the world to provide leadership and development training for a group of young nurses and midwives during 2020 to mark the Year of the International Nurse and the Midwife

30 June 2019: International Council of Nurses Congress in Singapore – WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says in a speech that investing in a stronger nursing workforce is essential for achieving universal health coverage and proposed that “every country bring one nurse and one midwife to the 2020 World Health Assembly

1 January 2020 – The official start of the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife

7 April 2020: World Health Day – Launch of the WHO’s State of the World’s Nursing (SoWN) report. It will describe how the nursing workforce will help deliver universal health coverage and highlight areas for policy development for the next three to five years. The report will also provide a technical description of the nursing workforce in WHO member states

12 May 2020: International Nurses Day – marking the birthday of nursing pioneer Florence Nightingale. The WHO will host a celebration in Geneva with the International Council of Nurses and the Nursing Now campaign

13-15 May 2020: WHO Global Forum of Government Chief Nursing Officers – Biennial convening of government chief nursing and midwifery officers immediately prior to the 73rd World Health Assembly

18-23 May 2020: 73rd World Health Assembly held in Geneva – In celebration of the Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, the Director General has invited nursing champions to address the Assembly. The SoWN report may inform discussions on nursing and midwifery at the 73rd WHA

Sep-Oct 2020: WHO regional committees held – potential regional commitments will be made on the health workforce, including nursing and midwifery, based on the SoWN report

27-28 October 2020: Nightingale 2020 – Florence Nightingale Foundation will host a conference in London to showcase how nurses and midwives can work collectively to transform global health and care. It will celebrate Florence Nightingale’s legacy and contribute to the WHO’s International Year of the Nurse and midwife

28 October 2020: Nursing Times Awards – Our annual awards ceremony will be held at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London and will feature a special award to mark International Year of the Nurse and Midwife

31 December 2020 – Official end of the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife

ABOUT FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE:

- Florence Nightingale was a British nurse, statistician, and social reformer who are also considered as a foundational philosopher of modern nursing.
- She was born in Florence, Italy, on May 12, 1820. The year 2020 marks a bicentenary year of her birth.
During the Crimean War, she and a team of nurses improved the unsanitary conditions at a British base hospital, greatly reducing the death count. Her writings sparked worldwide health care reform.

She was known for her night rounds to aid the wounded, establishing her image as the ‘Lady with the Lamp’.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: how the “year of the nurse and midwife” will help to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and healthy lives and promote wellbeing?

Sources: the Hindu.

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CONTEXT:

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23rd January 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa Division, Bengal Province, to Prabhavati Dutt Bose and Janakinath Bose.

SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE:

- Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (23 January 1897 – 18 August 1945) is one of the most celebrated freedom fighters of India.
- In 1942, he earned the title ‘Netaji’, in Germany by the Indian soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj.
- Bose is credited with the very famous slogan, “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!” as well as “Jai Hind”.
- He is also credited to be the first man to call Mahatma Gandhi “Father of the Nation”, in his address from Singapore.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Born: January 23, 1897
Place of Birth: Cuttack, Orissa
Parents: Janakinath Bose (father) and Prabhavati Devi (mother)

Spouse: Emily Schenkl

Children: Anita Bose Pfaff

Associations: Indian National Congress; Forward Bloc; Indian National Army

Movements: Indian Freedom Movement

Political Ideology: Nationalism; Communism; Fascism-inclined;

Religious Beliefs: Hinduism

Publications: The Indian Struggle (1920–1942)

Memorial: Renkji Temple, Tokyo, Japan; Netaji Bhawan, Kolkata, India

Education: Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack; Presidency College, Calcutta; University of Cambridge, England

Death: August 18, 1945

**TIMELINE:**

- In 1919, Bose headed to London to give the Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination and he was selected. Bose, however, resigned from Civil Services as he believed he could not side with the British.

- In 1921, Bose worked under Chittaranjan Das, a powerful politician in Bengal. He worked as the editor for Das’s newspaper, Forward, and later started his own newspaper, Swaraj.

- In 1923, Bose was elected the President of the All India Youth Congress and also the Secretary Bengal State Congress.

- During the mid-1930s Bose travelled in Europe. He researched and wrote the first part of his book, The Indian Struggle, which covered the country’s independence movement in the years 1920–1934.

- After his return, Bose took over as the elected President of Indian National Congress in 1938 (Haripur) and stood for unqualified Swaraj (self-
governance) and the use of force against the British which then combated against Mahatma Gandhi and his views.

- Bose was re-elected in 1939 (Tripuri) but soon resigned from the presidency and formed the All India Forward Bloc, a faction within the Congress which aimed at consolidating the political left.
- In 1943, he travelled to Japan and took leadership of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia. With Japanese aid and influence, he took the leadership of a trained army of about 40,000 troops in Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia known as the Indian National Army.
- The INA was first formed under Mohan Singh and Japanese Major Iwaichi Fujiwara and comprised Indian prisoners of war of the British-Indian Army captured by Japan in the Malayan (present-day Malaysia) campaign and at Singapore.
- The troops of the INA were under the aegis of a provisional government, the Azad Hind Government, which came to produce its own currency, postage stamps, court and civil code, and was recognised by nine Axis states.
- In 1945, the British Indian Army retaliated to the capture of Manipur, Kohima and Imphal by INA and killed almost half of the Japanese forces and the entire participating INA contingent.
- Bose escaped to Manchuria seeking a future in the Soviet Union.
- He is said to have died in 1945 when his plane crashed in Taiwan. However, there are still many conspiracy theories regarding his death.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: contribution of NETAJI SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE to achieve independence for India

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**GURU GOBIND SINGH**

**CONTEXT:**

The birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh was celebrated on January 2nd this year.

**GURU GOBIND SINGH:**
- His birthday sometimes falls either in December or January or even both months in the Gregorian calendar. The annual celebration of the Guru’s birthday is based on the Nanakshahi calendar.
- He became the Sikh guru at the age of nine, following the demise of father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru.
- He is known for his significant contributions to the Sikh religion, including the introduction of the turban to cover hair.
- He is also responsible to establish the highest order in the Sikh community.
- Followers of the Sikh faith religiously follow the morals and codes of discipline set up by Guru Gobind Singh.
- He fought against the Mughals later in battle of Muktsar in 1705.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Date of Birth: January 5, 1666
Place of Birth: Patna Sahib, India
Death: October 7, 1708
Place of Death: Hazur Sahib, Nanded, India

Full name: Gobind Rai
Spouse: Mata Sahib Kaur (m. 1700), Mata Jito (m. 1684), Mata Jito (m. 1677)
Children: Ajit Singh, Fateh Singh, Zorawar Singh, Jujhar Singh

MAJOR WORKS:

- Introduced the Khalsa & the Five Ks;
- Declared Guru Granth Sahib as eternal Guru for Sikhs;
- Wrote Zafarnamah, Bachittar Natak, Chaupai (Sikhism),
- Akal Ustat,
- Jaap Sahib,
- Tav-Prasad Savaiye,
- Chandi di Var

“*When all other means have failed, It is but lawful to take to the sword.*”

Guru Gobind Singh, Zafarnamah
AMAZING FACTS ABOUT GURU GOBIND SINGH:

1. A LEADER AMONG US

Gobind Rai, who would later be named as Guru Gobind Singh, was born to the ninth Guru of Sikhism, Guru Teg Bahadur and Mata Gujri at Patna Sahib or Takht Sri Patna Sahib (now in Patna).

2. SON OF A MARTYR

He was only nine when he became the Tenth Sikh Guru. He ascended after his father Guru Teg Bahadur accepted martyrdom in the hands of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to protect the Kashmiri Hindus.

3. SCHOLAR AND WARRIOR

As a child, Guru Gobind Singh learned many languages including Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi, Braj, Gurmukhi and Persian. He also learned martial arts to become adept in combat.

4. TO THE HILLS

Guru Gobind Singh’s hometown was the city of Anandpur Sahib in the present Rupnagar district in Punjab. He left the town due to a scuffle with Bhim Chand and proceeded to Nahan, a place in the hills of Himachal Pradesh, following an invitation of Mat Prakash, the king of Sirmur.

5. PREACHING IN HILLS

From Nahan, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded to Paonta, a town beside the river Yamuna in South Sirmur, Himachal Pradesh. There, he founded the Paonta Sahib Gurudwara and preached about the Sikh principles. Paonta Sahib remains an important pilgrimage site for Sikhs. Guru Gobindji also wrote texts and had a substantial number of followers within three years, the time he spent there.

6. A FIGHTER

In September 1688, at the age of 19, Guru Gobind Singh fought the Battle of Bhangani against an allied force of Bhim Chand, Garwal king Fateh Khan and other local kings of the Sivalik Hills. The battle lasted for a day and thousands of lives were lost. The Guru came out victorious. A description of the battle can be found in Bichitra Natak or Bachittar Natak, a part of the Dasham Granth, which is a religious text attributed to Guru Gobind Singh.

7. RETURN TO HOME
In November 1688, Guru Gobind returned to Anandpur, which became known as Chak Nanaki, agreeing upon an invitation from the dowager queen of Bilaspur.

8. FOUNDER OF KHALSA

On March 30 in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh gathered his followers to his home in Anadpur. He asked for a volunteer to sacrifice his head for his brothers. Daya Ram offered his head and the Guru took him inside a tent and later emerged with a bloody sword. He again asked for a volunteer and repeated the feat. This went on for three more times. At last, Guru emerged from the tent with the five volunteers and five headless goats were found in the tent. These five Sikh volunteers were named as Panj Pyaare or 'five beloved ones' by the Guru.

The five volunteers were Daya Ram, also known as Bhai Daya Singh; Dharam Das, also known as Bhai Dharam Singh; Himmat Rai, also known as Bhai Himmat Singh; Mohkam Chand, also known as Bhai Mohkam Singh; and Sahib Chand, also known as Bhai Sahib Singh. They were the first Sikhs.

9. KHALSA: The five 'K's, THE WAY OF LIFE

At the gathering of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Vani - "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh". He named all his followers with the title Singh, meaning lion. He also founded the principles of Khalsa or the Five 'K's.

The five 'K's are the five principles of life that are to be followed by a Khalsa. These include Kesh or hair, which means to leave the hair uncut to show acceptance to the form God intended humans to be; Kangha or wooden comb, as a symbol of cleanliness; Kara or iron bracelet, as a mark to remind a Khalsa of self-restraint; Kacchera or knee-length shorts, to be worn by a Khalsa for being always ready to go into battle on horseback; and Kirpan, a sword to defend oneself and the poor, the weak and the oppressed from all religions, castes and creeds.

10. FIGHTING THE MUGHALS

After repeated conflicts with Garwali and Mughal leaders, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter to Aurangzeb in Persian, which was later famously named as Zafarnama or the Epistle of Victory, reminding him of the misdeed the Mughals had done to the Sikhs. He fought against the Mughals later in battle of Muktsar in 1705.
11. PASSING THE LEGACY

After Aurangzeb’s death, Guru Gobind Singh no longer remained an adversary to the Mughals. The next Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah was friendly with Guru Gobind at first. He even named the Guru as Hind Ka Pir or the Saint of India. But later on, Bahadur Shah was influenced by Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sirhind, to attack the Sikh community. Wazir Khan sent two Pathan assassins Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg to attack the Guru during his sleep at Nanded, the Guru’s resting place. They stabbed Guru Gobind Singh in his sleep. The Guru killed Jamshed, the attacker, with his sword, while other Sikh brothers killed Beg.

Guru Gobind Singh named Guru Granth Sahib, the religious text of the Khalsas and the Sikhs, as the next Guru of the two communities. He left his bodily form and on October 7 in 1708.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: contribution of Guru Gobind Singh to sikh religion

Sources: the Hindu.

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SAVITRIBAI PHULE

CONTEXT:

Birth anniversary of Indian Social Reformer Savitribai Phule, She was born on January 3, 1831.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE:

- Savitribai Phule Savitribai is considered as the first female teacher of India.
- She played vital role in improving women rights in the country.
- She along with her husband Jyotirao Phule founded the first India’s girls’ school in Pune in 1848.
- She worked hard to abolish gender discrimination and caste discrimination.
- She was a prolific Marathi writer. Some of her literary works include Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar, Kavya Phule, Go Get Education.
PERSONAL DETAILS:

- **Born:** 3 January 1831
- **Place:** Naigaon, Western Presidency, British India
- **Died:** 10 March 1897 (aged 66)
- **Place:** Pune, Bombay Presidency, British India
- **Cause of death:** Bubonic plague
- **Nationality:** Indian
- **Spouse(s):** Jyotirao Phule

ESTABLISHMENTS:

- Savitribai Phule set up “Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha”.
- That works to prevent female infanticides, killing of pregnant rape victims and widows. She along with her husband also founded Satyashodhak Samaj that supported inter-caste marriages.
- 'Kavya Phule' was published when Savitribai was just 23.
- The first woman teacher and the first female educationist of India was also the first female poetess.
- Her two books of poetry 'Kavya Phule' (1934) and 'Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar' (1982) continue to inspire us today with their questions on caste and gender.
- 'Kavya Phule' was published when Savitribai was just 23.
- She also wrote a poem entitled 'Go, Get Education' which encouraged people to free themselves from oppression by educating themselves.

LEGACY

- Pune City Corporation created a memorial for her in 1983.
- In 2015, the University of Pune was renamed as Savitribai Phule Pune University in her honour.
- On 10 March 1998 a stamp was released by India Post in honour of Phule.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: contribution of Savitribai Phule to prevent and educate a girl child and how she fought against castism and gender discrimination?
Lord Curzon, India’s Viceroy between 1899 and 1905, was one of the most controversial and consequential holders of that post.

**Personal Details**

- **Born:** 11 January 1859, Kedleston, Derbyshire, England, UK
- **Died:** 20 March 1925 (aged 66), London, England, UK
- **Political party:** Conservative
- **Spouse(s):** Mary Leiter, Grace Duggan
- **Education:** Balliol College, Oxford
- **Children:** Mary Curzon, 2nd Baroness Ravensdale, Lady Cynthia Mosley, Lady Alexandra Curzon

**Hold Positions:**

1. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (23 October 1919 – 22 January 1924)
2. Viceroy and Governor-General of India (6 January 1899 – 18 November 1905)
3. Leader of the House of Lords (3 November 1924 – 20 March 1925)
4. Lord President of the Council (10 December 1916 – 23 October 1919)
5. President of the Air Board (15 May 1916 – 3 January 1917)

**WHY WAS BENGAL DIVIDED?**
Bengal was partitioned by Lord Curzon who was the then viceroy of India (1855–1905). The official reason for dividing Bengal stated by Curzon was that it was difficult to run the administration smoothly with having 78 million populations in Bengal and hence dividing Bengal would make the administration run effectively.

**WHAT WAS CURZON’S ROLE IN THE PARTITION OF BENGAL?**

- In July 1905, Curzon announced the partition of the undivided Bengal Presidency.
- The Presidency was the most populous province in India, with around 8 crore people, and comprised the present-day states of West Bengal, Bihar, parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Assam, as well as today’s Bangladesh.
- A new province of East Bengal and Assam was announced, with a population of 3.1 crore, and a Muslim-Hindu ratio of 3:2. Bengal, the western province, was overwhelmingly Hindu.
- While the move was ostensibly aimed at making the administration of the large region easier, Curzon’s real intentions were far less benign.

He recorded in a letter:

“The Bengalis like to think of themselves as a nation, If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again, and you will be cementing and solidifying on the eastern flank of India a force almost formidable, and certain to be an increasing trouble in the future.”

**WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE PARTITION WAS ANNOUNCED?**

- The partition provoked great resentment and hostility in Bengal. It was clear to the Bengal Congress and patriotic Indians in both Bengal and elsewhere that Curzon’s motive was to crush the increasingly loud political voices of the literate class in the province, and to provoke religious strife and opposition against them. But the protests against the partition did not remain confined to this class alone.
- A campaign to boycott British goods, especially textiles, and promote swadeshi began. There were marches and demonstrations with the protesters singing Bande Mataram to underline their patriotism and challenge the colonialists. Samitis emerged throughout Bengal, with several thousand volunteers.
- Rabindranath Tagore led the marches at many places, and composed many patriotic songs, most famously ‘Amar Sonar Bangla’ (My Golden Bengal), which is now the national anthem of Bangladesh. The message of patriotism and Bengali nationalism was showcased in Jatras, or popular theatre.
WHAT IMPACT DID THE PROTESTS HAVE?

- Curzon left for Britain in 1905, but the agitation continued for many years. Partition was finally reversed in 1911 by Lord Hardinge in the face of unremitting opposition.
- The Swadeshi movement, which had grown significantly during the agitation, later reached nationwide proportions. The partition of Bengal and the highhanded behaviour of Curzon fired the national movement and the Congress.

In ‘Lion and the Tiger: The Rise and Fall of the British Raj, 1600-1947’, Denis Judd wrote:

“Curzon had hoped to bind India permanently to the Raj. Ironically, his partition of Bengal, and the bitter controversy that followed, did much to revitalize Congress. Curzon, typically, had dismissed the Congress in 1900 as ‘tottering to its fall’. But he left India with Congress more active and effective than at any time in its history.”

REACTIONARY POLICIES OF LORD CURZON:

- Through Calcutta Corporation act 1899 he reduced the number of elected legislatures to deprive Indians from self-governance.
- He looked at Indians with contempt and insulted and injured their feelings.
- He described Bengalis as cowards, windbags, impracticable talkers and mere frothy patriots. He even refused to meet to president of Indian national congress.
- The biggest blunder he committed was the partition of Bengal.
- Although it was a political masterstroke to break growing Indian nationalism among Bengalis, it proved disastrous for British in longer term.

IMPACT OF CURZON’S REACTIONARY POLICIES:

- Curzon by his impolitic utterances and imperialist designs brought political unrest in India to a bursting point.
- Curzon’s imperialistic policies provoked reaction which in turn stung political life in India.
- Out of his tyranny was born a stronger sense of nationhood.

DO YOU KNOW?

Who was responsible for the partition of India?

Lord Mountbatten

Lord Mountbatten had to divide India. For the greed of being prime minister, they agreed to do the sin of partition which claimed many lives, caused wealth loss, and made two brothers sworn enemies of each other.
Taken in this light Curzon proved to be a benefactor of India without intending to do so.

**REFORMS BY LORD CURZON:**

1. **EDUCATIONAL:**

To set the educational system in order, he instituted in 1902, a Universities Commission to go into the entire question of university education in the country. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of the Commission, Curzon brought in the Indian Universities Act of 1904, which brought all the universities in India under the control of the government.

2. **SCIENTIFIC:**

The Agriculture Research Institute in Pusa (Bihar – Bengal Presidency) was established.

3. **ADMINISTRATIVE:**

He made efforts for police reforms, eliminating the corruption and to promote the economic development. He provided a revival to conservatism in India by refurbishing the main features of Lord Mayo’s policies. He instituted a Police Commission in 1902 under the chairmanship of Sir Andrew Frazer. Curzon accepted all the recommendations and implemented them. He set up training schools for both the officers and the constables and introduced provincial police service. During Curzon regime, the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) was established which covered roughly the areas of upper course of River Indus.

4. **MILITARY:**

Imperial cadet corps was set up which became an instrument for Indianisation of army later.

5. **OTHER REFORMS:**

He passed a law called the Ancient Monuments Act, 1904 which made it obligatory on the part of the government and local authorities to preserve the monuments of archaeological importance and their destruction an offence.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Reforms and key events during his rule and Implications of his policies.

**Sources:** Indian Express.
Journalists Day was celebrated on 6 January in Maharashtra, The day is observed in the memory of late thespian journalist Balshashtri Jambhekar.

**BALSHASTRI JAMBHEKAR:**

- Balshastri Jambhekar is also known as The Father of Marathi Journalism.
- He is recognized for his efforts in starting journalism in the Marathi language.
- He dealt with the issues of widow re-marriage in his newspaper.
- He fought to develop a scientific set of minds in the masses of uneducated India.
- The first newspaper in the Marathi language named Darpan was published on 6 January 1832.
- The release date also marks his birth anniversary.
- He was the editor of Darpan during British Rule in India.

**PERSONAL DETAILS:**

Born: 6 January 1812

Place: Pombhurle in the Devgad taluka, Sindhudurg district Konkan region, Maharashtra, India

Died: 18 May 1846 (aged 34)

**SOCIAL IMPACT OF DARPN**

**WIDOW RE-MARRIAGE**

He specifically dealt with the issues of widow re-marriage in his newspaper. He tried to develop a scientific set of mind in the masses of uneducated India. This resulted in a large-scale debate in the society and finally in a movement for the support of widow re-marriage. He passionately desired that the knowledge should percolate in the society and Darpan was one of the means to this end.
SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

He was aware that the country could only progress with the use of scientific knowledge and a rational outlook towards social problems. He wanted to build a society having a scientific outlook. He was one of those social activists who made continuous effort in generating useful and healthy consciousness amongst the common masses and attempted to educate the uneducated.

REFORMS IN JOURNALISM

His never-dying talent and endeavour left a stamp over not only the Maharashtrian public, but across India, as a distinguished social reformer and journalist.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS:

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Balshastri Jambhekar understood the importance of public libraries. He founded 'The Bombay Native General Library'. He also started 'Native Improvement Society', of which 'Student's Literary and Scientific Society' was an offshoot. Intellectual giants like Dadabhai Navroji and Bhau Daji Lad drew inspiration through these institutions.

PUBLISHED MAGAZINE ‘DIGDARSHAN’

In 1840 he published first Marathi monthly, Digdarshan (direction). He edited this magazine for 5 years. Digdarshan published articles on various subjects including physics, chemistry, geography, history etc.

MASTER OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

He had mastery in many languages including Marathi, Sanskrit, English and Hindi. Apart from that he also had a good grasp of Greek, Latin, French, Gujarati and Bengali.

RESEARCH PAPERS

He was the first Indian to have published research papers in the quarterly journal of the Asiatic Society. He was the first person to print Dnyaneshwari in 1845. It was known as the first ever-printed version.

THE FIRST PROFESSOR OF HINDI

He was also well known as the first professor of Hindi in the Elphinston College, Mumbai. He also worked as Director of the Colaba Observatory.

THE BOOKS HE WROTE
He wrote books like Neetikatha (stories on morality), Encyclopedic History of England, English grammar, History of India and Mathematics based on Zero.

**SOCIAL REFORMER AND A JOURNALIST**

He was active during the years 1830 to 1846 and worked for the betterment of Maharashtra and India. He had a very short life span of just 34 years. But in those years as well he tried to educate people and develop a scientific mindset. He a stamp of his personality as a social reformer and a journalist during the period 1832 to 1846

**RECOGNITION**

For these contributions in the form of first Marathi newspaper and first Marathi monthly, he is acknowledged as The Father of Marathi Journalism. His birthday and coincidentally the day of publication of the first issue of Darpan is 6 January and it is celebrated as the Journalist Day in Maharashtra in his memory.

While he died in 1846 further recognition was forthcoming in 1901 when Justice Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar while delivering eulogy for the just died Justice M G Ranade (in whose place he had been appointed as justice at Bombay High Court) noted that in terms of intellectual stature Balshastri Jambhekar was perhaps the only one who could have matched up to the intellectual level of Justice Ranade who he said was one of the foremost of Indian university graduates.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: contribution of Balshastri Jambhekar as the father of Marathi journalism, a social reformer and a first hindi proffesor.

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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• Lala Lajpat Rai was an Indian freedom fighter.
• He played a pivotal role in the Indian Independence movement.
• He was popularly known as Punjab Kesari.
• He was one third of the Lal Bal Pal triumvirate.

**PERSONAL DETAILS:**

- Born: 28 January 1865,
- Place: Dhudike
- Died: 17 November 1928,
- Place: Lahore, Pakistan
- Nickname: Punjab Kesari
- Parents: Gulab Devi, Radha Krishan
- Occupation: Author, politician, freedom struggler
- Political party: Indian National Congress
- Movement: Indian Independence movement
- Education: Government College University, Lahore, Government Higher Secondary School, Rewari

**HIS CONTRIBUTIONS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND RELATED KEY FACTS:**

- Rai is remembered for his role during the Swadeshi movement and for his advocacy of education.
- He became a follower of Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, and went on to become one of the society’s leaders.
- He also helped found the Punjab National Bank and Lakshmi Insurance Company in their early stages in 1894.
- In 1885, Rai established the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic School in Lahore and remained a committed educationist throughout his life.
- Rai, Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal (called Lal-Bal-Pal) fervently advocated the use of Swadeshi goods and mass agitation in the aftermath of the controversial Partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon.
- He founded the Indian Home Rule League of America in New York City in 1917.
HIS IMPORTANT WORKS INCLUDE:

- The Arya Samaj’,
- ‘Young India’,
- ‘England’s Debt to India’,
- ‘Evolution of Japan’,
- ‘India’s Will to Freedom’,
- ‘Message of the Bhagwad Gita’,
- ‘Political Future of India’,
- ‘Problem of National Education in India’, ‘
- The Depressed Glasses’,
- the travelogue ‘United States of America’

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS VIEWS FOR THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE:

- His views helped recognize the importance of a united front against British.
- The British efforts to divide India on communal lines as seen in the Acts of 1909 and 1919 were made clear to Indian leadership.
- His thoughts of cultural diversity were given post-independence by Nehru as ‘Unity in Diversity’.
- His idea of people of all religions as true citizens of India, combined with Gandhiji’s ideas of inclusive fight against British led to Non-Cooperative movement linked with the Khilafat movement.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: contributions, achievements and significance of his views for the freedom struggle

Sources: pib, the hindu

DO YOU KNOW?

Why Lala Lajpat Rai is called Punjab Kesari?

Lala Lajpat Rai was an Indian Punjabi author and politician who is chiefly remembered as a leader in the Indian fight for independence from the British Raj. He was popularly known as ‘Punjab Kesari’ meaning ‘The Lion of Punjab’, also known as ‘Sher-E-Punjab’ in Punjabi.
The Democracy Index 2019 is released and prepared by a UK-based company Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The index is based on the functioning of government, electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, political participation, and political culture.
- The report A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest was prepared by The Economist Intelligence Unit.

- It provided a snapshot of the state of democracy worldwide in 165 independent states and two territories.
- Norway topped EIU’s index with a score of 9.87
- North Korea ranked last of the global rankings, with a score of 1.08.
- China ranked 153rd with a score of 2.26.
- The report described the year 2019 as a tumultuous year for Asian countries.
- Three countries namely Chile, France, and Portugal were from the flawed democracy category to the full democracy category.
- Malta fell out of the full democracy category to the flawed democracy category.
**India:**

- India’s scored an overall of 6.90 in 2019 on a scale of 0-10. It fell from 7.23 in 2018 among other countries where there were regressions.
- In the Asia and Australia region, India ranked 8th after countries namely Timor-Leste, Malaysia, and Taiwan.
- The index referred to the changes in Jammu & Kashmir and the controversial implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam as the democratic regression caused in India.
- India was graded with 8.67 in electoral process and pluralism, 6.79 in government functioning, 6.67 in political participation, 5.63 in political culture and 6.76 in civil liberties.

**Bottom 5 countries:**

1. Chad with 1.61
2. Syria with 1.43
3. The Central African Republic with 1.32
4. The Republic of Congo with 1.13
5. North Korea with 1.08

**What is Democracy Index?**

- The Democracy Index is prepared by a UK-based company Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). It is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group.
- It measures the state of democracy in 167 countries of which 166 are sovereign states and 164 are UN member states.
- The index was first published in 2006, with updates for 2008, 2010 and later years.

**Method:**

The index is based on 60 indicators grouped in five different categories, measuring pluralism, civil liberties and political culture.

In addition to a numeric score and a ranking, the index categorises each country in one of four regime types:

**Full Democracies**

They are nations where civil liberties and fundamental political freedoms are not only respected but also reinforced by a political culture conducive to the thriving of democratic principles. These nations have a valid system of governmental checks and balances, an independent judiciary whose decisions are enforced, governments that function adequately, and diverse and independent media. These nations have only limited problems in democratic functioning.

**Flawed Democracies**
They are nations where elections are fair and free and basic civil liberties are honoured but may have issues (e.g. media freedom infringement and minor suppression of political opposition and critics). These nations have significant faults in other democratic aspects, including underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics, and issues in the functioning of governance.

**HYBRID REGIMES**

They are nations with regular electoral frauds, preventing them from being fair and free democracy. These nations commonly have governments that apply pressure on political opposition, non-independent judiciaries, widespread corruption, harassment and pressure placed on the media, anaemic rule of law, and more pronounced faults than flawed democracies in the realms of underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics, and issues in the functioning of governance.

**AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES**

They are nations where political pluralism has vanished or is extremely limited. These nations are often absolute monarchies or dictatorships, may have some conventional institutions of democracy but with meagre significance, infringements and abuses of civil liberties are commonplace, elections (if they take place) are not fair and free, the media is often state-owned or controlled by groups associated with the ruling regime, the judiciary is not independent, and there are omnipresent censorship and suppression of governmental criticism.

**CRITICISM:**

- The Democracy Index has been criticised for lacking transparency and accountability beyond the numbers.
- To generate the index, the Economist Intelligence Unit has a scoring system in which various experts are asked to answer 60 questions and assign each reply a number, with the weighted average deciding the ranking.
- However, the final report does not indicate what kinds of experts, nor their number, nor whether the experts are employees of the Economist Intelligence Unit or independent scholars, nor the nationalities of the experts.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** significance of the report

**Sources:** the Hindu.
SRI LANKA TOPPED THE WORLD
BREASTFEEDING TRENDS
INITIATIVE LIST

CONTEXT:

Sri Lanka topped on breastfeeding rate according to a new survey conducted by the World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi). The survey among 97 countries globally

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sri Lanka’s rank is based on its performance on ten indicators of policies and programs.
- Sri Lanka has scored 91 out of 100 points.
- WBTi uses color-code to rank countries. Sri Lanka earned a green color code, which implies the best level of performance.
- Sri Lanka has been making an effort to support and provide supportive measures for breastfeeding since 2005.
- Sri Lanka has demonstrated a high level of commitment towards the health and nutrition of mothers and babies.

WORLD BREASTFEEDING TRENDS INITIATIVE (WBTI):

- WBTi was launched in 2004. WBTi assists countries to assess the status of the participating countries.
- It will also benchmark the progress in implementation of the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding in a standard way.
- The WBTi assists countries to measure strengths and weaknesses on the 10 parameters of policy and programmes that protect, promote and support optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices.
- So far, 120 countries have been involved in WBTi and 97 have completed assessments.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: about the report

Sources: the Hindu.
Global Social Mobility Report

Context:

World Economic Forum has come out with its first-ever Global Social Mobility Report.

Performance of India:

1. The report has ranked India a lowly 76 out of the 82 countries profiled.
2. It lists India among the five countries that stand to gain the most from a better social mobility score.
3. It ranks 41st in lifelong learning and 53rd in working conditions.
4. The Areas of improvement for India include social protection (76th) and fair wage distribution (79th).

Global Performance:

1. The Nordic nations hold the top five spots, led by Denmark in the first place (scoring 85 points), followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden (all above 83 points) and Iceland (82 points).

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The Global Social Mobility Index Ranking, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>85.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>83.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>83.6</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>80.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Among the G7 economies, Germany is the most socially mobile, ranking 11th with 78 points.

THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, GLOBALIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY

- Globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution have generated significant benefits, but have also exacerbated inequalities. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, and with it, continuing and future disruption to labour markets, will likely compound differences in social mobility for those countries unprepared to take advantage of new opportunities.

- Globally, the declining income share of labour relative to an increase in the income share of capital has significantly driven economic inequality and prompted a decline in equality of opportunity. This is reflected in huge wage disparities, which have grown exponentially since the 1970s. The report reveals that in the US, the top 1% of income earners in 2018 earned 158% more than in 1979, in comparison to just 24% for the bottom 90%.

- The oft-cited causes of this polarization are globalization and technology. The index clearly shows that the former has increased inequalities within countries by transferring low-skilled jobs in high-productivity sectors in high-income economies to lower-income counterparts. This has effectively penalized workers in specific locations and types of job.

- Concurrently, technology has polarized inequalities by reducing demand for low-skilled jobs while rewarding highly skilled jobs disproportionately. Exacerbating this has been the role of so-called “superstar” firms. These have high profits and a low share of labour, and as models of great productivity, have come to increasingly dominate markets.
The outlook remains mixed in the realm of technology. Analysis of the index reveals that in most countries, low social mobility is related to economic development issues that go beyond income. With this in mind, “digital leapfrogging” will not happen unless these issues are systemically addressed. More positively, technology has the potential to equalize the barriers to entry to knowledge, but only if the conditions are conducive.

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR GOVERNMENT

Reversing the outlook is possible but requires concerted action, political will and time. The index suggests that governments must play the role of equalizer, levelling the playing field for all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic background. The report suggests:

CREATING A NEW FINANCING MODEL FOR SOCIAL MOBILITY:

Improving tax progressivity on personal income, policies that address wealth concentration and broadly re-balancing the sources of taxation can support the social mobility agenda. Most importantly though, the mix of public spending and policy incentives must change to put greater emphasis on the factors of social spending.

MORE SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING:

targeted at improvements in the availability, quality and distribution of education programmes as well as a new agenda for promoting skills development throughout an individual’s working life. This includes a new approach to jointly financing such efforts between the public and private sector.

DEVELOPING A NEW SOCIAL PROTECTION CONTRACT:

this would offer holistic protection to all workers irrespective of their employment status, particularly in a context of technological change and industry transitions, requiring greater support for job transitions in the coming decade.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BUSINESS:

TAKES THE LEAD:

Primarily by promoting a culture of meritocracy in hiring, providing vocational education, reskilling and upskilling as well as by paying fair wages, This includes industry and sector-specific plans to address historic inequalities within and between sectors.

CREATES ACTION PLANS SPECIFIC TO EACH INDUSTRY:
These are required to address shifts in inequality taking into account each industry's differing circumstances.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MOBILITY?

- It can be understood as the movement in personal circumstances either “upwards” or “downwards” of an individual in relation to those of their parents.
- In absolute terms, it is the ability of a child to experience a better life than their parents.
- On the other hand, relative social mobility is an assessment of the impact of socio-economic background on an individual’s outcomes in life.
- It can be measured against a number of outcomes ranging from health to educational achievement and income.

WHY DOES SOCIAL MOBILITY MATTER?

- Research has shown that in high-income countries, since the 1990s, there is stagnation at both the bottom and the top end of the income distribution—a phenomenon which social mobility experts describe as ‘sticky floors’ and ‘sticky ceilings’.
- In other words, how far an individual can move up in the society determines a lot whether one is closer to the income “floor” (or poor) or “ceiling” (or rich).
- Social mobility levels, then, can help us understand both the speed – that is, how long it takes for individuals at the bottom of the scale to catch up with those at the top – and the intensity – that is, how many steps it takes for an individual to move up the ladder in a given period – of social mobility.

WHY THE NEED FOR A NEW INDEX?

- Social mobility has become the pressing issue of modern life, and as the index highlights, while major improvements have been made in some areas, notably extreme poverty, in others, the situation is deteriorating.
- Globalization and technology are frequently blamed for this, but as the report highlights, there are a plethora of reasons – not least of which is poor policy-making – and it is the responsibility of a range of stakeholders to redress these.

WHAT DOES IT DO THAT OTHER INDICES DON’T?

- The index considers what a country can do holistically to foster relative social mobility for all citizens, which is markedly different from other methodologies.
- Historically, indices have analysed social mobility across generations by comparing earnings of children with those of their parents. Others have focused on outcomes, and as such, struggled to provide timely insights. The more academic tend to look at tracking income inequality.
- The problem with these approaches is that they capture the effect of measures that were taken 30-40 years ago.
- The Global Social Mobility Index, however, focuses on drivers of relative social mobility instead of outcomes.
- It looks at policies, practices and institutions.
This allows it to enable effective comparisons throughout regions and generations. It uses 10 pillars, which in turn are broken down into five determinants of social mobility – health, education, technology access, work opportunities, working conditions and fair wages and finally, social protection and inclusive institutions.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: highlights, suggestions and significance of the index

Sources: the Hindu. https://www.weforum.org/

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CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX

CONTEXT:

The global Corruption Perceptions Index 2019 (CPI-2019) has been released by Transparency International.

WHAT IS THE CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI)?

- The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is an index that scores countries on how corrupt their governments are believed to be.
- The CPI is published by Transparency International, an organization that seeks to stop bribery and other forms of public corruption.
- A country’s score can range from zero to 100, with zero indicating high levels of corruption and 100 indicating low levels.
- Transparency International launched the index in 1995, and today it scores 176 countries and territories. It is published annually.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Corruption Perceptions Index scores countries on levels of corruptness.
- The methodology for measuring CPI is based on selecting source data, rescaling source data, aggregating the rescaled data, and a statistical measure indicating the level of certainty.
- Low CPI ranking indicates a high level of corruption.

UNDERSTANDING THE CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX (CPI):
The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) has been measured with different methodologies from year to year, making yearly comparisons difficult. But in 2012, the methodology was modified again, this time to allow for comparisons across time.

According to Transparency International, the new methodology involves four basic steps, including the selection of source data, rescaling source data, aggregating the rescaled data, and a statistical measure indicating the level of certainty. A quality control mechanism is also incorporated into the process.

This consists of independent data collection and calculations by two in-house researchers and two independent researchers from academia.

**CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX SOURCES**

- African Development Bank
- World Bank
- World Economic Forum
- Economist Intelligence Unit
- Global Insight
- Bertelsmann Foundation
- International Institute for Management Development
- The PRS Group, Inc.
- World Justice Project
- Political and Economic Risk Consultancy
- Freedom House

**ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CORRUPTION**

According to a publishing in 2002 in the Journal of Business Ethics, countries and territories that have low CPI rankings (and therefore high corruption) also have what the study authors called an overabundance of regulation and a thriving black market.

Countries or territories with a high real gross domestic product per capita (RGDP/Cap) also had a high CPI ranking (and therefore low levels of corruption).

**KEY FINDINGS OF CPI 2019:**

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- The report considered revealed that a majority of countries showed little to no improvement in tackling corruption against the previous report.
- It considered 13 surveys and expert assessments to measure public sector corruption in 180 countries.
- It ranks the countries of a score from zero, highly corrupt, to 100, very clean.
- The report stated that corruption is more pervasive in most of the countries that it surveyed.
With a score of 41, India is at the 80th spot. The rank is also shared by China, Benin, Ghana and Morocco. Neighbouring Pakistan is ranked at the 120th place.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL:

- Transparency International is a non-governmental organization. It was established in 1993. It is headquartered in Berlin, Germany.
- The organization aims to combat global corruption with civil societal anti-corruption measures and to prevent criminal activities arising from corruption.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: key findings of CPI 2019 and economic impact of corruption

Sources: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/, https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019

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WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK: TRENDS

CONTEXT:

International Labour Organization (ILO) released the World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2020 (WESO). The report highlighted that more than 470 million people worldwide are unemployed or underemployed.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The report forecasted Global unemployment to increase by around 2.5 million in 2020.
It reported that around 188 million people are unemployed in the world.
Also, 165 million people, aged between 15 and 24, lack sufficient paid work.
It stated that 120 million people either lack access to the labour market or have given up actively searching for work.
The report stated that unemployment is projected to rise after a long period of stability. It stated that many people are working for fewer paid hours than they would like or lack adequate access to paid work.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO):

- ILO was established in 1919. The ILO became the United Nation’s first specialized agency in 1946. ILO has 187 member States.
- It aims to bring together governments, employers, and workers to set labour standards, devise programmes and develop policies to promote decent work for all women and men.
- ILO aims to promote rights at work, enhance social protection, encourage decent employment opportunities, and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) analyses key labour market issues, including unemployment, labour underutilisation, working poverty, income inequality, labour income share and factors that exclude people from decent work.

WORLD EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL OUTLOOK TRENDS 2020 (WESO):

WESO report provides an overview of global and regional trends in employment, unemployment, labour force participation and productivity.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: highlights of the report


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STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX

2019

CONTEXT:
‘State Energy Efficiency Index 2019’, which tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency (EE) initiatives in 36 states and union territories based on 97 significant indicators. The index was released on the occasion of RPM (Review, Planning and Monitoring) meeting, which is being held on 09-10 Jan 2020 at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, New Delhi.

**NEED:**

- The index is developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).
- It will help states contribute towards national goals on energy security and climate action by helping drive EE policies and program implementation at the state and local level, tracking progress in managing the states’ and India’s energy footprint and institutionalising the data capture and monitoring of EE activities by states.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR STATES:**

- State EE Index 2019 shows that majority of the initiatives taken by states is related to Policies and Regulations.
- Most of the first-generation energy efficiency policies prepared by BEE under programmes on Standards & Labelling (S&L), ECBC, Perform Achieve & Trade (PAT), etc. are understood by states and as the next steps they should focus on ensuring greater compliance to achieve savings.

**Based on the analysis of responses submitted by states this year, a three-point agenda is suggested for consideration by state agencies:**

1. Proactive role by states in policy formulation and implementation to shift the focus from “policies in place” to “policies successfully implemented”.
2. Strengthening the mechanism for data capture, management and public availability of data: For this year’s Index, SDAs proactively contacted various state departments to gather data. However, SDAs should further enhance their engagement with state departments and private sector to enable a robust mechanism for Energy Data Management System.

**ENHANCING THE CREDIBILITY OF EE SCHEMES:**

- Ensuring the integrity of programs that have direct or indirect linkages with common consumers is significant to energy efficiency market transformation.
- States must demonstrate an approach which includes enforcement and compliance checks as well as independent monitoring and verification of savings, which is integral to all EE policies and programs.
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: key findings of the report

Sources: the Hindu.

GLOBAL TALENT COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

CONTEXT:

Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) for 2020 has been released.

ABOUT GTCI:

- GTCI, launched in 2013, is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent.
- It is released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Adecco Group and Google.
- The report measures levels of Global Talent Competitiveness by looking at 70 variables such as ease of hiring, gender earnings gap, and prevalence of training in firms.

PERFORMANCE OF INDIA:

1. India is placed at no. 72.
2. Although more could be done to improve the country’s educational system (68th in Formal Education), India’s key strength relates to growing (44th) talent, due to its levels of lifelong learning (40th) and access to growth opportunities (39th).
3. The country’s highest-ranked sub-pillar is employability, but the ability to match labour market demand and supply stands in contrast to the country’s poor mid-level skills.

GLOBAL PERFORMANCE:

Switzerland, the United States and Singapore lead the index.
KEY OBSERVATIONS:

- The gap between talent champions and the rest of the world is widening.
- A similar gap is also seen in the universe of artificial intelligence. AI talent is scarce and unequally distributed across industries, sectors, and nations.
- More than half of the population in the developing world lacks basic digital skills.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: key findings of the report

Sources: the Hindu.

CONTEXT:

India celebrated its 71st Republic Day on January 26, 2020.

GUEST OF HONOUR: BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT JAIR BOLSONARO.

- Bolsonaro is the third Brazilian President to be invited as Chief Guest for India’s Republic Day Parade.
- Before him, India hosted President Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1996 and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in 2004, as chief guests for the Republic Day Parade.

WHY WE CELEBRATE JANUARY 26TH AS REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA?

The Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950, a date specially chosen to coincide with the anniversary of ‘Purna Swaraj Diwas’. January 26, 1930 was marked as ‘Purna Swaraj Diwas’, or the day the nation would attain complete freedom from its colonisers by the Congress.
• The members of the drafting committee felt that the birth of the constitution should be observed on a day that held some significance in their fight for independence.
• When India was ultimately granted freedom by the British in 1947, but on August 15 and not January 26, the date was instead assigned to celebrating India’s Republic Day.
• This was the day the Indian Independence Act was consequently repealed and India was established as a democratic republic, no longer a dominion of the British Crown.

WHAT WAS SHOWCASED AT THE PARADE?

1. Dhanush Artillery Gun.
2. Rafale and Tejas aircrafts.
5. Meghalaya – Living Root Bridge.

SIGNIFICANT MEMORIES:

▪ It was this day when the Indian Tricolour was first unfurled in January 1930 at Lahore, by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and the declaration of an independent Indian National Congress was made.
▪ 26th January, 1950 was the day when the Indian republic and its constitution came into force. It was this day in history in 1965 when Hindi was declared as the official language of India.

CELEBRATIONS GALORE

➢ Republic Day is celebrated every year with much enthusiasm all over the country and to mark the importance of this occasion, a grand parade is held in the capital, New Delhi, from Raisina Hill near the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House), along the Rajpath, past India Gate and on to the historic Red Fort.
➢ The event begins with the Prime Minister of India laying a wreath at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate, commemorating all the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the country. Soon, a 21 gun salute is presented, the President unfurls the National Flag and the National Anthem is played. This marks the beginning of the parade.
➢ The President is accompanied by a notable foreign Head of State - who is the invited Chief Guest at the celebration.
➢ The Parade begins with winners of gallantry awards passing the President in open jeeps. President of India, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Armed Forces, takes the salute at the grand parade. The Indian Military also showcases its latest acquisitions such as tanks, missiles, radars, etc.
➢ Soon after, awards and medals of bravery are given by the President to the people from the armed forces for their exceptional courage in the field and also to those civilians who have distinguished themselves by their different acts of valour in different situations.
➢ After this, helicopters from the armed forces fly past the parade area showering rose petals on the audience.
➢ The military parade is followed by a colourful cultural parade. India's rich cultural heritage is depicted in the form of tableaus from various states. Each state depicts its unique festivals,
historical locations and art. This exhibition of diversity and richness of the culture of India lends a festive air to the occasion.

- Tableaus from various government department and ministries of India are also presented displaying their contribution towards the progress of the nation. The most cheered section of the parade is when the children who have won National Bravery Awards ride past the dais on elephants. School-children from all over the country also participate in the parade showcasing folk dances and singing to the tunes of patriotic songs.
- The parade also includes displays of skilful motor-cycle rides, by the Armed Forces personnel. The most eagerly awaited part of the parade is the fly past, put on by the Indian Air Force. The fly past marks the conclusion of the parade, when fighter planes of the IAF roar past the dais, symbolically saluting the President.
- Live Webcast of the Republic Day Parade is made available every year to millions of surfers who wish to view the parade over the Internet. After the event is over, the exclusive footage is made available as 'video on demand'.
- Celebrations, though on a relatively smaller scale, are also held in all state capitals, where the Governor of the state unfurls the Tricolour. Similar celebrations are also held at district headquarters, sub divisions, talukas, and panchayats.

**PM RALLY**

- The Republic Day celebration is a three day extravaganza and posts this celebration at India Gate, on the 27th January, a Prime Minister's Rally is held by a crème of N.C.C cadets displaying various breath-taking performances and drill.

**LOK TARANG**
WHO WAS THE FIRST CHIEF GUEST AT INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION 1930?
India's first Republic Day was graced by Indonesian president Sukarno.

BEATING THE RETREAT

Beating The Retreat officially denotes the end of Republic Day festivities. All important Government Buildings are beautifully decorated with lights every evening from 26th to 29th. Beating the Retreat ceremony is conducted on the evening of January 29, the third day after the Republic Day. The ceremony starts by the massed bands of the three services marching in unison, playing popular marching tunes.

The drummers also give a solo performance (known as the Drummer's Call). Followed by this the drummers play Abide With Me (which is also said to be Gandhi's favourite) and the chimes made by the tubular bells, placed quite at a distance, create a mesmerising ambience.

This is followed by the bugle call for Retreat, the band master then marches to the President and requests permission to take the bands away, and informs that the closing ceremony is now complete. The bands march back playing a popular martial tune Saare Jahan Se Acha.

At exactly 6 pm, the buglers sound the retreat and the National Flag is lowered, and the National Anthem is sung, bringing the Republic Day celebrations to a formal end.

INDIA CELEBRATED INDEPENDENCE DAY ON JANUARY 26 AFTER 1930 TILL 1947

Even when India was a British dominion and owed formal allegiance to the British Crown, India used to celebrate its Independence January 26 till 1947. After Independence, the Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949, and January 26, 1950, was the date chosen to become a sovereign republic.

THE FIRST INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION

As per the Fauji Akhbar report on February 4, 1950, India was declared the Sovereign Democratic Republic exactly at 18 minutes past 10 on the morning of Thursday, January 26, 1950. Six minutes later, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was sworn in as the President.
Dr. Rajendra Prasad was then sworn in as first President of Republic of India by Chief Justice H. Kania.

The retiring Governor-General, C Rajagopalachari, read out the proclamation of the Republic of India: “Now, therefore, it is hereby proclaimed that from this, the 26th day of January 1950, India, that is Bharat, shall be the Sovereign Democratic Republic, and the Union and its component units, the States, shall exercise all powers and functions of government and administration in accordance with the provisions of the said Constitution.”

“...The state drive started exactly at 2.30 pm. The 35-year-old coach, specially renovated for the occasion, bearing the new emblem of Ashoka’s capital and drawn by six sturdy Australian horses, carried the President and drove out of the Government House at a slow trot, escorted by the President’s bodyguard,” Fauji Akhbar reported.

As many as 15,000 people watched one of the most magnificent military parades where 3,000 officers and men of the three armed services of India and the police with massed bands had taken positions for the ceremonial parade.
Figure 14 President Sukarno of Indonesia was guest of honour for India’s first Republic Day celebrations in 1950

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: significance and history of republic day of India

Sources: the Hindu.

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NATIONAL VOTERS DAY

CONTEXT:

National Voters Day is observed on 25 January. To mark the foundation day of Election Commission of India (ECI) The day is observed at the National Level, Assembly Level, Constituency Level, State Level, Polling Station Level, and District Level.

AIM:

The day is observed to provide the youth with a sense of citizenship, empowerment, and pride in electoral participation. India is the largest democracy in the world with about 91 crore citizens registered as voters.
THEME:
The theme for 2020 National Voters Day is “Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy”. The theme aims to promote the electoral process among newly eligible young voters in the country.

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE NVD:
To encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrolment, especially for the new voters. Dedicated to the voters of the country, the Day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the electoral process. New Voters are felicitated and handed over their Elector Photo Identity Card in the NVD function.

ARTICLE 326- RIGHT TO VOTE:
Article 326 of the Indian constitution states that no person can be denied the right to vote if he fulfills the need for Adult Suffrage, that is, the person must be above the age of 18. The Right to Vote is not mentioned in the Part-3 of the constitution and hence it is a constitutional right and not a fundamental right.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA (ECI):
ECI was established on 25 January 1950. It’s a constitutional body deriving its authority from Article 324 of the Constitution and Representation of the People Acts. The day was started in 2011. Year 2020 marks 10th National Voters Day.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: significance of Voters Day
International Day of Education is observed on 24 January every year.

AIM:

- The day aims to celebrate the role of education for peace and development. The day aims to remind that without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all.
- The day reminds the countries that it will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty without education.

THEME:

- The theme for 2020 International Day is ‘Learning for people, planet, prosperity, and peace’.
- The theme highlights the integrated nature of education and its centrality to the collective development ambitions.
On 3 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated 24 January as the International Day of Education. On this day, the partners and stakeholders flexibility to tailor the celebration for diverse audiences, a variety of contexts and for priority themes.

Learning for people, planet, prosperity, and peace

The 2020 theme ‘Learning for people, planet, prosperity and peace,’ highlights the integrated nature of education, its humanistic aims, as well as its centrality to our collective development ambitions. It also gives stakeholders and partners flexibility to tailor the celebration for diverse audiences, a variety of contexts and for priority themes.

The 2020 celebration will position education and the learning it enables as humanity’s greatest renewable resource and reaffirm the role of education as a fundamental right, a public good and an enabler of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will frame ‘inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all’ as a goal in and of itself, as well as a necessary means to accelerate progress to meet the targets of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

BACKGROUND

- The adoption of the resolution 73/25 “International Day of Education”, co-authored by Nigeria and 58 other Member States, demonstrated the unwavering political will to support transformative actions for inclusive, equitable and quality education for all.
- By doing so, the international community reiterated that education plays a key role in building sustainable and resilient societies, and contributes to the achievement of all other Sustainable Development Goals.
- With a view to enhance international cooperation in supporting the efforts towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4, the resolution called on all stakeholders including Member States, organizations of the UN system, and civil society, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, the private sector, individuals and other relevant stakeholders to observe the International Day of Education.
- UNESCO, as the specialized United Nations agency for education, facilitates the annual observance of the Day in close collaboration with main education actors.

EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT

- The right to education is enshrined in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The declaration calls for free and compulsory elementary education.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, goes further to stipulate that countries shall make higher education accessible to all.

DO YOU KNOW?

On 3 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated 24 January as the International Day of Education.
RTE IN INDIA:

- Right to education (RTE) was inserted in Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution through the Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002.
- It makes education a Fundamental Right for the children between the ages of six and fourteen.

EDUCATION IS KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- When it adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the international community recognized that education is essential for the success of all 17 of its goals.
- Sustainable Development Goal 4, in particular, aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030.

CHALLENGES TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

- Education offers children a ladder out of poverty and a path to a promising future. But about 265 million children and adolescents around the world do not have the opportunity to enter or complete school.
- 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic math.
- Less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school and some four million children and youth refugees are out of school.
- Their right to education is being violated and it is unacceptable.
- It reported that around 4 million children and youth refugees are out of school.
- Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, countries will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: history and significance of International Day of Education, What are the challenges to achieve sustainable development goal through universal education?

Sources: the Hindu. www.un.org › observances › education-day
National Youth Day or Yuva Diwas is observed on 12 January across India. The day is celebrated every year to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. It aims to create awareness and to provide knowledge to the youth about the rights in India.

**AIM:**

The main aim of the celebration of the Youth day is to propagate the philosophy and the ideals of Swami Vivekananda for which he lived and worked.

**THEME:**

The theme of the National Youth Day 2020 is “Channelizing Youth Power for Nation Building”. It aims to inspire the youth generations and to educate them to behave properly in society.

**EVENTS AND CELEBRATIONS:**

On this day, several functions are organized in schools, colleges, institutions. The day is celebrated by performing the parade, recitations, songs, speech on Swami Vivekananda, conventions, essay-writing competition, seminar, etc.

**WHY IS NATIONAL YOUTH DAY CELEBRATED ON 12 JANUARY?**

National Youth Day is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda. He was a social reformer, philosopher and thinker. The main objective behind the celebration is to propagate the philosophy and the ideals of Swami Vivekananda for which he lived and worked. No doubt he was a great inspiration for all National Youth of India. Across the country, several functions are organised in schools, colleges, etc.
NATIONAL YOUTH DAY: HISTORY

In 1984, the Indian Government first declared to celebrate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda i.e. 12 January as National Youth Day. Since then from 1985, it is celebrated as National Youth Day all over the country. The main aim of the Government is to make a better future of the country by motivating the youths through the way of their life and ideas of the Swami Vivekananda. It is a great way to wake up the eternal energy of the youths as well as to make the country developed.

OVERVIEW

Observed by: India & RKM branch centres worldwide

Significance: Birthday of Swami Vivekananda

Begins: 1985

Date: 12 January

Frequency: Annual

NATIONAL YOUTH DAY TIMELINE

1984: National Youth Day declared

The Indian Government declared Swami Vivekananda’s birthday, January 12, as National Youth Day to honor the great spiritual leader, and to encourage the youth in the country.

1902: A great soul departed

Vivekananda retired to his room and passed away peacefully while he was in a meditative state.

1897: The Ramakrishna Mission For Social Services

Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission. Its ideals are based on karma yoga and the teachings of its guru.

1893: East Meets West

Vivekananda spoke at Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago and introduced the Vedanta philosophy to the West. His address received many accolades and a two-minute standing ovation from a crowd of 7,000.

1863: A leader was born
Swami Vivekananda was born into an aristocratic family in Kolkata, India.

**WHY NATIONAL YOUTH DAY IS IMPORTANT?**

**It inspires young people**

The life and teachings of Vivekananda are a source of great inspiration for young minds.

**It honors a great spiritual leader**

India also celebrates the birthday of Swami Vivekananda and remembers his invaluable contribution to the country.

**It's an eventful day**

Debates, speeches, rallies, seminars, and many other activities take place in schools, colleges, and local youth clubs on this day.

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**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

- Narendra Nath Datta, famously known as Swami Vivekananda was a philosopher, social reformer, and thinker.
- He represented India in the first Parliament of Religion held in Chicago in 1893. He established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897.
- He urged the youth to have the dedication to the cause to attain success.
- He said that pursuing a challenge with utmost dedication is really the road to success for the youth.

**PERSONAL DETAILS:**

Original name: Narendranath Datta

- Born: 12 January 1863
- Place: Calcutta, Bengal Presidency, British India (present-day Kolkata, West Bengal, India)
- Died: 4 July 1902 (aged 39)
- Place: Belur Math, Bengal Presidency, British India (present-day West Bengal, India)
- Alma mater: University of Calcutta (B.A.)
Founder of: Ramakrishna Mission (1897), Ramakrishna Math

Philosophy: Modern Vedanta, Rāja yoga

Guru: Ramakrishna

Literary works: Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, My Master, Lectures from Colombo to Almora

SOME FAMOUS QUOTES BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

"We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think. Words are secondary. Thoughts live; they travel far".

"All differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind, because oneness is the secret of everything".

“Arise! Awake! And stop not until the goal is reached.”

“The greatest religion is to be true to your own nature. Have faith in yourselves.”

5 TEACHINGS OF VIVEKANANDA THAT WILL ENLIGHTEN YOU

1. It's all in the mind

"Whatever you think, that you will be, If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be."

2. Follow the three P's

"Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all, love."

3. What Vedanta calls religion

"This is the gist of all worship — to be pure and to do good to others."
4. **End hunger and ignorance**

"So long as millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them."

5. **Every man's true religion**

"No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul."

**CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

- Swami Vivekananda was admitted to the school founded by Mr. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar in 1870. While in school he focused both on studies as well as body building.
- He had great respect for his mother tongue.
- One such incident was when he had an English language class in school, he said, “I shall not learn the language of the white master.”
- At least for 7 – 8 months he abstained from learning that language.
- Later he learnt English owing to compulsion. Swami Vivekananda stood first in his matriculate examination and added to the glory of his family and school.
- Then he joined the Presidency College in Kolkata and completed his M.A. in Philosophy.

**MEETING HIS GURU AND ACCEPTING SANYAS BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

Dr. Ramchandra Dutt, a relative of Narendra who had been raised in his house was a disciple of Shri Ramkrishna Paramhansa suggested to narrendra nath to join brahmo samaj. Later Shri Ramkrishna initiated Narendranath on the path of Sanyas and gave him the name Swami Vivekanand.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF RAMKRISHNA MISSION BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

Swami Vivekananda along with Taraknath, another disciple of Ramkrishna, established the Ramkrishna Mission after Mahasamadhi of Shri Ramkrishna Paramhansa.

**IMPORTANCE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA**

Swami Vivekananda putting curb on conversions with his stormy propagation of ‘Vedanta’ in other countries
India was ruled by the British during the period of Swami Vivekananda. Owing to the influence of British education system, their culture, strategies of Christian missionaries misleading people and their literature, the affluent class in Bharat developed inferiority complex feeling that Hindu Dharma and culture is of very low standard, inhuman and barbarian.

Many Hindus would have been baptized and adopted Christianity; but there is no doubt that it was curbed due to the fiery propagation of ‘Vedanta’ in other countries by Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda gave message of spiritual unison and creating new consciousness amongst youth

- Swami Vivekananda represented India and consequently, Hindu Dharma in a world conference was held in Chicago for all religions in the year of 1893.
- Swami Vivekananda gave a message of spiritual unity to the world in this conference.
- He also emphasized that along with spiritual progress, materialistic / worldly progress was equally important. Swami Vivekananda’s guidance helped to generate new consciousness and enthusiasm amongst the youth.

Swami Vivekananda awakened patriotism and enthusiasm amongst people through spiritual discourses

- Continuous invasions, immorality, looting, oppression of their women and violence had crushed Hindus mentally.
- Swami Vivekananda undertook the mission of propagating message of Ramakrishna and pulling out Hindus from the depression and defeated mentality generated amongst people.
- Swami Vivekananda travelled all over India for this great mission and created enthusiasm and patriotism amongst people through his spiritual discourses.
- Moreover, he made the whole world realize the importance of Hindu Dharma and Hindustan.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA SHINES AT THE WORLD PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

The premonition regarding the visit to Chicago

- Swami Vivekananda was half asleep on one night, he saw a miraculous dream. Shri Ramkrishna’s blazing form was moving ahead over the seas and beckoning Swamiji to follow him.
- Swami Vivekananda opened his eyes. His heart was filled with indescribable ecstasy. At the same time he heard very clearly a divine voice saying, “Go”. Then he resolved to go abroad and completed all arrangements within a day or two.

Departure for the World Parliament of Religions

- Swami Vivekananda left the Indian shores, aboard the ship, ‘Peninsular’ on 31st May, 1893. He reached Vancouver port in Canada on 15th July.
From there he travelled by train to the famous city of Chicago in America. He came to know that a World Parliament of Religions was going to be held on 11th September. Swami Vivekananda did not have the invite required to participate in this conference. Further even the date to register as a Representative had lapsed. Yet, wherever he went people were attracted to him. On the very first day he met Prof. J.H. Wright, who was teaching Greek at Harward University. The two of them conversed for almost four hours. The professor was so impressed by Swami Vivekananda’s talent and intellect that he accepted the responsibility of giving Swamiji admittance to the World Parliament of Religions as a representative.

Swami Vivekananda participates at the Chicago Interfaith conference

Swami Vivekananda was not the representative of any particular sect. He had arrived at the conference as the representative of the Sanantan Hindu Vaidik Dharma of all Bharatvarsha. The conference was attended by almost 6 to 7 thousand ladies and gentlemen. Swami Vivekananda had not prepared any written speech. Finally he stood up from his seat having sent a silent prayer to his Guru. He addressed the conference with the words, “Sisters and brothers of America”. These words had such miraculous strength in them that those thousands gathered stood up and there was continuous applause. The emotional appeal in those compassionate words had stirred every heart. It was the first time ever that any orator had referred to the whole of mankind as ‘Sisters and brothers’. Further he entranced all present with his brilliant and powerful oration. Yet Swami ji did not criticise any religion. He did not degrade any religion. He only wiped the dirt that had accumulated on the Hindu Dharma owing to its ill-treatment and affronts at the hands of its invaders.

Swami Vivekananda’s sermons

Swami Vivekananda returned back to Kolkata to a grand welcome after projecting Bharat in its deserved glory. ‘The Plan of my movement’, ‘Vedant in everyday life of Bharat’, ‘Our duty for the day’, ‘The great sons of Bharat’, ‘Future of Bharat’ were some of the subjects on which he started delivering lectures.

‘Real Sanyas is to sacrifice the self for the betterment of others’

Swami Vivekananda held a lot of respect for the spiritual heritage of Bharat, but he did attack through his speeches its undesirable customs and the abominable caste system. Thus his speeches served as a wakeup call even to the Hindu society.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA’S ENLIGHTENING GUIDANCE ON EDUCATION SYSTEM
Education should be such that it would create ‘human’ and character

- The burden of knowledge not understood throughout life but somehow filled in the brains does not mean Education! Education should be such that it will create ‘human’, good character inculcating good thoughts.
- If you learn 4-5 good thoughts and try to inculcate them in you, your education would be better than learning by heart a whole library!

Today’s education has completely failed in creating ‘human’ but has created terrible defects

- First thing is that the education is not creating ‘human’ but it is completely negative education. Such negative education or education that teaches only to condemn (our culture) is worse than death.

WORKS

LECTURES

- Although Vivekananda was a powerful orator and writer in English and Bengali, he was not a thorough scholar, and most of his published works were compiled from lectures given around the world which were "mainly delivered impromptu and with little preparation".
- His main work, Raja Yoga, consists of talks he delivered in New York.

LITERARY WORKS

- Vivekananda was a complete artist, composing many songs and poems, including his favourite, "Kali the Mother".
- Vivekananda blended humour with his teachings, and his language was lucid.
- His Bengali writings testify to his belief that words (spoken or written) should clarify ideas, rather than demonstrating the speaker (or writer's) knowledge.
- "Bartaman Bharat meaning" Present Day India is an erudite Bengali language essay written by him, which was first published in the March 1899 issue of Udbodhan, the only Bengali language magazine of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

PUBLICATIONS

Published in his lifetime

- Sangeet Kalpataru (1887, with Vaishnav Charan Basak)[79]
- Karma Yoga (1896)[207][208]
- Raja Yoga (1896 [1899 edition])[209]
- Vedanta Philosophy: An address before the Graduate Philosophical Society (1896)
- Lectures from Colombo to Almora (1897)
- Bartaman Bharat (in Bengali) (March 1899), Udbodhan
- My Master (1901), The Baker and Taylor Company, New York
- Vedanta philosophy: lectures on Jnana Yoga (1902) Vedanta Society, New York OCLC 919769260
- Jnana yoga (1899)

**Published posthumously**

- Addresses on Bhakti Yoga
- Bhakti Yoga
- The East and the West (1909)
- Inspired Talks (1909)
- Narada Bhakti Sutras – translation
- Para Bhakti or Supreme Devotion
- Practical Vedanta
- Speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda; a comprehensive collection

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of the youth day, contribution of SWAMI VIVEKANANDA as philosopher, social reformer, and thinker.

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS 2020**

**CONTEXT:**

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.
WHY WE CELEBRATE 9TH JANUARY AS PBD?

9th January was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa and eventually led India’s freedom struggle.

SIGNIFICANCE:

- PBD conventions are being held every year since 2003. These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities.
- These conventions are also very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: significance of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

Sources: the Hindu.

CONTEXT:

The victory pillar (also known as Ransthamb) in Bhima-Koregaon village (Pune district of Maharashtra) is to celebrate the 202nd anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon battle of 1818 on January 1, 2020.

WHAT WAS HAPPENED?

- In 2018, incidents of violence were registered during the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Bhima-Koregaon battle.
- India is characterized by more ethnic and religious groups than other countries in the world.
The socio-cultural and demographic dimension of diversity in the Indian context has sometimes spilled over into violence numerous times in the years since independence.

The racism, extremism and superiority complex is the only reason for the clashes between the Indian communities.

The clashes took place between Dalits and Maratha communities in Bhima Koregaon of Maharashtra on 1 January 2018.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

- A battle was fought in Bhima Koregaon between the Peshwa forces and the British on January 1, 1818.
- The British army, which comprised mainly of Dalit soldiers, fought the upper caste-dominated Peshwa army. The British troops defeated the Peshwa army.
- Peshwa Bajirao II had insulted the Mahar community and terminated them from the service of his army. This caused them to side with the English against the Peshwa’s numerically superior army.
- The defeat of Peshwa army was considered to be a victory against caste-based discrimination and oppression.
- It was one of the last battles of the Third Anglo-Maratha War, which ended the Peshwa domination.
- Babasaheb Ambedkar’s visit to the site on January 1, 1927, revitalized the memory of the battle for the Dalit community, making it a rallying point and an assertion of pride.

**BATTLE OF KOREGAON**

- The Battle of Koregaon (also called the Battle of Koregaon Bhima, after the river Bhima that flows close to it) was fought on 1 January 1818 between the British East India Company and the Peshwa faction of the Maratha Confederacy, at Koregaon Bhima.
- A 28,000-strong force led by Peshwa Baji Rao II whilst on their way to attack the company-held Pune, were unexpectedly met by an 800-strong Company force that was on its way to reinforce the British troops in Pune.
- The Peshwa dispatched around 2,000 soldiers to attack the force which sought entrenchment in Koregaon. Led by Captain Francis Staunton, the Company troops defended their position for nearly 12 hours, before the Peshwa’s troops ultimately withdrew, fearing the imminent arrival of a larger British force.
- The battle was part of the Third Anglo Maratha war, a series of battles that culminated in the defeat of the Maratha Empire (under the Peshwas) and subsequent rule of the British East India Company in nearly all of Western, Central and Southern India.
- There is a “victory pillar” (obelisk) in Koregaon commemorating the battle.

**OVERVIEW**

Date: 1 January 1818

Location: Koregaon Bhima (in present-day Maharashtra, India)
Result: British Victory

Belligerents: British East India Company

Losses: 275 killed, wounded or missing, 500–600 killed or wounded (British estimates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANY LEADERS</th>
<th>PESHWA'S LEADERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Captain Francis</td>
<td>1. Peshwa Baji Rao II</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. F. Staunton</td>
<td>2. Bapu Gokhale</td>
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<td>3. Appa Desai</td>
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<td>4. Trimbakji Dengle</td>
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</table>

**PESHWA'S FORCES**

- The Peshwa's army comprised 20,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry. Out of these, around 2,000 men were deployed in the action, constantly reinforced during the battle.
- The force that attacked the Company troops consisted of three infantry parties of 600 soldiers each.
- These soldiers included Arabs, Gosains and Marathas (the caste).
- The majority of the attackers were Arabs (mercenaries and their descendants), reputed to be the finest among the Peshwa's soldiers.
- The attackers were supported by a cavalry and two pieces of artillery.
- The attack was directed by Bapu Gokhale, Appa Desai and Trimbakji Dengle.
- Trimbakji was the only among these to enter the Koregaon village, once during the attack.
- The Peshwa and other chiefs stayed at Phoolsheher (modern Phulgaon) near Koregaon.
- The titular Maratha Chatrapati, Pratap Singh of Satara, also accompanied the Peshwa.

**COMPANY FORCES**

- The Company troops dispatched from Shirur comprised 834 men, including:
- Around 500 soldiers of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Regiment of Bombay Native Infantry, led by Captain Francis Staunton.
  Other officers included:
  - Lieutenant and Adjuntant Pattison
  - Lieutenant Jones
  - Assistant-Surgeon Wingate
  - Around 300 auxiliary horsemen under Lieutenant Swanston

*Figure 17 Bhima Koregaon Victory Pillar/shaurya pillar*
24 European and 4 Native Madras artillerymen with two 6-pounder guns, led by Lieutenant Chisholm. Besides Chisholm, Assistant-Surgeon Wyllie (or Wyldie) was the only officer in the artillery.

The Company troops of Indian origin included Mahars, Marathas, Rajputs, Muslims, and Jews. This was mostly the troops that Capt. Staunton had raised three months ago with the object of strengthening the defense of Poona that was already under British control.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: find out the reason behind the clashes between the Dalits and the Maratha community on the Koregaon Bhima Battle which was fought 200 years ago. Explain the Socio-cultural and demographic diversity of India.

Sources: the Hindu.

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**STATE CAN REGULATE MINORITY INSTITUTIONS**

**CONTEXT:**

In an important judgement which could have bearing on running of all government-aided minority educational institutions across the country, the Supreme Court has held that such institutions cannot claim to have absolute right in deciding appointment of teachers and it can be regulated by a government to ensure excellence in imparting education.

**WHAT’S THE ISSUE?**

- These observations were made by the court while upholding constitutional validity of West Bengal Madrassas Service Commission Act, 2008, under which the selection and appointment of teachers in madrassas are to be decided by a commission.
■ It set aside Calcutta high court verdict declaring various provision of the law unconstitutional for being violative of Article 30.

**OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE SUPREME COURT:**

- Good quality of education cannot be compromised in national interest irrespective of whether it is minority or majority educational institutions.
- The essence of Article 30(1) is to ensure equal treatment between the majority and the minority institutions and that rules and regulations would apply equally to the majority institutions as well as to the minority institutions.

**How to strike a “balance” between the two objectives of excellence in education and the preservation of the minorities’ right?**

The court explains how to strike a “balance” between the two objectives of excellence in education and the preservation of the minorities’ right to run their educational institutions.

For this, the court broadly divides education into two categories – secular education and education “directly aimed at or dealing with preservation and protection of the heritage, culture, script and special characteristics of a religious or a linguistic minority.”

- When it comes to the latter, the court advocated “maximum latitude” to be given to the management to appoint teachers.
- The court reasons that only “teachers who believe in the religious ideology or in the special characteristics of the concerned minority would alone be able to imbibe in the students admitted in such educational institutions, what the minorities would like to preserve, profess and propagate.”
- However, minority institutions where the curriculum was “purely secular”, the intent must be to impart education availing the best possible teachers.

**Constitutional Provisions regarding Minority Educational Institutions:**

**ARTICLE 30(1)**

- Article 30(1) recognizes linguistic and religious minorities but not those based on race, ethnicity.
- It recognizes the right of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions, in effect recognizing the role educational institutions play in preserving distinct culture.
- A majority community can also establish and administer educational institution but they will not enjoy special rights under Article 30(1)(a).
SPECIAL RIGHTS ENJOYED BY RELIGIOUS MINORITY INSTITUTIONS:

1. Under Art 30(1)(a), MEI enjoy right to education as a Fundamental Right. In case the property is taken over by state, due compensation to be provided to establish institutions elsewhere.
2. Under Article 15(5), MEIs are not considered for reservation.
3. Under Right to Education Act, MEI not required to provide admission to children in the age group of 6-14 years upto 25% of enrolment reserved for economically backward section of society.
4. In St Stephens vs Delhi University case, 1992, SC ruled that MEIs can have 50% seats reserved for minorities.
5. In TMA Pai & others vs State of Karnataka & others 2002 case, SC ruled that MEIs can have separate admission process which is fair, transparent and merit based. They can also separate fee structure but should not charge capitation fee.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: right of religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions or article 30 (1)

Sources: the Hindu.

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CONTEXT:

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal. Through the portal, people can report cyber-crimes online.

INDIAN CYBER CRIME COORDINATION CENTRE (I4C):
I4C and the portal will let all cybercrime-related complaints be accessed by law enforcement agencies in the states and union territories (UTs) to take action as per the law.

More than 700 police districts and more than 3,900 police stations have been connected to the portal, www.cybercrime.gov.in, so far.

It is a citizen-centric initiative.

The portal aims to boost the capacity of the law enforcement agencies to investigate cases

It is expected that it will improve the success rate of prosecutions.

The portal also focuses on specific crimes especially those related to finance and social media like cyberbullying, stalking, etc.

It will improve coordination amongst the agencies of law enforcement in different states, districts, and police stations to deal with cybercrimes in a coordinated and effective manner.

THE 7 MAIN COMPONENTS ARE:

1) National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit

2) National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

3) National Cyber Crime Training Centre

4) Cyber Crime Ecosystem Management Unit

5) National Cyber Crime Research and Innovation Centre

6) National Cyber Crime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem

7) Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: establishment of INDIAN CYBER CRIME COORDINATION CENTRE (I4C)

Sources: the Hindu.
**CONTEXT:**

The Union Government has notified the structure of the National Startup Advisory Council to advice on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country.

**COMPOSITION:**

The Council will be chaired by Minister for Commerce & Industry.

- It will consist of the non-official members, to be nominated by Central Government, from various categories like founders of successful startups, veterans and persons capable of representing interests of incubators and accelerators etc.
- The term of the non-official members of the Startup Advisory Council will be for a period of two years.
- The nominees of the concerned Ministries/Departments/Organisations, not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, will be ex-officio members of the Council.
- Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade will be the Convener of the Council.

**ROLES AND FUNCTIONS:**

1. Suggest measures to foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students in particular, promote innovation in all sectors of economy across the country.
2. Suggest measures to facilitate public organizations to assimilate innovation with a view to improving public service delivery, promote creation, protection and commercialization of intellectual property rights.
3. Suggest making it easier to start, operate, grow and exit businesses by reducing regulatory compliances and costs, promote ease of access to capital for startups, and incentivize domestic capital for investments into startups.
4. Mobilize global capital for investments in Indian startups, keep control of startups with original promoters and provide access to global markets for Indian startups.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: ROLES AND FUNCTIONS of the council

**Sources:** the Hindu. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/

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EAO (EAST ASIAN OBSERVATORY)

CONTEXT:

India is in preliminary discussions to be a part of the East Asian Observatories Consortium of eight countries committed to build large telescopes and pool resources.

FORMED BY:

EACOA (East Asian Core Observatories Association) for the purpose of pursuing joint projects in astronomy within the East Asian region.

ABOUT EAO (EAST ASIAN OBSERVATORY):

- The intention of EAO is to build and operate facilities, which will enhance and leverage existing and planned regional facilities.
- It will also raise funding and to build an observatory staff, separate from that of the EACOA institutions.
- The EAO is chartered as a non-profit Hawaii corporation.
- Its first task is to assume the operation of the James Clerk Maxwell Submillimetre Telescope (JCMT) on the summit of Maunakea, Hawai`i.
- It consists of China, Japan, Taiwan, Korea as full members and Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia as ‘observers’.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA:

Having India join the group could mean the establishment of new kinds of telescopes — one proposed being in Tibet — that could aid the observation of new black holes and throw light on cosmic phenomena.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: implications of EAO for INDIA

Sources: the Hindu.
The first convention centre was established in Africa by India to honour the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. The Centre was jointly inaugurated by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and President of Niger Mahamadou Issoufou. Mr. Jaishankar is on his state visit to the West African country, Niger. He is the first Indian Foreign Minister to visit the West African country.

MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE (MGICC):

- The establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre (MGICC) proves the relationship between India and Niger, as also a symbol of India’s firm commitment towards Africa.
- The first centre was established in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi whose 150th Birth Anniversary was observed in 2019.
- MGICC was designed as a modern and eco-friendly facility. It includes a 2,000 capacity Plenary Hall.
- The Centre will witness high-level and wide-ranging participation from African Union member states and other high-level conventions.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EAM’S VISIT:

- During his visit, Mr. Jaishankar met Prime Minister Brigi Rafini during his visit.
- The two leaders discussed bilateral ties.
- He met his counterpart of Niger, Kalla Ankourao and held discussions on a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues.
The bilateral relations between India and Niger have expanded significantly in recent years. India has provided Lines of Credit (LoC) to Niger for projects in transport, solar energy, electrification, and potable drinking water.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance and establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi International Convention Centre (MGICC)

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU (NCRB)**

**CONTEXT:**

NCRB has launched two online national-level services related to Search of Missing Persons and to Generate Vehicle NOC.

**LAUNCHED ON:**

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)

**ACCESSSED THROUGH:**

‘digitalpolicecitizenservices.gov.in’ portal or through a link in the existing ‘Digital Police Portal’

**WHAT IS CCTNS PROJECT?**

- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) are a project initiated in June 2009 which aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing at the Police Station level.
- This will be done through adoption of principles of e-Governance, and creation of a nationwide networked infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system around “investigation of crime and detection of criminals”.

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www.iasupsc.com 78 volume: 7
WHAT IT DOES?

- The Project will interconnect about 15000 Police Stations and additional 5000 offices of supervisory police officers across the country and digitize data related to FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all Police Stations.
- It will not only automate Police functions at Police station and higher levels but will also create facilities and mechanism to provide public services like registration of online complaints, ascertaining the status of case registered at the police station, verification of persons etc.
- In 2015, an additional objective of establishing a basic platform for an Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) was added to the Project.

BENEFITS:

1. The Full implementation of the Project with all the new components would lead to a Central citizen portal having linkages with State level citizen portals that will provide a number of citizen friendly services like Police Verification for various purposes including passport verification, reporting a crime including cyber-crime and online tracking of the case progress etc.
2. The project will enable National level crime analytics to be published at increased frequency, which will help the policy makers as well as lawmakers in taking appropriate and timely action, it will also enable Pan-India criminal/accused name search in the regional language for improved inter-state tracking of criminal movement. This would lead to development of a national database of crimes and criminals.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: benefits of CCTNS PROJECT

Sources: pib
The Indian Army began its work based on the Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) model.

IN NEWS:

- The model will identify the potential industry partners for its base workshops and ordnance depots intended to improve operational efficiency.
- Army also issued a Request for Information (RFI) to shortlist service providers with experience in warehousing, logistics and supply chain management for Central Ordnance Depot (COD), Kanpur.
- Also, the Army’s Master General of Ordnance (MGO) started to evaluate the GOCO model for Army Base Workshops (ABWs) to drive higher operational efficiencies.
- Indian Army has hired Price water house Coopers Pvt. Ltd. (PwC) as a consultant to run the process and to hold conferences & consultations with the industry.

GOCO MODEL:

- The GOCO model was recommended by the Lt. Gen. DB Shekatkar (Retd.) committee.
- The model aims to enhance combat capability and re-balancing defence expenditure.
- As per the committee’s recommendations, the government has decided to disband two advance base workshops; one static workshop and four ordnance depots and eight ABWs are recommended to be corporatized on the GOCO model.
- The 8 ABWs that are identified by the army are located in Allahabad, Agra, Delhi, Kankinara of West Bengal, Jabalpur of Madhya Pradesh, and Meerut of Uttar Pradesh, Kirkee near Pune and Bengaluru.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: what is GOCO Model? INDIAN DEFENCE SYSTEM

Sources: the Hindu.
Indian Navy continues to deploy one warship for Operation SANKALP in order to ensure the safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz amidst deteriorating US-Iran relations.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Indian Navy launched Operation SANKALP in the Gulf Region on 19th June 2019.
- Indian Navy warships and aircraft are deployed to establish presence, provide a sense of reassurance to the Indian merchantmen, monitor the ongoing situation and respond to any emergent crises like deteriorating US-Iran relations in the recent times.

**US-IRAN:**

- 1979: US-backed Shah of Iran was overthrown and the country became an Islamic republic.
- Dozens of Americans were taken hostage inside the US embassy in the capital Tehran.
- 2015: Iran agreed on a landmark deal to limit its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of tough economic sanctions.
- This move improved Iran’s diplomatic relations with other nations.
- 2018: The US President abandoned the Nuclear Accord and reinstated US sanctions to force Iran’s leaders to agree to a new deal.
- Iran rejected it even the economy of the country was sent into recession.
- 2019: The pressure was stepped up in May by application of secondary sanctions on countries that continued to do business with Iran.
- Relations further deteriorated when oil tankers were sabotaged in the Gulf of Oman.
- Later, Tehran started suspending some of the commitments under the nuclear deal.
- It was followed by attacks and counter-attacks by both countries until January 2020.
- 2020: On 3 January, Qasem Soleimani was killed in a US drone strike at Baghdad airport.
- Iran abandoned the last limit on its enrichment of uranium imposed by the nuclear accord as a way of revenge.
- These issues have led to turbulent situations in the Gulf region.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: operation SANKALP, INDIAN DEFENCE SYSTEM

**Sources:** the Hindu.
Russia started production of S-400 long-range surface-to-air missile systems for India. The five units will be delivered to India by 2025.

S-400 AIR DEFENCE MISSILE SYSTEMS:

- The S-400 air defence missile systems are among the best in the world. This will significantly bolster India’s air defence mechanism. In October 2018, India signed a USD 5 billion deal to buy the air defence missile systems.
- The S-400, an upgraded version of the S-300 previously been available to the Russian defence forces. It is manufactured by Almaz-Antey and has been in service in Russia since 2007.
- The Triumf interceptor-based missile system can destroy incoming hostile aircraft, missiles and even drones at ranges of up to 400 km. S-400 is known as Russia most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile defence system.
- The US imposed sanctions on Russia under the stringent Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The law also provides for punitive action against countries purchasing defence hardware from Russia.
- India and Russia finalised a broad agreement for the joint venture between Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and two Russian defence majors for production of Kamov helicopters.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: INDIAN DEFENCE SYSTEM

Sources: the Hindu.
Government is to set up a war memorial for animals in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. The memorial will be set up at the Remount and Veterinary Corps (RVC) Centre and College in Meerut. RVC is where the army breeds, rears, and trains dogs, mules and horses.

WAR MEMORIAL IN MEERUT:

- The memorial will feature a heroine who lost her life in a counter-insurgency operation in Kashmir in 2016.
- It will feature some others who acquitted themselves creditably in the Kargil war India fought with Pakistan in 1999.
- The proposal is yet to receive approval from the Ministry of Defence.
- It will be India's first animal war memorial.
- The memorial aims to recognize the heroic acts of the animals on the battlefield, devotion to duty and outstanding contribution to military service alongside soldiers.
- The monument has been planned to be set up similar to the National War Memorial in Delhi but on a smaller scale.
- The names and service numbers of over 350 handlers, 300 dogs, and a few horses and mules will be inscribed on granite tablets at the memorial.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: first war memorial for animals

Sources: the Hindu.

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On January 29, 2020, the Indian Navy launched Operation Vanilla in the Southern Indian Ocean. The operation was launched based on the request received from Madagascar.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The Operation has been launched to assist the population of Madagascar that was affected by Cyclone Diane.
- The Indian Navy ship Airavat has been deployed in the relief mission.
- The operation will provide succor to the flood affected population.
- The ship also set up a medical camp and offer water, food and other essential relief materials.

**MADAGASCAR ISLAND:**

**ALTERNATIVE TITLES:**

Great Red Island, Isle of Saint Lawrence, Madagasikara, Malagasy Republic, République de Madagascar, Repoblikan’i Madagasikara, Republic of Madagascar

**A BRIEF INTRODUCTION:**

- Madagascar, island country lying off the southeastern coast of Africa, Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world, after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo.
- Although located some 250 miles (400 km) from the African continent, Madagascar’s population is primarily related not to African peoples but rather to those of Indonesia, more than 3,000 miles (4,800 km) to the east.
- The Malagasy peoples, moreover, do not consider themselves to be Africans, but, because of the continuing bond with France that resulted from former colonial rule, the island developed political, economic, and cultural links with the French-speaking countries of western Africa.
- The animal life and vegetation of the island are equally anomalous, differing greatly from that of nearby Africa and being in many respects unique.
- Although the coastlands have been known to Europeans for more than 400 years and to Arabs for much longer, recent historical development has been more intense and concentrated in the central plateau, which contains the capital city of Antananarivo (formerly Tananarive).

LAND

Madagascar is located in the southwestern Indian Ocean and is separated from the African coast by the 250-mile- (400-km-) wide Mozambique Channel.
RELIEF

Madagascar consists of three parallel longitudinal zones—the central plateau, the coastal strip in the east, and the zone of low plateaus and plains in the west.

The central plateau

- Situated between 2,500 and 4,500 feet (800 and 1,400 metres) above sea level, the plateau has been uplifted and worn down several times and is tilted to the west.

Three massifs are more than 8,500 feet (2,600 metres) high.

1. The Tsaratanana region in the north is separated from the rest of the plateau by the Tsaratanana Massif, whose summit, Maromokotro, reaches 9,436 feet (2,876 metres) and is the highest point on the island.
2. Ankaratra Massif in the centre is an enormous volcanic mass whose summit, Tsiafajavona, is 8,671 feet (2,643 metres) high. Ankaratra is a major watershed divide separating three main river basins.
3. Farther south, Andringitra is a vast granite massif north of Tôlañaro (Faradofay); it rises to 8,720 feet (2,658 metres) at Boby Peak.

- The plateau slopes with some regularity toward the extreme southern plain, but its boundaries to the east and west are more abrupt.
- To the east it descends in a sharp fault, by vertical steps of 1,000 to 2,000 feet (300 to 600 metres). This cliff, which is called the Great Cliff or the Cliff of Angavo, is often impassable and is itself bordered by the Betsimisaraka Escarpment, a second and lower cliff to the east, which overhangs the coastal plain. Behind the scarp face are the remains of ancient lakes, including one called Alaotra.
- To the south the two steep gradients meet and form the Mahafaly and the Androy plateaus, which overhang the sea in precipitous cliffs.
- Toward the west the descent is made in a series of steps. However, in places the central plateau is bordered by an impassable escarpment, such as the Cliff of Bongolava in the west-central part of the island.
- To the extreme north the plateau is bordered by the low belt of the Ambohitra Mountains, which include a series of volcanic craters.

Coastal stripes

- The coastal strip has an average width of about 30 miles (50 km).
- It is a narrow alluvial plain that terminates in a low coastline bordered with lagoons linked together by the Pangalanes (Ampangalana) Canal, which is more than 370 miles (600 km) long.
- To the south of Farafangana the coast becomes rocky, and in the southeast there occur many little bays. To the northeast is the deep Bay of Antongil (Antongila).
The zone of low plateaus and plains in the west

- The western zone is between 60 and 125 miles (100 and 200 km) wide. Its sedimentary layers slope toward the Mozambique Channel and produce a succession of hills. The inland (eastern) side of these steep hills dominates the hollows formed in the soft sediments of the interior, while the other side descends to the sea in rocky slopes. The coastline is straight, bordered by small dunes and fringed with mangroves.
- The currents in the Mozambique Channel have favoured the offshore deposit of alluvium and the growth of river deltas.
- On the northwestern coast there are a number of estuaries and bays. This coast is bordered by coral reefs and volcanic islands, such as Nosy Be (Nossi-Bé), which protects Ampasindava Bay.

DRAINAGE

Rivers

- The steep eastern face of the plateau is drained by numerous short, torrential rivers, such as the Mandrare, the Mananara, the Faraony, the Ivondro, and the Maningory, which discharge either into the coastal lagoons or directly into the sea over waterfalls and rapids.
- The more gently sloping western side of the plateau is crossed by longer and larger rivers, including the Onilahy, the Mangoky, the Tsiribihina, and the Betsiboka, which bring huge deposits of fertile alluvium down into the vast plains and many-channeled estuaries; the river mouths, while not completely blocked by this sediment, are studded with numerous sandbanks.

Lake

- There are many lakes of volcanic origin on the island, such as Lake Itasy.
- Alaotra is the last surviving lake of the eastern slope.
- Lake Tsimanampetsotsa, near the coast south of Toliara (formerly Tuléar), is a large body of saline water that has no outlet.

SOILS

The central plateau and the eastern coast are mainly composed of gneiss, granite, quartz, and other crystalline rock formations.

Alluvial

- Fertile alluvial soils in the valleys support intensive cultivation.
Volcanic

- There also are scattered volcanic intrusions that produce fertile but easily erodible soils.

Sedimentary

- Lake Alaotra is a large sedimentary pocket in the central plateau containing some of the island’s most productive farmland.
- The western third of the island consists entirely of deposits of sedimentary rock, giving rise to soils of medium to low fertility.

WHAT IS MADAGASCAR FAMOUS FOR?

As the biggest island in the Indian Ocean, Madagascar is famous for its unique wildlife and biodiversity. With breathtaking views of nature, white sand beaches, stunning rainforest and delicious local food, this spot offers an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: INDIAN DEFENCE SYSTEM, Madagascar island

Sources: pib

KERALA BECOMES FIRST STATE TO PASS ANTI-CAA RESOLUTION

CONTEXT:

Kerala has become the first state in India to pass a resolution demanding rollback of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

WHY KERALA’S ARGUMENTS?

- The CAA act contradicts the basic values and principles of the Constitution.
It is against the “secular” outlook and fabric of the country and would lead to religion-based discrimination in granting citizenship.

BACKGROUND:

- The Parliament had passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 on December 11, 2019. The act had triggered widespread protests across India and created fear of discrimination based on religion.
- Kerala has already put on hold all the activities in connection with the National Population Register (NPR) considering the anxiety among people that it relates to the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

WHAT’S THE ISSUE NOW?

- The Centre has clarified that the CAA act will not impact any Indian citizen including Muslims.
- The clarification has failed to have any impact on the protests, with many states announcing that they will not implement the law.

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019:

1. It seeks to allow illegal migrants from certain minority communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan eligible for Indian citizenship by amending the Citizenship Act of 1955.
2. It seeks to grant citizenship to people from minority communities — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians — after 6 years of stay in India even if they do not possess any proper document. The current requirement is 12 years of stay.
3. The Bill provides that the registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may be cancelled if they violate any law.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

Sources: the Hindu.
Recently, the two Nirbhaya case convicts have filed Curative petitions in the Supreme Court. Earlier, the convicts had filed a mercy petition and review petition which has been rejected.

**ABOUT “CURATIVE PETITION”:**

The concept of the curative petition was first evolved by the Supreme Court of India in Rupa Ashok Hurra vs. Ashok Hurra and another case (2002) on the question whether an aggrieved person is entitled to any relief against the final judgement/order of the Supreme Court, even after the dismissal of a review petition.

**OBJECTIVES:**

Its objectives are two folds- avoid miscarriage of justice and to prevent abuse of process.

**CONSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND:**

The concept of the curative petition is supported by Article 137 of the Indian Constitution. It provides that in the matter of laws and rules made under Article 145, the Supreme Court has the power to review any judgement pronounced (or order made) by it. Such a petition needs to be filed within 30 days from the date of judgement or order.

**PROCEDURE:**

- A curative petition may be filed after a review plea against the final conviction is dismissed.
- It can be entertained if the petitioner establishes that there was a violation of the principles of natural justice, and that he was not heard by the court before passing an order.
- It must be rare rather than regular.
- A curative petition must be first circulated to a Bench of the three senior-most judges, and the judges who passed the concerned judgment, if available. Only when a majority of the judges conclude that the matter needs hearing should it be listed before the same Bench.
- The Bench at any stage of consideration of the curative petition can ask a senior counsel to assist it as amicus curiae (Friend of the court).
- A curative petition is usually decided by judges in the chamber unless a specific request for an open-court hearing is allowed.

**GROUNDS FOR REJECTION:**

In the event of the Bench holding at any stage that the petition is without any merit, it may impose a penalty on the petitioner.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**
A four party agreement among the Centre, Mizoram Government, Tripura Government and Mizoram Bru Displaced People’s Forum (MBDPF) which seeks to end the 22-year-old Bru refugee crisis may be signed on 16th January 2020.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Bru or Reang is a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group.
- In Mizoram, they have been targeted by groups that do not consider them indigenous to the state. In 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Brus fled Mamit, Kolasib and Lunglei districts of Mizoram and were accommodated in relief camps in Tripura.
- Since then, 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in eight phases of repatriation, while 32,000 still live in six relief camps in North Tripura.
- In June 2018, community leaders from the Bru camps signed an agreement with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation in Mizoram. But most camp residents rejected the terms of the agreement.
- The camp residents say that the agreement doesn’t guarantee their safety in Mizoram.
- In October 2019, the supply of ration to relief camps was stopped on instructions of the Home Ministry in a bid to hastily complete the repatriation of refugees to Mizoram. Civil society outfits had alleged that at least six refugees died due to starvation.

**PROPOSED NEW AGREEMENT:**

- According to the 2018 agreement, the Bru tribals would have settled in Mizoram, but according to the new agreement, they will now settle in Tripura.
- The stakeholders in the issue expect a package of Rs 600 crore from the Centre which includes:
Plots of 2,500 sq ft for each Bru family in addition to agricultural land.
- A stipend of Rs 5,000 per month and free ration for each family for the next two years.
- Bru tribals would be included in Tripura’s voter list.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** Bru Displaced People’s Forum (MBDPF)

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**GOVT. SIGNS ACCORD WITH NDFB, ABSU TO RESOLVE BODO ISSUE**

**CONTEXT:**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Assam government and the Bodo groups have signed an agreement to redraw and rename the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) in Assam.

The BTAD district is currently spread over four districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

**OVERVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT SIGNED:**

- As per the agreement, villages dominated by Bodos that were presently outside the BTAD would be included and those with non-Bodo population would be excluded.
- The memorandum of settlement says that the criminal cases registered against members of the NDFB factions for “non-heinous” crimes shall be withdrawn by the Assam government and in cases of heinous crimes it will be reviewed.
- The families of those killed during the Bodo movement would get Rs. 5 lakh each.
- A Special Development Package of Rs. 1500 Crore would be given by the Centre to undertake specific projects for the development of Bodo areas.
- A committee will decide the exclusion and inclusion of new areas in the BTAD. Subsequent to this alteration, the total number of Assembly seats will go up to 60, from the existing 40.
After the agreement, the NDFB factions will leave the path of violence, surrender their weapons and disband their armed organisations within a month of signing the deal.

BACKGROUND:

- The first Bodo accord was signed with the ABSU in 1993, leading to the creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council with limited political powers.
- The BTC was created in 2003 with some more financial and other powers.
- The BTAD and other areas mentioned under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution have been exempted from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, that enables undocumented non-Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2014 to apply for Indian citizenship.

WHAT NEXT?

- As of now the agreement has not addressed the issue of “citizenship or work permit” for non-domiciles in the BTAD, to be renamed as the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).
- Several Bodo groups have been demanding a separate land for the ethnic community since 1972, a movement that has claimed nearly 4,000 lives.

WHO ARE THE NDFB?

- Alongside political movements, armed groups have also sought to create a separate Bodo state.
- In October 1986, the prominent group Bodo Security Force (BdSF) was formed by Ranjan Daimary. The BdSF subsequently renamed itself as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), an organisation that is known to be involved in attacks, killings, and extortions.

WHO ARE BODOS?

- Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam, making up over 5-6 per cent of the state’s population. They have controlled large parts of Assam in the past.
- The four districts in Assam — Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang — that constitute the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD), are home to several ethnic groups.

THE BODOLAND DISPUTE:

- In 1966-67, the demand for a separate state called Bodoland was raised under the banner of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political outfit.
- In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) renewed the demand. “Divide Assam fifty-fifty”, was a call given by the ABSU’s then leader, Upendra Nath Brahma.
- The unrest was a fallout of the Assam Movement (1979-85), whose culmination — the Assam Accord — addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the “Assamese people”, leading the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identity.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?
For prelims and mains: THE BODOLAND DISPUTE, about the agreement to redraw and rename the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) in Assam.

Sources: the Hindu.

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SAANSAAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA

CONTEXT:

Out of the total 790, only 252 Members of Parliament (MPs) have adopted gram panchayats under phase-4 of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY). Since the launch of the scheme, only 1,753 gram panchayats have been selected across four phases, way below the expected figure.

ABOUT SAANSAAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA:

- Launched in 2014, it is a village development project under which each Member of Parliament will take the responsibility of developing physical and institutional infrastructure in three villages by 2019.
- The goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams or model villages by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.
- The Project was launched on the occasion of birth anniversary of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- The scheme will be implemented through a village development plan that would be prepared for every identified gram panchayat with special focus on enabling every poor household to come out of poverty.
- The constituency fund, MPLADS, would be available to fill critical financing gaps.
- The planning process in each village will be a participatory exercise coordinated by the District Collector. The MP will play an active facilitating role in this exercise.
- Adoption and adaptation of technology and introduction of innovations are critical to this programme. This will include use of space application and remote sensing for planning, mobile based technology for monitoring, agriculture technology for increasing productivity etc.
At the state level there will be an Empowered Committee headed by the Chief Secretary consisting of the relevant Departments and including experts, as required with at least two Civil Society representatives.

The district Collector will be the nodal officer for implementing the SAGY. He will conduct a monthly review meeting with representatives of the participating Line Departments. The Members of Parliament concerned will chair the review meetings.

SAGY gives focus to community participation. Social mobilization of village community can trigger a chain of other development activities in the village.

**JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN**

- Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) is a village development project launched by Government of India in October 2014, under which each Member of Parliament will take the responsibility of developing physical and institutional infrastructure in three villages by 2019.
- The Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAANJHI) was launched on 11th October, 2014.

**GOAL**

The goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

**VALUES OF SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA**

- Adopting people’s participation as an end in itself – ensuring the involvement of all sections of society in all aspects related to the life of village, especially in decision-making related to governance
- Adhering to Antyodaya – enabling the “poorest and the weakest person” in the village to achieve well being
- Affirming gender equality and ensuring respect for women
- Guaranteeing social justice
- Instilling dignity of labour and the spirit of community service and voluntarism
- Promoting a culture of cleanliness
- Living in consonance with nature – ensuring a balance between development and ecology
- Preserving and promoting local cultural heritage
- Inculcating mutual cooperation, self-help and self-reliance
- Fostering peace and harmony in the village community
- Bringing about transparency, accountability and probity in public life
- Nurturing local self-governance
- Adhering to the values enshrined in the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of the Indian Constitution.

**OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of SAGY are:

1. To trigger processes which lead to holistic development of the identified Gram Panchayats
2. To substantially improve the standard of living and quality of life of all sections of the population through
   - Improved basic amenities
   - Higher productivity
   - Enhanced human development
   - Better livelihood opportunities
   - Reduced disparities
   - Access to rights and entitlements
   - Wider social mobilization
   - Enriched social capital

3. To generate models of local level development and effective local governance which can motivate and inspire neighbouring Gram Panchayats to learn and adapt

4. To nurture the identified Adarsh Grams as schools of local development to train other Gram Panchayats.

**APPROACH**

In order to achieve these objectives, SAGY would be guided by the following approach:

- Leveraging the leadership, capacity, commitment and energy of the Members of Parliament (MP) to develop model Gram Panchayats
- Engaging with and mobilizing the community for participatory local level development.
- Converging different government programmes and private and voluntary initiatives to achieve comprehensive development in tune with people’s aspirations and local potential.
- Building partnerships with voluntary organisations, co-operatives and academic and research institutions.
- Focusing on outcomes and sustainability.

**ACTIVITIES IN AN ADARSH GRAM**

*Holistic development through SAGY*
An Adarsh Gram should evolve out of people’s shared vision, using their capacities and available resources to the best extent possible, duly facilitated by the MP, the Gram Panchayat, civil society and the government machinery. Naturally, the elements of an Adarsh Gram would be context specific. However, it is still possible to broadly identify the important activities. They would include:

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

- Inculcating hygienic behaviour and practices
- Fostering healthy habits including daily exercise and games
- Reducing risk behaviour - alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse, etc.

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:**

- Universal access to basic health facilities consisting of health card, medical examination
- Total immunization
- Balancing the sex-ratio
- 100% institutional delivery
- Improving nutrition status for all, with special focus on children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers
- Strong focus on the special needs of Persons with Disability (PWD), especially children and women
- Universal access to education facilities up to Class X and retention
- Conversion of schools into ‘smart schools’. Smart schools will have IT enabled classrooms, e-libraries, web based teaching and will make all students e-literate required for providing quality education
- Adult literacy
- E-literacy
- Village libraries including e-libraries

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:**

- Activities for promotion of voluntarism like Bharat Nirman Volunteers
- Building the capacity of the people to fully participate and contribute to local development
- Activities for honouring village elders, local role models especially women, freedom fighters and martyrs
- Activities for violence and crime free villages such as:
  - Setting up Citizen Committees
  - Sensitization, especially of youth
- Village sports and folk arts festivals
- Having a village song to instil a sense of pride among the people
- Celebrating ‘Village Day’
- Proactive steps for inclusion and integration of socially excluded groups, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**
Promoting diversified agricultural and allied livelihoods, including livestock and horticulture, through-

- Organic farming
- Soil health cards
- Crop intensification such as SRI
- Setting up of seed banks
- Collection and value addition to Non Timber Forest Produce, Livestock development including Gobar Bank, cattle hostel
- Livestock development including Gobar Bank, cattle hostel
- Micro-irrigation
- Agro-service centres

**RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION LIKE:**

- Post-harvest technology applications
- Micro-enterprises
- Dairy development and processing
- Food processing
- Traditional Industries
- Skill Development of all eligible youth for self-employment and placement

**VILLAGE TOURISM INCLUDING ECO-TOURISM**

All the above activities should focus particularly on lifting households out of poverty, for which organising and federating women SHGs, providing employment to all workers, and bringing about financial inclusion are very important.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT:**

- Activities for a clean and green village consisting of:
  - Providing toilets in each household and in all public institutions and ensuring their proper use
  - Appropriate solid and liquid waste management

- Roadside plantations
- Tree plantation in accordance with local preferences in homesteads, schools and public institutions – including green walkways
- Social forestry
- Watershed management especially renovation and revival of traditional water bodies
- Rainwater harvesting- rooftop as well as others
- Reducing local pollution of air, water and land

**BASIC AMENITIES AND SERVICES:**

- Pucca houses for all houseless poor/poor living in kutcha houses
Drinking water, preferably treated piped water with household taps
Internal all weather roads with covered drains
All weather road connectivity to the main road-network
Electricity connection to all households and street-lights including from alternative sources of energy, especially solar
Pucca infrastructure for public institutions- Anganwadis, schools, health institutions, Gram Panchayat Office and libraries
Civic infrastructure including community halls, buildings for SHG federations, playgrounds and burial grounds/crematoria
Village markets
Infrastructure for PDS outlets
Micro mini banks/post offices/ATMs
Broadband connectivity and Common Service Centres
Telecom connectivity
CCTVs in public places

**SOCIAL SECURITY:**
- Pensions for all eligible families - old age, disability and widow
- Insurance schemes like Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana
- Health insurance - RSBY
- PDS - universal access to all eligible households

**GOOD GOVERNANCE:**
- Strengthening of local democracy through strong and accountable Gram Panchayats and active Gram Sabhas
- E-Governance resulting in better service delivery
- Provision of UIDAI cards to all
- Ensuring regular and punctual attendance of government and panchayat staff
- Time bound service delivery in line with Department’s Citizens Charter
- Holding of Mahila Gram Sabhas before every Gram Sabha
- Holding of a Gram Sabha at least 4 times a year
- Holding of Bal Sabhas every quarter

**IDENTIFICATION OF ADARSH GRAM**
- A Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit. It will have a population of 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in hilly, tribal and difficult areas. In districts where this unit size is not available, Gram Panchayats approximating the desirable population size may be chosen.
- The MP would be free to identify a suitable Gram Panchayat for being developed as Adarsh Gram, other than his/her own village or that of his/her spouse.
- The MP will identify one Gram Panchayat to be taken up immediately, and two others to be taken up a little later. Lok Sabha MP has to choose a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency and Rajya Sabha MP a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected. Nominated MPs may choose a Gram
Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country. In the case of urban constituencies, (where there are no Gram Panchayats), the MP will identify a Gram Panchayat from a nearby rural constituency.

- The Gram Panchayats once selected by members of Parliament (whose tenures have ended on account of resignation or otherwise) would be continued as such under SAGY irrespective of whether activities have already been initiated in the GP under SAGY or not. The newly elected MPs will have the option to select the GP of their choice and two more subsequently by 2019.
- Primarily, the goal is to develop three Adarsh Grams by March 2019, of which one would be achieved by 2016. Thereafter, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** The main objectives, values, approaches of SAGY. ACTIVITIES IN AN ADARSH GRAM

**Sources:** Indiawww.india.gov.in

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**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**CONTEXT:**

Andhra Pradesh Cabinet has approved a statutory resolution seeking the abolition of the Legislative Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

- The Vidhan Parishad of united Andhra Pradesh was created on July 1, 1958, and dissolved on May 31, 1985. It was resurrected after 22 years, on March 30, 2007.
- Since the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, the Council has had 58 members.

**COUNCILS IN OTHER STATES:**

Besides Andhra Pradesh, five other states have Vidhan Parishads — Bihar (58 members), Karnataka (75), Maharashtra (78), Telangana (40), UP (100). Jammu and Kashmir had a Council until the state was bifurcated into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.
WHAT ARE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS, AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT:

India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.

WHY DO WE NEED A SECOND HOUSE:

1. To act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House.
2. To ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.
3. Having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST HAVING A SECOND HOUSE:

1. Rather than fulfilling the lofty objective of getting intellectuals into the legislature, the forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected.
2. It is also an unnecessary drain on the exchequer.
3. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
4. While Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, members of Legislative Councils can’t. MLCs also can’t vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members.
5. As regards Money bills, only fourteen days’ delay can be caused by the Council, which is more or less a formality rather than a barrier in the way of Money Bill passed by the Assembly.

HOW IS A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CREATED:

Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: the abolition and creation of the Legislative Council

Sources: the Hindu.

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India has ranked 34th in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) of the World Economic Forum for the year 2019. In 2013, India ranked 65th.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) analyzed 139 countries and scored each according to three sub-indices:

1. Regulatory Framework
2. Business Environment and Infrastructure
3. Human, Cultural, and Natural Resources

These sub-indices are, in turn, composed of 14 pillars of Travel and Tourism Competitiveness. The Ministry of Tourism reported that India has gained popularity among overseas travellers as foreign tourist arrivals grew by 3.23% to 96,69,633 during January-November 2019. It also reported that 93,66,478 overseas travellers had arrived in January-November 2018.

Measures taken by Government:

- In 2019, the tourism ministry has taken several steps by opening 120 new peaks for mountaineering in order to boost inbound tourism. It has also reduced e-visa fees and reduced the GST rates on hotel room bookings, among others.
- The government also reduced GST on hotel rooms with tariffs of Rs.1,001-7,500 per night to 12%, while those above Rs.7,501 to 18%.
- Also, the government-sanctioned 77 projects for the development of thematic circuits and allocated an amount of Rs.6,035.70 crore, so far, under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
- Under the National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) Scheme the Central government identified pilgrimage destinations. It sanctioned 28 projects that amount to Rs.840.02 crore.

TTCI:
The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) is released by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The index measures the factors and policies that make a country a viable place to invest in the Travel and Tourism sector. This sustainability indicator can be used to calculate the status of the Travel and Tourism goal.

The top 10 countries of the index are:
1) Spain
2) France
3) Germany
4) Japan
5) United States
6) United Kingdom
7) Australia
8) Italy
9) Canada
10) Switzerland

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: TTCI

Sources: the Hindu.

PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY)

CONTEXT:

Maharashtra has become the first state in the country to integrate its land records with the web portal of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). This will help in checking the cases of “over-insurance” — insurance of more land than in possession — as well as insurance of ineligible people.

ABOUT PMFBY:

Launched in April, 2016, after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), Weather-based Crop Insurance scheme and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS)
PREMIUM:

It envisages a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for Kharif crops, and 1.5% for Rabi crops. The premium for annual commercial and horticultural crops will be 5%.

OVERVIEW

Scheme Applicable: All of India State
Eligible For This Scheme: Tenant and SAO loan Farmer
Fasal Bima Yojana Rate Premium: 1.5% to 3.5%
Duration of This Scheme: 3 year

OBJECTIVES:

1. Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events.
2. Stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
3. Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
4. Ensuring flow of credit to the agriculture sector which contributes to food security, crop diversification and enhancing growth and competitiveness of agriculture sector besides protecting farmers from production risks.
5. To supply insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the case of failure of any of the notified crops because of this of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
6. To secure the income of farmers to ensure their continuation in farming.
7. To encourage farmers to take up ground-breaking and modern farming practices.
8. To ensure the flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

No classification of farmers:

The desire of the government in providing the benefits of the scheme to as many farmers has possible, has encouraged them to eliminate any segregation or classification. Any farmer is welcome to be a part of the crop insurance scheme.

Ownership of land is not an issue:

Some of the prior schemes were only open for those farmers who owned the land. But the PMFBY is not like that. It will not take into consideration whether the farmer is the actual owners of the land or has it on a rental basis.
Safeguarding the non-loanee farmers:

The rules of the scheme highlight that if an agricultural labor has not applied for any other credit for framing purpose, then they will have to produce proper documents for being a part of the PMFBY. This kind of farmers is called non-loanee farmers.

FARMERS TO BE COVERED:

All farmers growing notified crops in a notified area during the season who have insurable interest in the crop are eligible.

Compulsory coverage:

The enrolment under the scheme, subject to possession of insurable interest on the cultivation of the notified crop in the notified area, shall be compulsory for following categories of farmers:

1. Farmers in the notified area who possess a Crop Loan account/KCC account (called as Loanee Farmers) to whom credit limit is sanctioned/renewed for the notified crop during the crop season. and
2. Such other farmers whom the Government may decide to include from time to time.

Voluntary coverage:

Voluntary coverage may be obtained by all farmers not covered above, including Crop KCC/Crop Loan Account holders whose credit limit is not renewed.

CHALLENGES AT PRESENT:

Insufficient reach and the issue of penetration

Data constraints:

With just around 45% of the claims made by farmers over the last three crop seasons data for the last rabi season is not available paid by the insurance companies.

Low payout of claims:

The reason for the very low payout of claims is that only few state governments are paying their share of the premiums on time and till they do, the central government doesn’t pay its share either. Till they get the premium, insurance companies simply sit on the claims.

Gaps in assessment of crop loss:
There is hardly any use of modern technology in assessing crop damages. There is lack of trained outsourced agencies, scope of corruption during implementation and the non-utilisation of technologies like smart phones and drones to improve reliability of such sampling. Less number of notified crops than can avail insurance, Inadequate and delayed claim payment.

**High actuarial premium rates:**

Insurance companies charged high actuarial premium rates. If states delay notifications, or payment of premiums, or crop cutting data, companies cannot pay compensation to the farmers in time.

**Poor capacity to deliver:**

There has been no concerted effort by the state government and insurance companies to build awareness of farmers on PMFBY. Insurance companies have failed to set-up infrastructure for proper implementation of PMFBY.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** challenges to implement PMFBY

**Sources:** the Hindu.

**HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX**

**CONTEXT:**

The latest edition of Henley Passport Index has been released.

**WHAT IS HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX (HPI)?**

It is a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom for their citizens. Started in 2006 as Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index (HVRI) and was modified and renamed in January 2018.

**HOW ARE THE COUNTRIES RANKED?**

The ranking is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world’s largest and most accurate database of travel information, and enhanced by the
Henley & Partners Research Department. The Index lists the world’s passports “according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa”.

**PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES:**

1. Japan is at the top. It has been topping the Index for three straight years; according to the 2020 index, its citizens are able to access 191 destinations without having to obtain a visa in advance.
2. Singapore, in second place (same as in 2019), has a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 190.
3. Germany is No. 3 (same position as in 2019), with access to 189 destinations;
4. The US and the UK have been falling consistently over successive Indices.

**PERFORMANCE OF INDIA:**

1. The Indian passport is closer to the bottom, ranked 84th in the world.
2. This translates into visa-free access to 58 destinations, including 33 which give Indians visas on arrival.
3. Twenty of the 58 visa-free access destinations in the 2020 list are in Africa, and 11 each in Asia and the Caribbean. Serbia is the only European country to which Indian passport holders can travel visa-free.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX (HPI)

Sources: the Hindu.

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**MUKHYAMANTRI KRISHAK DURGHAHTNA KALYAN YOJANA**

**CONTEXT:**

Uttar Pradesh state Government has launched Mukhyamantri Krishak Durghatna Kalyan Yojana. The government also
announced that it is to implement Mukhyamantri Paryatan Samvardhan Yojana.

**MUKHYAMANTRI KRISHAK DURGHATNA KALYAN YOJANA:**

- The scheme will provide financial assistance of Rs.5 lakh to the family of farmers who die or become handicapped while working in fields.
- The scheme also includes Bataidars for the first time.
- The scheme will cover farmers and their family members in the age group of 18-70 years.
- The scheme was implemented on 14 September 2019 in the state.

**MUKHYAMANTRI PARYATAN SAMVARDHAN YOJANA:**

- The scheme aims to boost tourism in the state.
- Under the scheme, one tourist point will be developed with a fund of Rs.50 lakh in each and every assembly segment of the state.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: about the scheme

_Sources:_ the Hindu.
Karnataka government’s move to amend The Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961 is based on the Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016

Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016 is proposed by the Centre’s think tank NITI Aayog to increase investments in agriculture and productivity.

**MODEL (AGRICULTURAL) LAND LEASING ACT, 2016:**

1. Legalise land leasing to promote agricultural efficiency, equity and power reduction. This will also help in much needed productivity improvement in agriculture as well as occupational mobility of the people and rapid rural change.
2. This is very important step for land reforms through which needs of landlord as well as lease holder have been taken care.
3. Through this act, the landlord can legally lease the land with mutual consent for agriculture and allied activities. In this act, it has been taken care that in any circumstances the leased holders’ claim on land will not be valid.
4. Lease holder may receive institutional loan, insurance and disaster relief so that he may invest more and more in agriculture.
5. Allow automatic resumption of land after the agreed lease period without requiring any minimum area of land to be left with the tenant even after termination of tenancy, as laws of some states require.
6. Incentivise tenants to make investment in land improvement and also entitle them to get back the unused value of investment at the time of termination of tenancy.
7. In order to resolve the dispute between the landlord and lease holder, the provision of “Special Land Tribunal” has been made in the Civil Court.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: how the Model (Agricultural) Land Leasing Act, 2016 will be helpful to increase investments in agriculture and productivity?

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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The Supreme Court has ordered that children excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam but whose parents/guardians/caregivers are part of the final list, should not be sent to detention camps or separated from their loved ones at any cost.

**WHAT APPLICATION STATED?**

The Supreme Court’s order is in response to an application which stated that the unreasonable manner in which children have been excluded from the NRC final list even when their parents are included is in direct contravention with constitutional as well as the legal safeguards.

**ASSAM NRC:**

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is the register containing names of Indian Citizens. The only time that an NRC was prepared was in 1951.
- After the conduct of the Census of 1951, the NRC was prepared by recording particulars of all the persons enumerated during that Census.
- The NRC in Assam is basically a list of Indian citizens living in the state. The citizens’ register sets out to identify foreign nationals in the state.
- The process to update the register began following a Supreme Court order in 2013, with the state’s nearly 33 million people having to prove that they were Indian nationals prior to 24th March, 1971.
- The updated final NRC was released on 31st August, 2019 with over 1.9 million applicants failing to make it to the list.

**RELATED CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:**

**ARTICLE 15 (1):**

Provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. However, under Article 15 (3) of the Constitution, the State is allowed to make any special provision for women and children.
ARTICLE 39(E):
The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength.

ARTICLE 39 (F):
The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

ARTICLE 45:
The state shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

ARTICLE 47:
Directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health

THE JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) ACT, 2015:

- The JJ Act, 2015 provides for strengthened provisions for both children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law.
- The State Government shall constitute for every district, one or more Child Welfare Committees for exercising the powers and discharge the duties conferred on such Committees in relation to children in need of care and protection under this Act.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: care, protection and rights of children under constitution provision

Sources: the Hindu.

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Section 2(1) (d) of the PHR Act defines Human Rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India.

NHRC issued a notice to the Rajasthan government in connection with the deaths of over 100 children at the government-run hospital in Kota, Rajasthan in December 2019.

VALUE ADDITION FOR PRELIMS:

- NHRC of India is an independent statutory body established in 1993 as per provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, later amended in 2006.

ESTABLISHMENT:

- It was established in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted for the promotion and protection of human rights in Paris (October, 1991) and endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 December, 1993.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE:

- NHRC is a multi-member body which consists of a Chairman and seven other members appointed by the President, on recommendation of high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister. Out of the seven members, three are ex-officio member.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- NHRC can only make recommendations, without the power to enforce decisions.
- NHRC does not have any mechanism of investigation. In majority cases, it asks the concerned Central and State Governments to investigate the cases of the violation of Human Rights.
- The Commission is responsible for spreading of human rights awareness amongst the masses and encouraging the efforts of all stake holders in the field of human rights literacy not only at the national level but at international level too.

DO YOU KNOW?

Section 2(1) (d) of the PHR Act defines Human Rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India.
NHRC is a unique institution because it is one of the few National Human Rights Institutes (NHRIs) in the world whose Chairperson is the former Chief Justice of the country. The world looks at NHRC of India as a role model in promoting and monitoring effective implementation of promotion and protection of human rights.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Constitution of India, human rights

**Sources:** the Hindu. https://nhrc.nic.in/about-us/vision-and-mission

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**WORLD DAY OF WAR ORPHANS**

**CONTEXT:**

The World Day of War Orphans was celebrated on 6 January 2020. The day is observed every year. The day enables the global Communities to recognize the plight of a, particularly vulnerable group.

**AIM:**

- The day aims to address the war orphans as it has become a growing worldwide humanitarian and social crisis. The day ensures to voice out the predicament of war orphans.
- It highlights those children growing up in orphanage experience emotional, social and physical handicaps.

**WAR ORPHANS:**

- The World Day of War Orphans was initiated by the French organization, SOS Enfants en Detresses.
- UNICEF estimated that there are nearly 9,00,000 children in the Northeast, all of whom have been seriously affected by the war, either through a lack of education, food, shelter or a direct injury.
- In the developed countries orphans are relatively less in number but in countries that have been and are subjected to wars and great epidemics such as AIDS, there are significant numbers of orphans.
An estimate said that World War II created millions of orphans in Europe, with 300,000 orphans in Poland and 200,000 in Yugoslavia alone.

The children are most often neglected. The day aims to remember these children and reminds the responsibility to work hard to diminish the shadow of war so that no one would be an orphan within the motherland.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: importance of the day

Sources: the Hindu.

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INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT ON WOMEN IN STEM

CONTEXT:

The Department of Biotechnology (Ministry of Science & Technology) organized an International Summit on Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in New Delhi in January 2020.

AIM:

To boost the participation of women in the STEM fields for the development of a scientific career

THEME:

Visualizing the Future: New Skylines

OBJECTIVES:

The objective of the summit was to showcase successful women in the field of STEM as real-world examples of women scientists, doctors and engineers as well as the rewards associated with it.
STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS)

It is a curriculum based on the idea of educating students in 4 specific disciplines— in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.

1. science,
2. technology,
3. engineering
4. mathematics

SIGNIFICANCE:

- A robust STEM education creates critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and next-generation innovators.
- India is one of the countries that produce the highest number of scientists and engineers; the growth of STEM has picked up significantly over the last few years.
- According to the National Science Foundation, it is predicted that 80% of the jobs created in the next decade will require some form of math and science skills.
- Despite having the top-quality talent, the exam-focused education model of India has limited students when it comes to innovation, problem-solving and creativity. This is where the STEM players come in to fill this gap.
- Under Article 51A of the Constitution of India it is a duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: value of stem education

Sources: the Hindu.
WHAT IS NAGOBA JATARA?

- Nagoba Jatara is a tribal festival held in Keslapur village, Indervelli Mandal Adilabad district, Telangana, thus the festival also known as Keslapur jatara.
- It is a huge religious and cultural event of the Boigutta branch of Mesram clan of the aboriginal Raj Gond and Pardhan tribes.
- During the festival, the maha puja of serpent god Nagoba is held.
- It is the second biggest tribal carnival and celebrated by Mesaram clan of Gond tribes for 10 days.
- Tribal people from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Mesram clan offer prayers at the festival.
- It's Starts in pushya masam, of Hindu lunar month.
- A ceremony of 'bheting' is it's integral part where the new brides are introduced to the clan god during first jatra after their marriage.

OVERVIEW

Observed by: Tribal people or Scheduled Tribes
Type: Hindu, Tribal
Celebrations: 10 days
Observances: Offering to the Goddess
Begins: January
Date: Annual – February

NAGOBA JATARA CELEBRATIONS:

- Rituals performed at Keslapur Nagoba Jatara begin in the morning, the Mesram elders will place the sacred ‘jhari’, a 1,400-year-old water container before performing it’s puja.
- The group of Gond and Pradhan elders who had fetched holy water with pots from Hastina Madugu of river Godavari in Jannaram Mandal was given a traditional welcome under the old banyan tree.
- Before the start of the pujas, the Gonds continue to ‘purify’ the temple with Ganga Jal or water from the Godavari drawn at a spot called ‘Hastina Madugu’ where Nagoba is believed to have quenched his thirst after partaking the ‘naivedyam’.
- The event also includes a ceremony called ‘bheting’, which incorporates new brides into the clan. The Raj Gond Adivasis of Adilabad follow an elaborate ritual called Bheting, one of their many regalistic ceremonies, through which new daughters in law are formally introduced to the clan. All those who are married into the clan during the last year need to ‘meet’ clan deities through Bheting so that they become eligible to enter the deity’s temple.
The women clad in white saris are the Bheti Koriad or daughters in law to be introduced to goddess Jangubai and belong to the eight clans which have Jangubai as the clan deity.

The naivedyam carried in the bamboo baskets is made of freshly harvested food grains. The bamboo denotes the connection of the Gonds with the jungles while the naivedyam offering is a matter of thanksgiving for the crop harvested.

Adivasi celebrates with music and more than 15 types of dances.

The Gusadi Dance performance by dancers from the Gond tribe is a major special attraction of the event.

Gonds pilgrims and priests will play traditional folk music at the entrance of the Jangubai cave temple located in the hilly forest of Kota-Parandoli gram panchayat in Kerameri Revenue Mandal.

Later Gond women carry on with their daily grind, including grinding grain, with a smile on their face.

The women in the given group coming on pilgrimage to Jangubai caves prepare food at the spot, a small shed having been earmarked for the purpose.

In the night, the Gonds performed the Mahapuja of Nagoba, also known as Persa Pen or great god, which marks the actual beginning of the annual tribal fair.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: the celebration of Nagoba Jatara

Sources: the Hindu.

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**INDIA COMMENCES THE WORLD’S LARGEST EVER VACCINATION PROGRAM TO CONTROL FMD**

**CONTEXT:**

The union Government launched a new scheme National Animal Disease Control Programme for FMD and Brucellosis by vaccinating 100% cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, and pig population for FMD and 100% bovine female calves of 4-8
months of age for brucellosis to prevent loss of Rs. 50,000 crores. This programme combined with providing unique PashuAadhar to 535 million animals.

**FINANCIAL OUTLAY:**

Rs. 13,343.00 crore

**DURATION:**

Five years (2019-20 to 2023-24)

**NATIONWIDE ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION PROGRAMME (NAIP):**

The Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme (N.A.I.P) which was recently launched by PM covering 600 chosen districts including aspirational districts as identified by NITI Aayog.

- The NAIP is a campaign mode genetic upgradation program covering all breeds of bovines to enhance the milk production using low cost breeding technology.
- It aims for improving genetic merit of milch animals with high quality seed.
- The gestation period for getting the benefits from the AI bovine is approximately 3 years.

**A MISSION MODE PROJECT**

- The aim of the program is to inseminate over 1 crore bovines in 6 months.
- The rate of Artificial Insemination is continuously increasing and has reached an average of 25,000 animals per day so far.
- 8 Lakh Artificial Inseminations has been performed under this programme benefitting more than 3.7 lakh farmers as on 29th November, 2019.

**PASHU AADHAAR**

- The NAIP also aims to ear-tag them with ‘Pashu Aadhaar’ which is a unique identification provided to the animals.
- This will enable the Government to identify and track the animals uniquely with all details such as the breed, age, gender and owner details.
- Every cow and buffalo under AI will be tagged and can be tracked through the Information Network on Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH) Database.

**QUALITY MILK PROGRAMME: STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR QUALITY & CLEAN MILK PRODUCTION**
SPONSORED BY:

Center govt. of India as on 31.03.2013

BACKGROUND:

This scheme was started during the year 2003-04 (Oct 2003) with a total outlay of Rs 30.00 crore for the Tenth Five year Plan. It is being continued during the 11th Five year Plan as merged scheme together with ‘Intensive Dairy Development Programme’(IDDP) with a total plan outlay of Rs 225.00 Crore (IDDP&CMP) and budget provision of Rs 30.00 Crore for CMP during 2013-14.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SCHEME

- Creation of necessary infrastructure for production of quality milk at the farmers level up to the points of consumption
- Improvement of milking procedure at the farmers level
- Training and Strengthening of infrastructure to create mass awareness about importance of clean milk production.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

It is being implemented through the State Government by District Cooperative Milk Union/ State Level Milk Federation.

TARGET GROUP/BENEFICIARIES

Farmer members of Primary Dairy Co-operative Societies are targeted for assistance under the scheme through training programmes to create awareness regarding importance of clean milk production.

Evaluation, impact study and modifications made by the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC):

The evaluation and impact study of strengthening infrastructure for quality & clean milk production (CMP) was conducted by an independent evaluation agency. Based on its suggestions, modifications have been made by the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) for extending the scope of the scheme besides including new components, which is being implemented from 1st April, 2011. Administrative approval of the scheme for 2013-14 has been issued.

PATTERN OF FUNDING UNDER THE SCHEME:

75% grant-in-aid for all components by Government of India to profit making unions (accumulated project above one crore as on 31st March of previous year). 100% grant-in-aid for all milk unions.

ACHIEVEMENT:
Since inception, 169 projects for 22 states and 01 UT covering 241 districts with a total cost of Rs 313.12 crore with a central share of Rs 258.02 crore have been approved up to 31.03.2013 under the scheme. So far under this scheme 6.91 lakh farmers have been trained and 2181 numbers of Bulk milk coolers with a total chilling capacity of 44,51,800 litre per day have been installed and 1515 existing laboratories have been strengthened.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: NAIP AND QUALITY MILK PROGRAMME, SCHEMES OFFERS BY GOVT. OF INDIA TO STRENGTHENING PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**ANDHRA PRADESH GOVERNMENT LAUNCHED THE DR. YSR AAROGYASRI SCHEME**

**CONTEXT:**

Andhra Pradesh state government launched the Dr. YSR Aarogyasri scheme. It was inaugurated by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at Eluru in West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. This is the second welfare scheme that the government has launched in 2020.

**AIM:**

The scheme aims to provide free medical treatment to the poor. The services will be extended to each district from April 2020 onwards.

**DR. YSR AAROGYASRI SCHEME:**

- YSR Aarogyasri scheme will benefit people having an annual income of up to Rs.5 lakh and the eligible people will be given Aarogyasri cards.
- The scheme benefits the people whose treatment amount crosses Rs.1,000.
- Under the scheme, the government will distribute 1.42 crores cards with QR codes across the state.
- Free treatment will be given to cancer patients from February 2020 onwards.
- The scheme provides one Asha worker for every 350 houses. 150 super-specialty hospitals located in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai will also be included in the Aarogyasri network.
- The patients will be provided financial aid of Rs.225 per day, to a maximum of Rs.5000 per month, during the recovery or resting period after the operation.
- Around 510 medicines will be made available in government hospitals.
- Medicines with the World Health Organization (WHO) standards will be distributed from April 2020.
- The state government has also announced that it is to provide pensions ranging from Rs.3,000 to Rs.10,000 to patients depending upon their disease
- The salaries of the sanitation employees in hospitals will be increased from Rs.8,000 to Rs.16,000.
- Nearly 1056 ambulances will be made available by March and vacant posts of doctors and nurses will be filled by the end of May.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** benefits of the scheme

**Sources:** the Hindu. http://www.ysaarogyasri.ap.gov.in/

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**“AMMA VODI SCHEME”**

**CONTEXT:**

The Andhra Pradesh State government launched the Amma Vodi scheme. It was launched by the Andhra Pradesh chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. “Amma Vodi” can be translated as ‘mother’s lap’ in Telugu. The scheme will be implemented on 26 January 2020.

**AIM:**
Amma Vodi scheme aims to support low-income families in educating their children.
“AMMA VODI SCHEME”:

- Under the scheme, mothers and guardians of school-going children from lower-income groups will receive financial assistance of Rs.15,000 annually.
- The scheme will be available to ration cardholders, who fall under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) and clear a few more criteria related to their economic status.
- The state government has allocated a budget of around Rs.6,455 crore for 2019-20 under the scheme. The fund nearly 20% of the total education budget of Rs.32,618 crore of the state.
- The state government has also taken funds from other departments to support the scheme.
- It has released the final list of all the beneficiaries of the scheme.
- The applicants who have registered for this scheme can check the Jaganna Amma Vodi eligibility list now on the official website of the AP government.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: benefits of the Amma Vodi scheme

Sources: the Hindu.

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**ASER REPORT SHOWED THE LEARNING STATUS OF UTTAR PRADESH STUDENTS**

**CONTEXT:**

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019 has been published by education non-profit Pratham.

**WHAT IS ASER AND WHY IT MATTERS:**

This is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable estimates of children’s enrolment and basic learning levels for each district and state in India.
ASER has been conducted every year since 2005 in all rural districts of India.

- It is the largest citizen-led survey in India.
- It is also the only annual source of information on children’s learning outcomes available in India today.
- Unlike most other large-scale learning assessments, ASER is a household-based rather than school-based survey. This design enables all children to be included – those who have never been to school or have dropped out, as well as those who are in government schools, private schools, religious schools or anywhere else.

HOW THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED?

- The survey was conducted in 26 districts across 24 states in India, covering a total of 1,514 villages, 30,425 households, and 36,930 children in the age group of 4-8 years.
- The sampled children’s enrolment status in pre-school or school was collected. Children did a variety of cognitive, early language, and early numeracy tasks; and activities to assess the children’s social and emotional development were also undertaken.
- All tasks were done one-on-one with children in their homes.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Only 16% of children in Class 1 in 26 surveyed rural districts can read text at the prescribed level, while almost 40% cannot even recognise letters.
- Only 41% of these children could recognise two digit numbers.
- Many Indian parents choose government schools for girls in the age group of 4 to 8 years while they favour private schools for boys.
- At least 25% of school children in the four-eight age group do not have age-appropriate cognitive and numeracy skills, making for a massive learning deficit at a very early stage.
- More than 90% of children in the 4-8 age group are enrolled in some type of educational institution. This proportion increases with age, from 91.3% of all 4-year-olds to 99.5% of all 8-year-olds in sampled districts.
- Children from less advantaged homes are disproportionately affected. Although almost half of all 4-year-olds and more than a quarter of all 5-year-olds are enrolled in anganwadis, these children have far lower levels of cognitive skill and foundational ability than their counterparts in private LKG/UKG classes.
- Overall, 41.7% of children in class I are of the RTE-mandated age.
- Children’s skills and abilities improve in each subsequent class. As per the report, “children’s ability to read standard I level text improves from 16.2% of children in standard I to 50.8% children in standard III. This means that half of all children in standard III are already at least two years behind where the curriculum expects them to be.”

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: KEY FINDINGS of the report
National Immunization Day observed on 19 January 2020. The day aimed to maintain the NO POLIO status of the country. On this day, a nationwide programme to administer polio drops to children below 5 years was organized throughout the country.

AIM:

The Pulse Polio programme ensures to protect children from polio disease and aims to eliminate poliomyelitis in India.

PULSE POLIO PROGRAMME 2020:

- President Ram Nath Kovind launched the Pulse Polio Programme 2020 and administered Polio drops to children below the age of 5 at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
- Two nationwide mass polio vaccination campaigns and two to three sub-national campaigns are held every year.
- Under the Pulse Polio Programme 2020, polio drops were administered to children less than five years of age.
- Approximately 17.4 crore children of less than five years across the country were being administered polio drops.
- In Puducherry, Chief Minister Narayanasamy launched the Intensified Pulse Polio Immunization (IPPI) programme on 20 January 2020. Around 82,000 children were administered polio drops through 452 centres in Puducherry.
- The immunization programme will be held for the next two days to cover all the left out children by the door to door visit.

POLIO FREE INDIA:
Pulse Polio Immunization programme launched in 1995 in India.
Vellore of Tamil Nadu became the first Indian town to become 100% polio-free through the pulse strategy, and the rest of India adopted the strategy in 1995.
India was declared polio-free country on 27 March 2014.
The last reported cases of polio in India were in West Bengal and Gujarat on 13 January 2011.

**POLIO:**

- Polio, also known as poliomyelitis, is a highly contagious viral disease caused by Poliovirus.
- It attacks the nervous system.
- Children less than 5 years are more likely to contract the virus than any other group.
- Poliovirus spreads by food or water containing human faeces and less commonly from infected saliva.
- Vaccination is provided to all children under the age of five years to fight polio.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of the immunization day

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE**

**CONTEXT:**

The government is planning for the nationwide rollout of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) under Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- According to government estimates, a countrywide rollout of PCV would require about 50% of the budget of UIP (minus shared costs such as staff salary, establishment costs, etc).
• PCV is the costliest vaccine in the UIP basket that currently covers only about 50% of the 26 million birth cohort in Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
• PCV was first brought into the UIP basket in 2017 but cost concerns have been among the reasons for its still-partial rollout.
• The cost challenge for India’s immunisation programme is set to mount further as Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) is set to withdraw its support for India from 2022.
• GAVI is an international organisation which brings together public and private sectors to create equal access to vaccines for children.

PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE:

- Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) prevents pneumococcal disease.
- The vaccine is a mix of several bacteria of the pneumococci family, which are known to cause pneumonia — hence ‘conjugate’, is included in the name of the vaccine.
- Conjugate vaccines are made using a combination of two different components.

PNEUMOCOCCAL DISEASE:

- Pneumococcal disease refers to any illness caused by pneumococcal bacteria.
- Symptoms: These bacteria can cause many types of illnesses, including pneumonia, which is an infection of the lungs. Pneumococcal bacteria are one of the most common causes of pneumonia.
- Vulnerable Population: Anyone can get pneumococcal disease, but children under 2 years of age, people with certain medical conditions, adults 65 years or older, and cigarette smokers are at the highest risk.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: use of PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE against pneumococcal bacteria

Sources: the Hindu.
CONTEXT:

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has approached the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) to take notice of the alleged corruption in the implementation of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

The alleged acts of corruption in the implementation of RUSA were discovered in July, 2019 after Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) director pointed out serious irregularities in the utilisation of funds.

RASHTRIYA UCHCHATAR SHIKSHA ABHIYAN:

- RUSA is the centrally sponsored scheme launched in October 2013 that aims at providing strategic funding to higher education institutions throughout the country.
- The scheme is being operated in mission mode for funding state universities and colleges to achieve the aims of equity, access and excellence.
- Funding is provided by the central ministry through the State governments and Union Territories (UTs), which in coordination with the Central Project Appraisal Board monitors the academic, administrative and financial advancements taken under the scheme.
- Since 2016-17, the government has spent an average of Rs 1,500 crore every year on RUSA.

OBJECTIVES:

- Improve the overall quality of state institutions by conforming to the prescribed norms and standards.
- Adoption of accreditation (certification of competency) as a mandatory quality assurance framework.
- Promoting autonomy in state universities and improving governance in institutions.
- Ensure reforms in the affiliation, academic and examination system.
- Ensure adequate availability of quality faculty in all higher educational institutions and ensure capacity building at all levels of employment.
- Create an enabling atmosphere for research in the higher education system.
- Correct regional imbalances in access to higher education by setting up institutions in unserved and underserved areas.
- Improve equity in higher education by providing adequate opportunities to the disadvantaged.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: OBJECTIVES of RASHTRIYA UCHCHATAR SHIKSHA ABHIYAN
The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

When The Bill will be introduced?

In the ensuing session of the Parliament

SALIENT FEATURES OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:

- Proposing requirement for opinion of one provider for termination of pregnancy, up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion of two providers for termination of pregnancy of 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- Enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women which will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules and would include ‘vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc.
- Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by Medical Board. The composition, functions and other details of Medical Board to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act.
- Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.

WHY NEED AMENDMENT?
The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is for expanding access of women to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian or social grounds.

The proposed amendments include substitution of certain sub-sections, insertion of certain new clauses under some sections in the existing Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, with a view to increase upper gestation limit for termination of pregnancy under certain conditions and to strengthen access to comprehensive abortion care, under strict conditions, without compromising service and quality of safe abortion.

The proposed increase in gestational age will ensure dignity, autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate pregnancy.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: why need amendment in the medical termination of pregnancy (amendment) bill?

**Sources:** pib

**AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HOMOEOPATHY BILL, 2019**

**CONTEXT:**

Recently, the Union Cabinet has given its approval to the amendments in the National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill, 2019.

**ABOUT THE DRAFT BILL:**

- The draft Bill seeks to set up the National Commission for Homoeopathy and replace the Central Council of Homoeopathy by amending the Homoeopathy Central Council (HCC) Act, 1973.
- Currently, the Bill is pending in Rajya Sabha.
THE AMENDMENTS:

- Ensure necessary regulatory reforms in the field of Homoeopathy education.
- Enable transparency and accountability for protecting the interest of the general public.
- Promote the availability of affordable healthcare services in all parts of the country.

HOMOEOPATHY CENTRAL COUNCIL (HCC) ACT, 1973:

- It was enacted for the constitution of a Central Council of Homoeopathy for the regulation of education and practice of Homoeopathy, for maintenance of Central Register of Homoeopathy and for related matters.
- This Act has been modelled on the pattern of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956.
- The broad functions, constitution, regulation-making powers are identical to those of the Medical Council of India.
- The Act provides a base for the growth of medical education and practice in Homoeopathy but there were some problems in the functioning of the Council.
- It had resulted in harmful effects on medical education and on quality of Homoeopathy healthcare services.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: why need amendment in the HOMOEOPATHY CENTRAL COUNCIL (HCC) ACT, 1973?

Sources: pib

CORONAVIRUS: WHO DECLARES GLOBAL EMERGENCY

CONTEXT:

World Health Organisation (WHO) declares the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) as the outbreak continues to spread outside Wuhan, China, the epicenter of the virus.
IN NEWS:

- The decision taken in the second consecutive meeting of the Emergency Committee convened by the WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.
- The meeting held under the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) regarding the outbreak of coronavirus in China with exportations to other countries.
- Ministry of Health of China reported on the current situation and the public health measures taken. According to WHO, there are now 7711 confirmed and 12167 suspected cases throughout the country.
- Of the confirmed cases, 1370 are severe, and 170 people have died.
- One hundred twenty-four people have recovered and discharged from the hospital.
- India already requested China for permission to operate two flights to bring back its nationals from worst-affected central Hubei province.

Figure 18 WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, centre, speaking at the press conference following a emergency committee discussion on the coronavirus on January 31, 2020.

NO TRAVEL OR TRADE RESTRICTIONS REQUIRED:

The WHO’s Emergency Committee, an advisory body of international experts, said in a statement that evidence had shown that restricting movement of people and goods during public health emergencies “may be ineffective and may divert resources from other interventions”.

“Further, restrictions may interrupt needed aid and technical support, may disrupt businesses, and may have negative effects on the economies of countries affected by the emergencies,” the committee said.

WHO-DISEASES
The WHO has called a public health emergency of international concern only five times since the relevant legislation took effect — for swine flu, polio, Zika and twice for Ebola outbreaks in Africa.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: a public health emergency of international concern

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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## NPCI LAUNCHED THE VAJRA PLATFORM FOR A FAST AND SECURE PLATFORM

**CONTEXT:**

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched the Vajra Platform to make payments fast and secure. The platform is based on blockchain technology.

**AIM:**

The main objective of the Vajra Platform is to provide automated clearing and settlement of payments and drastically reduce the need for manual reconciliation.

**FEATURES:**

- Vajra Platform uses distributed ledger technology (DLT)
- The platform uses a permissions model in order to ensure that only approved parties are a part of the network
- Payment companies can apply and register to be a part of the network
- After getting the approval, the companies can deploy the platform using an application programming interface (API) that will be provided by NPCI.
BENEFITS:

♦ Near real-time clearing and settlement of transactions
♦ Minimal reconciliation of transactions
♦ Improved security and reduced operational and financial risks
♦ Legitimate audit trail as DLT is incorruptible
♦ Vajra Platform will be used for Aadhaar authentication by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: BENEFITS of the Vajra Platform

Sources: the Hindu.

GDP GROWTH RATE FOR 2019-20
EXPECTED TO BE 5% (PREVIOUS FISCAL 6.8%)

CONTEXT:

GDP decline in 2019-20 s attributed to slowdown in Manufacturing (2%) and Construction sector (3.2%).

HIGHLIGHTS:

▪ The first advance estimates of the GDP growth for FY20 are being pegged at 5 per cent. The GVA estimate is being put at 4.9 per cent.
▪ The numbers are released at a time when the Indian economy has seen a sharp slowdown in growth, surprising policy-makers.
▪ The Indian economy grew at a six-year low of 5 per cent and 4.5 per cent, respectively, in the quarters ending June and September.
MAIN REASONS

The decline has been mainly on account of deceleration in manufacturing sector growth, which is expected to come down to 2 per cent in 2019-20 from 6.2 per cent in the year-ago fiscal.

According to the government data, the sectors which registered growth rate of over 4.9 percent are, ‘electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services’, ‘trade, hotels, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting’, ‘financial, real estate and professional services’ and ‘public administration, defence and other services’ at 5.4 percent, 5.9 percent, 6.4 percent, 9.1 percent respectively.

The sectors which registered growth rate below 3 percent are ‘agriculture, forestry and fishing’, ‘mining and quarrying’, ‘manufacturing’ and ‘construction’ is estimated to be 2.8 percent, 1.5 percent, 2.0 percent and 3.2 percent respectively.

MANUFACTURING

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from ‘Manufacturing’ sector is estimated to grow by 2.0 percent as compared to growth of 6.9 percent in 2018-19.
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' sector is estimated to grow by 2.8 percent as compared to growth of 2.9 percent in 2018-19.

MINING AND QUARRYING

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from ‘Mining and Quarrying’ sector is estimated to grow by 1.5 percent as compared to growth of 1.3 percent in 2018-19.
ELECTRICITY, GAS, WATER SUPPLY AND OTHER UTILITY SERVICES

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from ‘Electricity, Gas, Water Supply and Other Utility Services’ sector is expected to grow by 5.4 percent as compared to growth of 7.0 percent in 2018-19.

CONSTRUCTION

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from ‘Construction’ sector is expected to grow by 3.2 percent as compared to growth of 8.7 percent in 2018-19.
Trade, Hotels and Transport & Communication and Services related to Broadcasting

The estimated growth in GVA for the Trade, Hotels, Transport and Communication and Services related to Broadcasting services during 2019-20 is placed at 5.9 percent as against growth of 6.9 percent in the previous year.

Financial, Real Estate and Professional Services

The estimated growth in GVA for this sector during 2019-20 is placed at 6.4 percent as compared to growth of 7.4 percent in 2018-19.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE AND OTHER SERVICES

GVA at Basic Prices for 2019-20 from this sector is expected to grow by 9.1 percent as compared to growth of 8.6 percent in 2018-19.
A Prasanna, the chief economist at I-Sec PD, said, "Our estimate was 5.1 percent. However, 5 percent is within the range of estimates one would have expected. Obviously, they are working with a limited set of data, so this should just be considered as the first guess for this year."

**WHAT IS GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)?**

Gross Domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period.

**WHAT IS GROSS VALUE ADDITION (GVA)?**

Gross value Addition (GVA) is the sum of a country’s GDP and net of subsidies and taxes in the economy (GVA=GDP+ Subsidies on Products−Taxes on Products).

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** expected grow and decline in GDP and GVA for the year 2019-2020

**Sources:** the Hindu.
GLOBAL INVESTMENT TREND MONITOR REPORT

CONTEXT:

The Global Investment Trend Monitor report, compiled by United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), has been released.

KEY FINDINGS:

INDIA-SPECIFIC:

India was among the top 10 recipients of Foreign Direct Investment in 2019, attracting $49 billion in inflows, a 16 per cent increase from the previous year.

GLOBAL SCENARIO:

The global foreign direct investment remained flat in 2019 at $1.39 trillion, a one per cent decline from a revised $1.41 trillion in 2018.

REASONS:

- This is against the backdrop of weaker macroeconomic performance and policy uncertainty for investors, including trade tensions.
- Developing economies continue to absorb more than half of global FDI flows.
- South Asia recorded a 10 per cent increase in FDI to $60 billion and this growth was driven by India, with a 16 per cent increase in inflows to an estimated $49 billion.
- The FDI flows to developed countries remained at a historically low level, decreasing by a further six per cent to an estimated $643 billion.
- There was zero-growth of flows to United States, which received $251 billion FDI in 2019, as compared to $254 billion in 2018, the report said.
- Despite this, the United States remained the largest recipient of FDI, followed by China with flows of $140 billion and Singapore with $110 billion.
- The FDI in the UK was down six per cent as Brexit unfolded.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: the grow and decline in Global investment trend
Published in the journal JGR Solid Earth, researchers claim that tiny particles of iron drift down from Earth’s molten outer core and form up to 200-mile-thick piles of iron “snow” around the inner core.

**IN NEWS:**

- The iron-snow falls from the molten outer core and piles up in the inner core of the Earth creating stacks that are up to 320 km thick.
- This finding was unearthed after analyzing signals from seismic waves as they pass through the Earth. Seismic Waves are vibrations generated by an earthquake, explosion, or similar energetic source and that propagate within the Earth or along its surface.
- The seismic waves moved much slower than expected when they passed through the base of the outer core.
- However, they moved faster than estimates as they passed through the eastern hemisphere of the top inner core.
- The scientists found out that slurry-like (semi-liquid) composition of the snow pack slows the seismic waves. The variation in snow pile size — thinner in the eastern hemisphere and thicker in the western — affected the speed of the waves.
- Earlier studies had also pointed about the existence of slurry layer exists between the inner and outer core.
- The same is supported by the latest data from experiments on core-like materials. The scientists have found that crystallisation is possible and that about 15% of the lowermost outer core could be made of iron-based crystals (snow).
These crystals could eventually fall down the liquid outer core and settle on top of the solid inner core.

**EARTH’S INTERNAL STRUCTURE:**

The internal structure of the Earth is layered in spherical shells: an outer silicate solid crust, a highly viscous asthenosphere and mantle, a liquid outer core that is much less viscous than the mantle, and a solid inner core.

The earth is made up of three different layers: the crust, the mantle and the core.

**THE CRUST:**

- This is the outside layer of the earth and is made of solid rock, mostly basalt and granite.
- There are two types of crust; oceanic and continental. Oceanic crust is denser and thinner and mainly composed of basalt. It is also known as Sima (most abundant minerals being silicate and magnesium).
- Continental crust is less dense, thicker, and mainly composed of granite. It is also called as Sial (most abundant minerals being silicate and aluminium).
The crust and the upper part of the mantle make up the lithosphere, which is broken into plates, both large and small.

THE MANTLE:

- The portion of the interior beyond the crust is called the mantle. The mantle extends from Moho's discontinuity (boundary between the crust and mantle) to a depth of 2,900 km.
- The crust and the uppermost part of the mantle are called lithosphere. Its thickness ranges from 10-200 km.
- The upper portion of the mantle is called asthenosphere which is the main source of magma that finds its way to the surface during volcanic eruptions.
- The lower mantle extends beyond the asthenosphere. It is in solid state.

THE CORE:

- The mantle-core boundary (gutenberg discontinuity) is located at a depth of 2,900 km.
- The outer core is in a liquid state while the inner core is in solid state.
The core is made up of very heavy material mostly constituted by nickel and iron. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as the nife layer.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** Earth Science, Geology, Geography, and Physical Geography

**Sources:** [https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a30295874/iron-snow-earth-inner-core/](https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a30295874/iron-snow-earth-inner-core/)

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**PROJECT NETRA**

**CONTEXT:**

Indian Space Research Organisation has inked a pact with Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) to pave the way for collaboration in establishing optical telescope facilities under Project ‘NETRA’ for tracking space objects.

**WHAT IS PROJECT NETRA (NETWORK FOR SPACE OBJECT TRACKING AND ANALYSIS)?**

Under the project, the ISRO plans to put up many observational facilities: connected radars, telescopes; data processing units and a control center.

They can, among others, spot, track and catalogue objects as small as 10 cm, up to a range of 3,400 km and equal to a space orbit of around 2,000 km.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT:**

- The project will give India its own capability in space situational awareness (SSA) like the other space powers — which is used to ‘predict’ threats from debris to Indian satellites.
- NETRA’s eventual goal is to capture the GEO, or geostationary orbit, scene at 36,000 km where communication satellites operate.
- The effort would make India a part of international efforts towards tracking, warning about and mitigating space debris.
**NEED:**

Currently there are 15 functional Indian communication satellites in the geostationary orbit of 36,000 km; 13 remote sensing satellites in LEO of up to 2,000 km; and eight navigation satellites in medium earth orbits. Their protection is utmost importance for India.

**BACKGROUND:**

- Space junk is an ever-growing problem with more than 7,500 tons of redundant hardware now thought to be circling the Earth.
- Ranging from old rocket bodies and defunct spacecraft through to screws and even flecks of paint – this material poses a collision hazard to operational missions.
- The rising population of space debris increases the potential danger to all space vehicles, but especially to the International Space Station (ISS), space shuttles, satellites and other spacecraft.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**INDIA’S COMMUNICATION SATELLITE**

**GSAT-30 LAUNCHED SUCCESSFULLY**

**CONTEXT:**

India’s latest communication satellite GSAT-30 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana. The launch vehicle Ariane 5 VA-251 lifted off from Kourou Launch Base, French Guiana IST carrying India’s GSAT-30 and EUTELSAT KONNECT for Eutelsat.
HIGHLIGHTS:

- **GSAT-30** derives its heritage from ISRO’s earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series and will replace INSAT-4A in orbit.
- The satellite will provide communication services to Indian mainland and islands through Ku-band and wide coverage covering Gulf countries, a large number of Asian countries and Australia through C-band.
- GSAT-30 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, Stock-exchange, Television uplinking and Teleport Services, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications.
- The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.”

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: GSAT-30

**Sources:** the Hindu.

RAJASTHAN TO GET IT’S FIRST BIOTECHNOLOGY PARK

**CONTEXT:**

Rajasthan government will be signing a memorandum of understanding with the Centre’s Department of Biotechnology to set up its first biotechnology park and incubation center in the state.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- This will enable the State government to take up research in the field of biotechnology and provide employment to the youths.
• It would also help to promote interdisciplinary field research such as bioinformatics, biomedical engineering and nanomedicine.
• Further, it will also help to promote biotechnology on the lines of health, agriculture, industry and food which will intensify the science-based manufacturing in industrialisation.

**BIOTECHNOLOGY PARKS AND INCUBATORS:**

- The Department of Biotechnology has established Biotechnology Parks/Incubators across the country to translate research into products and services by providing the necessary infrastructure support.
- These Biotechnology Parks offer facilities to Scientists, and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for technology incubation, technology demonstration and pilot plant studies for accelerated commercial development of Biotechnology.
- The Department so far has supported 9 Biotechnology Parks in various States.
- The Department has also come up with ‘National Biotechnology Parks Scheme’
- The scheme aims to create an ecosystem to absorb the start-ups which have graduated from incubators and give them a platform for further scaling up their R&D activities in collaboration with the state government and industry.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Objectives of Biotechnology Park

**Sources:** the Hindu.
France is to train Indian flight surgeons to enable them to monitor the health of astronauts selected for the human space mission Gaganyaan.

ABOUT FLIGHT SURGEON TRAINING:

- The training will be given for two-week. It is a critical aspect of the Gaganyaan project that is aimed at sending three Indians to space by 2022.
- The flight surgeons are the Indian Air Force (IAF) doctors specializing in aviation medicines and responsible for the health of astronauts before, during and after the flight
- The surgeons will be shortlisted soon.
- Those selected surgeons will undergo two weeks of training in France.

INDIA-FRANCE RELATIONSHIP:

India and France share strengthened ties in the area of space. The two countries had signed a joint vision for space cooperation in March 2018.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: how the Gaganyan project will be helpful to strengthen the India-France relationship?

Sources: the Hindu.

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ISRO TO SEND HALF HUMANOID VYOMMITRA AS A TRIAL TO SPACE AHEAD OF GAGANYAAN MISSION

CONTEXT:
The Indian Space Agency Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) unveiled Vyommitra, a prototype of half humanoid. ISRO has decided to send Vyommitra as a trial to space before Gaganyaan which has aimed at sending astronauts to space in an orbital spacecraft.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Vyommitra will be sent ahead of the first unmanned mission under Gaganyaan. It has been designed in a way that it will simulate most of the human body functions. The half humanoid has no legs. It will try to simulate a human and report back to ISRO.

SPACE ASTRONAUTS TRAINING:

- ISRO has selected 4 Indian astronauts for India’s first human space mission. The training of the Indian astronauts will take place in Russia.
- The astronauts shortlisted for the mission will receive training for 11 months. The 4 selected astronauts for the mission are male candidates. Their identity has not been revealed yet.
- The astronauts will receive module-specific training in India.
- They will be trained in crew and service modules designed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), learn to operate it, work around it and do simulations.
- Bahubali GSLV Mark-III, India’s heaviest launch vehicle, is expected to carry astronauts to space.
- The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Narendra Modi approved Rs.10,000 crores for the Gaganyaan project.
- Gaganyaan is the first human space mission that is conceived and developed in India.
WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Indian space mission

Sources: the Hindu.

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ACCRETION BURST EVENT

CONTEXT:

Astronomers have recently found that the funnelling of matter into a forming star happens at different rates over time, as per the rotating disc of gas and dust theory.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sometimes the forming star swallows up a huge amount of matter, resulting in a burst of activities in the massive star.
- This is called an accretion burst event.

NEED FOR THESE UNDERSTANDINGS:

- Astronomers don’t yet fully understand how massive stars in our galaxy are formed. So far, observations have only yielded some pieces of the puzzle.
- This is because nearly all the known massive stars in our galaxy are located very far away from our solar system. They also form in close proximity to other massive stars, making it difficult to study the environment where they take shape.

MASER MONITORING ORGANISATION (M2O):

- After the first detection of an accretion burst, in 2016, astronomers from around the world agreed in 2017 to coordinate their efforts to observe more.
- This led to the formation of the Maser Monitoring Organisation (M2O).
- The primary goal of M2O is to make the astronomy community aware of the importance of Maser monitoring. It is also to increase the number of sources monitored, the number of transitions monitored at, and increase cadence of observation.
It is incredibly rare: only three such events have been observed, out of all the billions of massive stars in the Milky Way.

WHAT IS A MASER?

- A maser is the microwave (radio frequency) equivalent of laser.
- The word stands for “microwave amplification by stimulated emission of radiation”.
- Masers are observed using radio telescopes and most of them are observed at centimetre wavelength: they are very compact.
- A maser flare can be a sign of an extraordinary event such as the formation of a star.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Observation of MASER, the formation of a star

Sources: the Hindu.

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SPITZER TELESCOPE

CONTEXT:

Spitzer space telescope of NASA will be retired on January 30, 2020. Spitzer is going to shut down permanently after about 16 years of exploring the cosmos in infrared light.

BACKGROUND:

Launched into solar orbit on August 25, 2003, Spitzer was initially scheduled for a minimum 2.5-year primary mission. But the space telescope has lasted far beyond its expected lifetime.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE SPITZER SPACE TELESCOPE AFTER IT IS RETIRED:

- The telescope has a very particular orbit, trailing about 158 million miles behind the Earth to keep it away from interfering heat.
In about 53 years, Spitzer’s orbit will take it past our planet. But, once the telescope flies by Spaceship Earth, Spitzer will drift off in the opposite direction into the emptiness of space.

**KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:**

1. Spitzer’s discoveries extend from our own planetary backyard, to planets around other stars, to the far reaches of the universe.
2. Spitzer has logged over 106,000 hours of observation time in the past 15 years. It has illuminated some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn, and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes.
3. The telescope also assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1, among other accomplishments.

**ABOUT SPITZER:**

- NASA’s Spitzer Space Telescope was launched in 2003 to study the universe in the infrared.
- It is the last mission of the NASA Great Observatories program, which saw four specialized telescopes (including the Hubble Space Telescope) launched between 1990 and 2003.
- The goal of the Great Observatories is to observe the universe in distinct wavelengths of light.
- The other observatories in Greta Observatories Program looked at visible light (Hubble, still operational), gamma-rays (Compton Gamma-Ray Observatory, no longer operational) and X-rays (the Chandra X-Ray Observatory, still operational).

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: role and achievements of THE SPITZER SPACE

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**CHINA OPERATIONALISED THE WORLD’S LARGEST RADIO TELESCOPE, FAST**

**CONTEXT:**
China operationalized the world’s largest radio telescope in southwest China’s Guiyang city, the capital of Guizhou province. The FAST telescope was launched after three years of trial operation.

**FAST TELESCOPE:**

- The Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST) telescope is with a diameter of half-a-kilometer.
- It is dubbed as China Sky Eye.
- The device is expected to make major scientific discoveries.
- FAST is 2.5 times as sensitive as the second-largest telescope in the world.
- It is capable of receiving a maximum of 38 gigabytes (GB) of information per second.
- The receiving area of the telescope is around 30 football fields.
- The cost of the telescope is around the US $170 million.
- The telescope includes a 5 km radius as the core zone, 5 km to 10 km radius as the intermediate zone and a peripheral zone that covers 10 km to 30 km in radius.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: functions and characteristics of FAST TELESCOPE

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE**

**CONTEXT:**

Recently, the Government has released a report of the task force on National Infrastructure Pipeline for 2019-2025.
National Infrastructure Pipeline is the investment plan unveiled by the Central Government for enhancing infrastructure in identified sectors for a period of five years from 2020-25.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Rs 102 lakh crore ($1.4 trillion) National Infrastructure Pipeline to spend in the infrastructure sector over a five-year period (2020-25).

The plan will help India to reach $5 trillion economy by 2025.

FUNDING OF THE SCHEME

- The funding of the National Infrastructure Pipeline will be jointly made by the Centre, states and the private sector in the proportion of 39:39:22 (39 % each by the centre and states and 22% by the private sector).
- The infrastructure plan was proposed by the Taskforce on National Infrastructure Pipeline for 2019-2025. Report of the Task Force was also published by the FM.
- The infrastructure investment plan was initiated after PM Modi’s Independence Day speech where he proposed Rs 100 lakh crore investment in infrastructure over the next five years. Following the PM’s vision, the task force was constituted, and it identified different sectors and allocation for Rs 102 lakh crore worth of projects. Another Rs 3 lakh crore projects will be added.

INFRASTRUCTURE PIPLELINE-SIGNIFICANCE

- For the next five years (2020-25), $1.4 trillion (Rs 102 lakh crores) will be invested.
- A task force was appointed on National Infrastructure Pipeline and it recommended Rs 102 lakh crore investments till 2025 besides proposing a vision plan.
- Infrastructure investment has a special role during slowdown as it generally helps to revive economic activities.

UTILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS TO FIGHT SLOWDOWN

- Investment in infrastructure is a good strategy to overcome the current slowdown. Governments usually unveil mega infrastructure projects to reactivate the economy when it falls in slowdown. The policy of high government spending in infrastructure energises demand in other sectors and led to more fund flows to various sectors besides creating valuable assets.
- It is estimated that India should invest $4.5 trillion in infrastructure by 2030 to support faster growth. The National infrastructure Pipeline is a part of that attempt to invest $4.5 trillion.
- Investment in major sectors under National Infrastructure Pipeline (2020-25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major heads/Ministry/</th>
<th>Amount to be invested</th>
<th>Percentage share of the</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

www.iasupsc.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>in Rs crores</th>
<th>sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>24,54,249</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>19,63,943</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>13,68,523</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
<td>1,00,923</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airports</td>
<td>1,43,398</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>16,29,012</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>3,20,498</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>7,72,678</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Infrastructure</td>
<td>7,72,765</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Food Processing Infrastructure</td>
<td>60,553</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Infrastructure</td>
<td>3,56,701</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Infrastructure</td>
<td>3,07,462</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (Rs Crore)</td>
<td>1,02,50,704</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VISION, STRATEGY OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE SET BY THE TASK FORCE**

- The Task Force on National Infrastructure Pipeline that chaired by Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance (MoF) submitted a detailed report on the infrastructure plan.
Main function of the task force was to identify technically feasible and financially/economically viable infrastructure projects that can be initiated in fiscals 2020 to 2025. The task force observed that by 2030, around 42% of India’s population would be urbanised from the current 31%. Hence, urban infrastructure is also to be modernised.

COMPONENTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE VISION 2025

(a) Affordable and clean energy:
- Ensuring 24×7 power availability;
- Reduce pollution through green and clean renewable energy and environment friendly fuel for transportation.

(b) Digital Services:
- Providing access for all.
- 100% population coverage for telecom and high-quality broadband services for socio-economic empowerment of every citizen;
- Digital payments and e governance Infrastructure for delivery of banking and public services

(c) Quality Education:
- World class educational institutes for teaching and research, technology driven learning meeting GER target of 35 by 2025 as per the draft National Education Policy, 2019.

(d) Convenient and efficient transportation and logistics:
- **ROADS:**
  Enhanced road connectivity to remotest areas and trunk connectivity through expressways, major economic corridors, strategic areas and tourist destinations. Extensive charging and on road traction infrastructure for electric vehicles

- **RAIL:**
  World-class stations and fully integrated rail network with inter-modal connectivity to remote regions and close to nil accidents.

- **AIR:**
  Airport and related infrastructure to enable international and regional connectivity so as to achieve passenger and cargo traffic on the vision of NCAP 2016. Air connectivity to all Tier II and most Tier III cities

- **PORTS:**
  Port and Waterway infrastructure focused on reducing logistics time and cost for foreign and domestic trade as per the Sagarmala National Perspective Plan 2016.
- **METRO-CONNECTIVITY:**
  Urban mobility MRTS and bus connectivity within 800 metres of homes in more than 50 cities.
  High standards of living for citizens by providing metro connectivity in at least 25 cities

(e) Housing and water supply for all:
- Housing for all by 2022 PMAY negligible slum population.
- All households to have piped water meeting national standards by 2024.
- Wastewater recycling and treatment.

(f) Disaster-resilient standards compliant public infrastructure

(g) Agriculture infrastructure:
- Increased irrigation and micro irrigation coverage;
- Integrated agro logistics systems from farm gate to end consumers storage, processing and packing, transportation, market and digital infrastructure for agriculture produce.

(h) Good health and well being:
- Superior healthcare facilities, electronic health records infrastructure.
- Superior accessible primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare infrastructure facilities across India to meet NHP 2017 goals.
- Medical para medical education infrastructure meeting manpower needs by 2020 and CHVs by 2025 as per IPHS norms.
- This vision will help India to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, it will help the country to meet the requirements of faster urbanisation. It is expected that by 2030, nearly 42% of the Indian population will be living in urban areas.

**CHALLENGES FOR NIP**

- The real challenge will be realising the funds required for infrastructure generation.
- Size of the proposed investment is big compared to previous six year’s completed investment in the infrastructure sector.
- Centre and the states made an investment of Rs 51 lakh crore during the previous six years according to the Finance Minister.
- Here, realising Rs 102 billion in the next five years will be a huge task given the precarious fiscal situation of the governments.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: challenges, significance and components of National Infrastructure Pipeline
**FAME-II SCHEME**

**CONTEXT:**

To give a further push to clean mobility in Road Transport Sector, the Department of Heavy Industries has sanctioned 2636 charging stations in 62 cities across 24 States/UTs under FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India) scheme phase II.

**AIMS:**

to boost electric mobility and increase the number of electric vehicles in commercial fleets.

**TARGET:**

The outlay of ₹10,000 crore has been made for three years till 2022 for FAME 2 scheme.

**WHAT ARE THE SALIENT FEATURES OF FAME-2 SCHEME?**

- The government will offer the incentives for electric buses, three-wheelers and four-wheelers to be used for commercial purposes.
- Plug-in hybrid vehicles and those with a sizeable lithium-ion battery and electric motor will also be included in the scheme and fiscal support offered depending on the size of the battery.

**HOW WILL FAME-2 SCHEME HELP IMPROVE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE:**

- The centre will invest in setting up charging stations, with the active participation of public sector units and private players.
- It has also been proposed to provide one slow-charging unit for every electric bus and one fast-charging station for 10 electric buses.
Projects for charging infrastructure will include those needed to extend electrification for running vehicles such as pantograph charging and flash charging. FAME 2 will also encourage interlinking of renewable energy sources with charging infrastructure.

**BACKGROUND:**

- FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. Main thrust of FAME is to encourage electric vehicles by providing subsidies.
- FAME focuses on 4 areas
  1. Technology development,
  2. Demand Creation,
  3. Pilot Projects
  4. Charging Infrastructure

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** WHAT ARE THE SALIENT FEATURES OF FAME-2 SCHEME and HOW WILL FAME-2 SCHEME HELP IMPROVE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE?

**Sources:** pib

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**ASSAM INLAND WATER TRANSPORT PROJECT**

**CONTEXT:**

World Bank signed an $88 million loan agreement with the Government of India and the Government of Assam on 16 January 2020. The loan is to help modernize Assam’s passenger ferry sector that runs on its rivers including the Brahmaputra and implement Inland Water Transport Project.

**INLAND WATER TRANSPORT PROJECT:**
There are more than 361 ferry routes cross the Brahmaputra in Assam and provides a crucial means of transport to thousands of commuters in both the urban and rural areas of the Brahmaputra Valley.

The Assam Inland Water Transport Project (AIWTP) will improve the passenger ferry infrastructure and its services in the state.

It will also strengthen the capacity of the institutions running inland water transport.

Well designed terminals and energy-efficient vessels will make the ferry services more sustainable with the least disruption to nature.

The project will support the state’s efforts to corporatize its own ferry activities.

Under the project, the government ferries will be operated by the Assam Shipping Company (ASC) and the Assam Ports Company (APC) will provide terminals and terminal services on a common-user basis to both public and private ferry operators.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: significance of INLAND WATER TRANSPORT PROJECT

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**“PURVODAYA”: ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN INDIA THROUGH AN INTEGRATED STEEL HUB**

**CONTEXT:**

Ministry of steel in partnership with CII and JPC is organising the launch of Purvodaya-Accelerated Development of Eastern Region through an Integrated Steel hub.

**BACKGROUND:**
The Eastern region of India, though extremely rich in resources, lags behind other states in terms of development. Eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Northern Andhra Pradesh) collectively hold 80% of the country’s iron ore, 100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite, and dolomite reserves.

In addition to its rich mineral reserves, these states also have a significant locational advantage. There is a presence of major ports such as Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, Kolkata etc. with >30% of India’s major port capacity, 3 major National Waterways as well as strong road, rail connectivity to most parts of the country.

Despite these advantages, these states are currently behind many other Indian states in terms of economic and development indicators such as GSDP per capita and Human Development Index (HDI).

**INTEGRATED STEEL HUB:**

The proposed Integrated Steel Hub, encompassing Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Northern Andhra Pradesh, would serve as a torchbearer for socio-economic growth of Eastern India.

**OBJECTIVE:**

- The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.
- In addition to increased steel capacity, this hub would also help enhance best-in-class value addition capabilities.

**THE INTEGRATED STEEL HUB WOULD FOCUS ON 3 KEY ELEMENTS:**

1. Capacity addition through easing the setup of greenfield steel plants
2. Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres
3. Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: objective of the integrated steel hub

Sources: the Hindu.
INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS IN NILGIRI BIOSPHERE REGION

CONTEXT:

The spread of invasive plants, especially Senna Spectabilis, is posing a major threat to the Nilgiri forest region, owing to its quick growth and coppicing character

WHAT ARE INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES?

Invasive alien species are plants, animals, pathogens and other organisms that are non-native to an ecosystem, and which may cause economic or environmental harm or adversely affect human health

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The thick foliage arrests the growth of other indigenous species of trees and grass, and causes food shortage for the wildlife population, especially herbivores, during summer.
- Moreover, wildlife would not feed on the leaves of the tree as it was not palatable for them
- The plant started to invade in adjacent tiger reserves, including Bandipur and Nagarhole in Karnataka and the Mudumalai tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu.

THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was the first biosphere reserve in India established in the year 1986. It is located in the Western Ghats and includes 2 of the 10 biogeographical provinces of India. Wide ranges of ecosystems and species diversity are found in this region. Thus, it was a natural choice for the premier biosphere reserve of the country.

ESTABLISHED TO FULFILL THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- To conserve insitu genetic diversity of species
- To restore degraded ecosystems to their natural conditions
- To provide baseline data for ecological and environmental research and education
- To function as an alternate model for sustainable development
GEOGRAPHY

- The total area of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is 5,520 sq. km.
- It is located in the Western Ghats between 76°- 77°15’E and 11°15’ - 12°15’N.
- The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve encompasses parts of Tamilnadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
- The annual rainfall of the reserve ranges from 500 mm to 7000 mm with temperature ranging from 0°C during winter to 41°C during summer.
- The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve falls under the biogeographic region of the Malabar rain forest.
- The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wyanaad Wildlife Sanctuary Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park and Silent Valley are the protected areas present within this reserve.
STATE | AREA (Sq. Kms)
---|---
Tamilnadu | 2537.6
Kerala | 1455.4
Karnataka | 1527.4

VEGETATION

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve comprises of substantial unspoilt areas of natural vegetation ranging from dry scrub to evergreen forests and swamps thus contributing to highest biodiversity. The altitude and climatic gradients support and nourish the different vegetational types.

VEGETATIONAL TYPES OF THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Forest type</th>
<th>Nature of Vegetation</th>
<th>Area of occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Moist evergreen</td>
<td>Dense, moist and multi storeyed forest with gigantic trees</td>
<td>In the narrow valleys of Silent Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Semi evergreen</td>
<td>Moist, deciduous Dense</td>
<td>Nilambur and Palghat division North east part of the Nilgiri district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thorn</td>
<td>Dense</td>
<td>Mudumalai and Bandipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Savannah woodland</td>
<td>Trees scattered amid woodland</td>
<td>Mudumalai and Bandipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sholas &amp; grasslands</td>
<td>High elevated evergreen with grasslands</td>
<td>South and western catchment area, Mukurthi national park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. FLORA

Moist evergreen forests
Sholas and grasslands
The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is very rich in plant diversity. About 3,300 species of flowering plants can be seen here.

- Of the 3,300 species 132 are endemic to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The genus Baeolepis is exclusively endemic to the Nilgiris.
- Some of the plants entirely restricted to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve include species of Adenoon, Calacanthus, Baeolepis, Frerea, Jarodina, Wagatea, Poeciloneuron, etc.
- Of the 175 species of orchids found in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, 8 are endemic to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- These include endemic and endangered species of Vanda, Liparis, Bulbophyllum, Spiranthes and Thrixspermum.
- The sholas of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve are a treasure house of rare plant species.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLANT TYPE</th>
<th>No. of SPECIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angiosperms</td>
<td>3238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnosperms</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pteridophytes</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. FAUNA

- The fauna of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve includes over 100 species of mammals, 350 species of birds, 80 species of reptiles and amphibians, 300 species of butterflies and innumerable invertebrates.
- 39 species of fish, 31 amphibians and 60 species of reptiles endemic to the Western Ghats also occur in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- Fresh water fish such as Danio neilgheriensis, Hypselobarbus dubuis and Puntius bovanicus are restricted to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The Nilgiri tahr, Nilgiri langur, slender loris, blackbuck, tiger, gaur, Indian elephant and marten are some of the animals found here.
WATER RESOURCES

- The Nilgiri & Biosphere Reserve is one of the critical catchment areas of peninsular India.
- Many of the major tributaries of the river Cauvery like the Bhavani, Moyar, Kabini and other rivers like Chaliyar, Punampuzha, etc., have their source and catchment areas within the reserve boundary.
- Many hydroelectric power projects are present in the Kundah, Bhavani and Moyar basins.
- The sholas and grasslands play a very important role in retaining water and supplying it to these streams.
- A drastic decline in the sholas and grasslands is one of the reasons for the recent water scarcity in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

THE PEOPLE

- A variety of human cultural diversity can be found in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The increase in population is attributed to migration from surrounding areas rather than the population growth of indigenous people.
- Tribal groups like the Todas, Kotas, Irullas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Adiyans, Edanadan Chettis, Cholanaickens, Allar, Malayan, etc., are native to the reserve.
- Except for Cholanaickens who live exclusively on food gathering, hunting and fishing, all the other tribal groups are involved in their traditional occupation of agriculture.

PROBLEMS OF THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve has been enduring human interference for a very long time through development projects such as hydroelectric power projects, agriculture, horticulture, etc., which have brought about substantial change in the ecology of the area.

Many environmental problems are noticed in different parts of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

1. INTENSIVE FELLING

- The increase in influx of population from the surrounding areas has led to deforestation and consequent habitat destruction.
- Between 1990–96 there has been a decrease in the dense forest area.
- 28.96 sq. km. of dense forests have become open forest and 22.67 sq. km. of dense forests have changed into non-forest areas.
- Intensive felling has led to multiple problems like destruction, depletion and degradation of the environment and its natural resources. Indiscriminate clearing of forests is destroying the habitat of the several species of animals and birds of the Nilgiris.
- Some of them like the Nilgiri wood pigeon, Nilgiri pipet and Nilgiri langur that are endemic to this region have hence become highly endangered.
Animals like the elephant, tiger and leopard are moving closer to human settlements owing to the shrinking of forest areas.

2. **PLANTATIONS (MONOCULTURE)**

- The Nilgiris, which support a variety of tree species, are threatened by monoculture.
- The sholas are being destroyed for plantations. Monoculture of eucalyptus, wattle, blue gum, cash crops like tea, coffee, cardamom and food crops like potato have degraded the soil quality along with excessive use of fertilizers.
- The tea bushes require frequent application of fertilizer, which has made the soil porous. During heavy rain, these slopes are easily washed away resulting in a landslide.

3. **GRAZING**

- The sholas were used for grazing cattle.
- The livestock population inside the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is very low but the population in the periphery is very high.
- Destruction of the sholas has led to disappearance of perennial streams, causing soil erosion and micro climatic changes.
- Overgrazing has led to degradation of low and high level grasslands, which harbour a large number of endemic species.

4. **FOREST FIRES**

- Forest fires are more common in the sholas and dry deciduous forests. They are both accidental as well as deliberate.
- The annual fire set off during the summer months for a better pasture in the ensuing monsoon is another manmade threat to the biological diversity.

5. **DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY**

- Due to developmental activities large areas of forests have been cleared in and around the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- More human habitation has resulted in largescale road laying that connects even remote forest areas to the nearest urban centre.
- Construction activities like road building have unleashed widespread landslides and slope destabilization. Construction of the Kabini reservoir has submerged the valley between Nagarhole and Bandipur.

6. **HORTICULTURAL AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES**

- Extension of agriculture, and use of lands unsuited for agriculture have accelerated soil erosion.
- Human settlements on the uplands have destroyed the sholas. Soil erosion is severe in the east and southwest areas of the Nilgiris where the monsoons are heavy.
In the Mysore plateau region, the extension of irrigation canals from reservoirs has led to a largescale shift in land practices.

7. TOURISM

- The Nilgiris are an important tourist centre in South India, and attract a large number of tourists. A large number of hotels, clubs, resorts, gardens and roads have emerged rapidly, degrading the natural vegetation.
- Extensive pollution and water scarcity are the result affecting the entire ecology Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.
- The Ooty Lake has been ruined accumulating garbage and disposal of sewage into it.

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NILGIRI BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Conservation and management of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve depends on the coordination between government agencies and the local people. For effective management, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve has been zonalised as:

1. **Core Zone (1240 sq.km)**
2. **Buffer Zone (4280 sq.km)**

- The buffer zone is further divided into manipulation zones like forestry, tourism and recreation zones.
- These zones are located in all the three states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Kerala into which the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve extends. Most of the plantations are seen only in the manipulation zone.
- Being one of the hotspots of biodiversity, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve has some national parks and wildlife sanctuaries within its boundaries.
- **Conservation of wildlife is the main objective** of these national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
- Some of these areas have been designated by the government as Project Tiger and Project Elephant areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mudumalai wildlife sanctuary (321 sq.km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elevation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fauna</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mukurthi National Park (80 sq.km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elevation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vegetation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Fauna**
Nilgiri tahr (state animal of Tamilnadu)

**Bandipur National Park (800 sq.km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Convergence of the Eastern and Western Ghats, Karnataka 800 m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevation</td>
<td>Ranges from moist deciduous to scrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Elephant, gaur, sambar, barking deer, sloth bear, jackal, wildboar, Malabar squirrel, chowsingha, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nagarhole National Park (Rajiv Gandhi National Park) (572 sq.km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>S.E. part of Kodagu district, Karnataka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Deciduous forest interspersed with swamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna</td>
<td>Elephant, chital, sambar, munjtac, tiger, leopard and wild dog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wyanaad Wildlife Sanctuary (344 sq.km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevation</td>
<td>600 to 1100 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Moist dry deciduous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna</td>
<td>Elephant, sambar, chital, tiger, wild dog and leopard, freshwater fish like Travancoria, Bhavania and Bargus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Silent Valley National Park (78 sq.km)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevation</td>
<td>2712.42 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Evergreen with grasslands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauna</td>
<td>Lion tailed macaque, Nilgiri marten and Nilgiri tahr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONCLUSION**

- Apart from preserving biological and cultural diversity, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve also provides ecological sustainability to the entire region.
- Research and monitoring of the management and conservation of the natural wealth of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve are being carried out by various government institutions and departments.
- A commitment to conserve this natural treasure house of resources is the need of the hour.
- This can be achieved only by the participation and co-operation of the local people in the conservation programmes.
IMPORTANT BIOSPHERE RESERVES OF INDIA

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: what environmental problems are noticed in different parts of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve? Role of government agencies and the local people to conserve and manage the nilgiri biosphere reserve.

Sources: the Hindu. CPR Environmental Education Centre, Chennai
Mahadayi, Netravali and Cotigao sanctuaries and some part of Mahaveer National Park in Goa has seen the presence of Tigers that has pushed Politicians & activists to demand Tiger Reserve status in these areas.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sanctuaries and National Parks are areas of significant ecological, floral, faunal or natural significance.
- They are notified by State Governments and protected by the Forest Department under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- A National Park or Wildlife Sanctuary that is considered significant for protecting tigers can be additionally designated as a Tiger Reserve.
- A Tiger Reserve consists of a ‘Core’ or ‘Critical Tiger Habitat’, which is to be managed as an inviolate area, and a ‘Buffer’ or Peripheral area immediately abutting a Core area, which may be accorded a lesser degree of habitat protection.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body formed in 2005-06, with an overarching supervisory/coordination role, performing functions as provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WILDLIFE SANCTUARY AND A NATIONAL PARK?

India has three regions where the local ecosystem is protected:

1. **NATIONAL PARKS:**

   National parks are given a greater degree of protection, with human activity greatly restricted. Only certain areas can be visited and only activities permitted by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state are allowed in the park. In wildlife sanctuaries, on the other hand, some human activity may be permitted, such as livestock grazing.

2. **WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES:**

   Wildlife sanctuaries are established to protect particular species of animals, whereas national parks preserve the landscape and any historically or culturally significant monuments in addition to protecting the flora and fauna.

3. **BIOSPHERE RESERVES:**

   Biosphere reserves are larger areas, which may include one or more national park and/or wildlife sanctuary. These also protect human communities and their ways of life.

**INDIA’S NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES**
India is a land filled with natural wonders. Its national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and biosphere reserves have a wealth of biodiversity and many rare species of animals make their homes there.

- India’s first national park was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park, now known as Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand.
- By 1970, India only had five national parks.
- In 1972, India enacted the Wildlife Protection Act and Project Tiger to safeguard the habitats of conservation reliant species.
- There are over 100 national parks in India and over 500 wildlife sanctuaries, each with its own unique scenery and ecosystem.
- These include 50 tiger reserves managed by Project Tiger – a government-run conservation programme.

**MOST WELL-KNOWN AND IMPORTANT NATIONAL PARKS**

**Jim Corbett National Park**

- Jim Corbett National Park is the **oldest national park in India**.
- It is found in the foothills of the Himalayas in the northern state of Uttarakhand.
- It was the first park under the Project Tiger initiative and is known for its **tiger conservation efforts**.
- Herds of Indian elephants arrive at the park during the summer, while the following species make up the park’s other inhabitants:
  - Deer
  - Macaques
  - Pangolins
  - Bears
  - Mongoose
  - Pythons
  - Leopards
  - Crocodiles

- It is named for the British naturalist, hunter and author Jim Corbett, who was a key figure in establishing the park as a protected area.

**Sariska National Park**
Sariska National Park (also known as Sariska Tiger Reserve) is found in the Alwar district of the state of Rajasthan in northern India. It is around 4 hours’ drive from Delhi and 2 hours’ drive from Jaipur.

Part of Project Tiger since 1978, Sariska was upgraded to a national park in 1990.

In addition to tigers, it is home to many animals, including the following species:

- Indian leopard
- Four-horned antelope
- Nilgai – a large, bull-like antelope.

**Gir National Park**

Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is located near Talala Gir in the state of Gujarat in western India.

Gir is significant in that it is the only place in the world where Asiatic lions are found.

Smaller than their African cousins, these lions are endangered, with only a few hundred left in the wild, all of whom live in the dry scrub land and forests of Gir.

Animal species can be found in the sanctuary, including:

- Asiatic lions
- Mugger crocodiles
- Honey badgers
- Various kinds of deer and antelope
- Over 300 species of birds

**Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary**

Kutch Desert is the **biggest wildlife sanctuary in India**.

It is found on the edge of the State of Gujarat in West India, with the international border with Pakistan forming the northern limits of the sanctuary.

Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary is in an area called the Great Rann of Kutch.

For much of the year, it is composed of saline desert, but during the summer monsoon, the mudflats fill with water, transforming them into wetlands.
An area of mudflats known as “Flamingo City” is renowned as a breeding ground for the pink birds, with millions flocking there every year.

A number of rare animal species can be found in the sanctuary, including:

- Greater and lesser flamingos
- Indian wild ass
- Chinkara (a species of gazelle)
- Hyena

**Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary**

Situated in the south of India, Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary forms part of the Kali Tiger Reserve along with the nearby Anshi National Park. Part of the sanctuary is also an elephant reserve.

Aside from tigers and elephants, the dense trees and bamboo of Dandeli are home to a plethora of animals, particularly birds.

Over 200 species have been recorded in the sanctuary, including:

- Great hornbill
- Indian sloth bear
- Muntjac
- Mugger crocodile
- Leopard – Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary is notable for its frequent sightings of black panthers.

**Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary**

From grasslands to forests to thorny scrub, Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary boasts a varied landscape across its 90 km².

This protected region is found in Kerala State in South India and is under the jurisdiction of Eravikulam National Park, with which it shares a border.

Chinnar wildlife sanctuary has 963 species of flowering plant, 156 documented species of butterfly, and hundreds of other animal species.

It also has a rehabilitation centre for the Indian star tortoise.

**Kaziranga National Park**

The famous Kaziranga National Park is a World Heritage Site. Located in the north-east of India, it contains 2/3 of the world’s population of great one-horned rhinoceroses (also known as Indian rhinoceroses).
In addition, it has one of the highest population densities of tigers in the world, as well as:

- Water buffalo
- Asian elephants
- Gaur
- Sambar
- Leopards
- Tigers
- one-horned rhinoceroses

**Pench National Park**

Pench National Park is an award-winning park located in the heart of India. Pench was a wildlife sanctuary from 1965 until 1975, when it was declared a national park; in 1992 it was also designated as a tiger reserve.

Wildlife native to the park include:

- Tiger
- Leopard
- Indian wolf
- Jackal
- Deer
- Monkey

**Manas National Park**

Manas National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage site and biosphere reserve. It is set in the Himalayan foothills in the north-east of India, bordering Bhutan. Manas is well-known among nature enthusiasts for its relatively large population of wild water buffalo. It is both a tiger and elephant.
reserve and has a number of other rare or endangered species, such as:

- The pygmy hog
- Assam roofed turtle
- Golden langur
- Hispid hare
- Tigers
- Elephants

**Bandipur National Park**

The Bandipur National Park in Karnataka (South India) once belonged to the Maharaja of the Kingdom of Mysore, as his private hunting ground.

Today, it is one of the leading tiger reserves under Project Tiger with all its wildlife protected.

Bandipur forms part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, which is the largest habitat of wild elephants in southern Asia.

It is known for its many species of butterfly.

It is also home to:

- Gaurus
- Sloth bears
- Indian rock pythons
- Dholes
- Mugger crocodiles

**Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park**

Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park is found far from mainland India in the Andaman Islands.

The park was established in 1983 to protect marine life in the area, such as corals.

Sea turtles are known to nest in great numbers on the islands.
## List of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Parks</th>
<th>States</th>
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(www.iasupsc.com)
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**EFFORTS OF WPSI TO CONSERVE WILDLIFE OF INDIA:**

**TIGER MORTALITY**

**TIGER DEATHS IN 2020**

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**TIGER DEATHS IN 2019**

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**LEOPARD MORTALITY**

**LEOPARD DEATHS IN 2020**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LEOPARD DEATHS IN 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poaching &amp; Seizures</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LOCATION OF NATIONAL PARKS OF INDIA
LOCATION OF WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES OF INDIA
LOCATION OF TIGER RESERVES OF INDIA

THE WILDLIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF INDIA (WPSI):

- The WILDLIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF INDIA (WPSI) was founded in 1994 by Belinda Wright, its Executive Director, who was an award-winning wildlife photographer and filmmaker till she took up the cause of conservation.
- From its inception, WPSI's main aim has been to bring a new focus to the daunting task of tackling India's growing wildlife crisis.
It does this by providing support and information to government authorities to combat poaching and the escalating illegal wildlife trade - particularly in wild tigers.

It has now broadened its focus to deal with human-animal conflicts and provide support for research projects.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: wildlife conservation, National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary of India,

Sources: the Hindu.

********************

AUSTRALIAN KOALAS BECOME ENDANGERED IN BUSH FIRES

CONTEXT:

The Australian Koalas population suffered an extraordinary hit in the bush fires of Australia. It took 3 months for the firemen to control the fires.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Australia recorded 2019 as its hottest year on record. Around 1.25 billion animals are believed to be dead in bush fires.
- It has also destroyed more than 10 million hectares of land.
- The Australian Koalas are to be put under “endangered” from “vulnerable” as 30% of their habitat were destroyed by the fires.
- The Australian Government has announced 50 million Australian Dollars emergency fund to save the wildlife affected due to the fires.

AUSTRALIAN KOALAS:

- The Australian Koalas is herbivorous animals that are native to Australia.
- They are found in coastal areas of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.
The IUCN red list currently puts Australian Koala under Vulnerable Category.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: wildlife conservation, Australian Koala

Sources: the Hindu.

********************************

IRRAWADDY DOLPHINS IN THE CHILIKÁ LAKE

CONTEXT:

During the Dolphin Census in Chilika lake, direct sighting of 146 Irrawaddy dolphins has been reported. The Census is being carried out using Hydrophone monitoring technique. A hydrophone is a microphone designed to be used underwater for recording or listening to underwater sound.

ABOUT IRRAWADDY DOLPHINS:

- Irrawaddy dolphins (Orcaella brevirostris) are found in coastal areas in South and Southeast Asia, and in three rivers: the Irrawaddy (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong (China).
- They are listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ as per the IUCN Red List.
- The total population of these aquatic mammals in the world is estimated to be less than 7,500.
- More than 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins have been reported from Bangladesh.
- Dolphin distribution in Chilika is considered to be the highest single lagoon population.
CHILIKA LAKE:

- Chilika is Asia’s largest and world’s second-largest lagoon.
- It lies on the east coast of India in the state of Odisha, separated from the mighty Bay of Bengal by a small strip of sand.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent and is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- The major attraction at Chilika is Irrawady dolphins which are often spotted off Satpada Island.
- The large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds) covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987.
- Kalijai Temple is located on an island in the Chilika Lake.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: IRRAWADDY DOLPHINS

Sources: the Hindu.

**********************************************************************************
Researchers had created the third embryo the nearly extinct northern white rhino, a remarkable success in an ongoing global mission to keep the species from going extinct.

**THE NORTHERN WHITE RHINOCEROS:**

- The northern white rhinoceros is one of two subspecies of the white rhinoceros (the other being the southern white rhinoceros).
- Found in several countries in East and Central Africa south of the Sahara.
- It is a grazer in grasslands and savanna woodlands.
- According to the latest International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) assessment from 2011, the subspecies is considered “Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct in the Wild).”

![Image of a northern white rhinoceros](image-url)

**THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN):**
IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations.

- Created in 1948, it is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.
- It is headquartered in Switzerland.
- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the world’s most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of plant and animal species.
- It uses a set of quantitative criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of species. These criteria are relevant to most species and all regions of the world.
- The IUCN Red List Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from NE (Not Evaluated) to EX (Extinct). Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU) species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
- It is recognized as the most authoritative guide to the status of biological diversity.
- It is also a key indicator for the SDGs and Aichi Targets.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: wildlife conservations

Sources: the Hindu.

****************************************************

CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION PROJECT

CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court has allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to a suitable habitat in India.

BACKGROUND:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had previously told the Supreme Court that African cheetahs would be translocated in India from Namibia and would be kept at Nauradehi wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has given a ‘no objection’ for the translocation.
WHAT IS REINTRODUCTION AND WHY REINTRODUCE CHEETAH NOW?

‘Reintroduction’ of a species means releasing it in an area where it is capable of surviving.

Reintroductions of large carnivores have increasingly been recognised as a strategy to conserve threatened species and restore ecosystem functions.

- The cheetah is the only large carnivore that has been extirpated, mainly by over-hunting in India in historical times.
- India now has the economic ability to consider restoring its lost natural heritage for ethical as well as ecological reasons.

FACTS:

- The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- The cheetah is also the world’s fastest land mammal.
- It is listed as vulnerable in IUCN red listed species.
- The country’s last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- The Asiatic cheetah is classified as a “critically endangered” species by the IUCN Red List, and is believed to survive only in Iran.

CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION PROGRAMME IN INDIA:

- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah reintroduction project seven years ago.
- Nauradehi in Madhya Pradesh was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary.

REASONS FOR EXTINCTION:

- The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man’s interference. Problems like human-wildlife conflict, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and illegal trafficking, have decimated their numbers.
- The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse.
- With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.

ABOUT NTCA:
The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

It was constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: wildlife conservations

**Sources:** the Hindu.

**Ramsar Sites in India**

**Context:**

India has added 10 more wetlands to sites protected by the Ramsar Convention. With this, a total of 37 sites in the country have been recognised under the international treaty.

**The 10 New Ones Are:**

1. Nandur Madhameshwar a first for Maharashtra;
2. Keshopur-Miani,
3. Beas Conservation Reserve and
4. Nangal in Punjab;
5. Nawabganj,
6. Parvati Agra,
7. Saman,
8. Samaspur,
9. Sandi and
10. Sarsai Nawar

The other Ramsar sites are in Rajasthan, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.

**About Ramsar Convention:**
• It is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
• It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1971.
• Known officially as ‘the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat’ (or, more recently, just ‘the Convention on Wetlands’), it came into force in 1975.

**MONTREUX RECORD:**

Montreux Record under the Convention is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

The Montreux Record was established by Recommendation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1990).

Sites may be added to and removed from the Record only with the approval of the Contracting Parties in which they lie.

• Currently, two wetlands of India are in Montreux record: Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur).
• Chilka lake (Odisha) was placed in the record but was later removed from it.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: Montreux Record

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**WETLAND BIRD CENSUS AT KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK**

**CONTEXT:**

The second wetland bird count was conducted in the Kaziranga National Park from 9th–10th January 2020.
NUMBER OF BIRDS:

- A total of 19,225 birds belonging to 96 species under 80 families was reported which is significantly higher than that of 2018.
- Having 96 species of wetland birds is one of the highest for wildlife reserves in India.

RANGE WISE DISTRIBUTION:

- The survey covered four ranges of the park — Agoratoli, Bagori, Kohora and Burapahar.
- More than half the birds (9,924) and 85 of the 96 species were recorded in Agoratoli Range. This was because Sohola, the largest of Kaziranga’s 92 perennial wetlands, is in this range.

ABOUT KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK:

- Location: It is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 ha. It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.
- It was declared as a National Park in 1974.
- It has been declared a tiger reserve since 2007. It has a total tiger reserve area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km.
- It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
- It is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: wildlife conservations

Sources: the Hindu.

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CENTRE PROMULGATED ORDINANCE TO AMEND COAL MINING LAWS

CONTEXT:

The Central government announced the promulgation of the ordinance for amendment in the Mines and Minerals

**ORDINANCE:**
On 11 January 2019, the Union Cabinet approved the promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020. The ordinance aims to ease the auction of coal mines, allow Foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhance ease of doing business.

**PROVISIONS OF THE ORDINANCE:**

- The amendments Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 will offer unexplored and partially explored coal blocks for mining through prospecting license-cum-mining lease (PL-cum-ML).
- It will enable any India-registered company to invest in the coal mining sector and develop coal blocks. The companies must have prior experience of mining in India to bid for the blocks.
- It will allow FDI in the coal mining sector by removing the restrictions and eligibility criteria for participation.
- Easing restrictions on end-user is expected to open up the coal sector for commercial mining for all local and global firms.
- GoI expects to attract investments from Indian and global corporates as Coal India has been tasked to produce one billion tonnes by 2023-24.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** The amendments Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act

**Sources:** the Hindu.

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**CONTEXT:**

The International Energy Agency (IEA) along with the country’s policy think tank NITI Aayog released the first in-depth review
of India’s energy policies. The review aims to set out a range of recommendations in each energy policy area.

The IEA regularly releases energy policy reviews for its member and association countries. For the first time, it has carried out the review for India. This is the first review IEA carried out for India.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The report highlighted the achievements made through the country’s energy policies
- It suggested recommendations to support the Government of India’s (GoI) goals to promote the well-functioning energy markets and boost the deployment of renewables.
- The review encourages India to institutionalize energy policy coordination across the government with a national energy policy framework.
- It marked the government’s policy that provided access to electricity, affordable efficient lighting, and clean cooking through schemes like SAUBHAGYA, UJJWALA, and UJALA.
- Also, India is pursuing energy market reforms and the swift deployment of renewable technologies.
- It highlighted the growth of renewables in India which accounts for almost 23% of India’s total installed capacity.
- The review also founded that the energy efficiency improvements in the country has avoided 15% of oil and gas imports, additional energy demand, and air pollution and 300 million tonnes (MT) of CO2 emissions between 2000 and 2018.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: highlights of the report

Sources: the Hindu.
The World Future Energy Summit began at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), Abu Dhabi on 13 January 2020. The theme of the summit is Rethinking Global Consumption, Production, and Investment. The event will be held from 13-16 January 2020 in ADNEC, Abu Dhabi.

EVENTS:

- The four-day event includes exhibition and forum programs that address energy, solar, water, waste and smart cities.
- It also focuses on clean energy generation, water sustainability
- The summit discussed the ways in which digital innovation can help to improve the quality of life in an urban environment.
- Along with the summit, the Climate Innovations Exchange (CLIX) will be held.

PARTICIPANTS:

Around 35,000 people from 170 countries are participating in the summit. 90 speakers, including music star and philanthropist Akon, Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda and Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister of Bangladesh, among others are the noted participants of the summit.

WORLD FUTURE ENERGY SUMMIT:

World Future Energy Summit is an annual event. It was first held in 2011. The summit invites innovators, academicians, political leaders and industry leaders to creates new business and investment.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: WORLD FUTURE ENERGY SUMMIT

Sources: the Hindu.
CONTEXT:

Government has launched the bidding process offering 11 areas in oil and gas blocks under Open Acreage Licensing Policy Round-V (OALP-V).

WHAT IS OPEN ACREAGE LICENSING POLICY (OALP)?

A critical part of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy. Provides uniform licences for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources.

REVENUE- SHARING MODEL:

Fields are offered under a revenue-sharing model and throw up marketing and pricing freedom for crude oil and natural gas produced.

HOW IT WORKS?

Under the OALP, once an explorer selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR) and submits the EoI, it is to be put up for competitive bidding and the entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.

WHAT IS NDR?

NDR has been created to provide explorers’ data on the country’s repositories, allowing them to choose fields according to their capabilities. Data received through the National Seismic Programme, an in-depth study of 26 sedimentary basins, are continuously being added to the NDR.

WHAT IS HELP?

- The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) replacing the erstwhile New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was approved in March 2016.
- The main features of HELP are Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: Open Acreage Licensing Policy
Gujarat ranked the best for parameters on efficiency targets in the review of state and Central government water departments by the ministry of Jal Shakti.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The seven Central departments reviewed, the Survey of India, got the top billing followed by the National Institute of Hydrology (NIH) and Central Water Commission.
- The Central Pollution Control Board, the country's pollution watchdog, has got the lowest rank in the ranking for the year 2019. Telangana got the top slot, and this year’s topper, Gujarat, was ranked seventh last time. Delhi. Among the states that significantly improved its ranking was Tamil Nadu.

**CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:**

- The departments ranked on parameters for procurement, finance, real-time data acquisition system, data digitization, analytical work, training, and updating MIS.
- The agencies are given a score out of 100, and those scoring between 48 and 100 are called satisfactory; the ones scoring between 40 and 48 are moderately satisfactory.
- The ranking is moderate considering moderate is 48 to 100 points, the water resource departments of nine states, union territories, and river basin organizations ranked as satisfactory, eight are moderately satisfactory, four moderately unsatisfactory, and 12, including Delhi, are in the unsatisfactory category.
- The states that have done satisfactory work under the project are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat SW, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra Rajasthan, Telangana, and West Bengal SW.
- SW stands for the surface water department and GW for the groundwater department.
• Gujarat surface water department scored 80.51 to be on top of the implementing agencies, followed by Damodar Valley Corporation with a 68.24 score and Rajasthan with a score of 66.73.
• The other states have scored less than 50, indicating that there is a vast scope of improvement in these states to achieve the national water targets.
• Rajasthan ranked 16th in the April-May 2018 rankings. In the rankings issued in December 2019, the country has made a quantum jump and is among the rules for the best management of its water resources.

WHAT’S IMPORTANT?

For prelims and mains: about the report

Sources: the Hindu.
The report highlighted that the top responding Indian companies now have committees and members designated to address climate risk. This is because of increasing climate activism. Scores of investors will actively engage companies to disclose their climate risk and helping them to do better. Around 6,900 companies with over 55% of global market capitalization disclosed environmental data through CDP in 2018.

**TOP 5 RANKS:**

- The United States topped the list with 135 companies
- Japan ranked second with 83 companies respectively
- The United Kingdom ranked third with 78 countries
- France ranked fourth with 51 companies
- India ranked fifth with 38 companies

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

For prelims and mains: key findings of the reports

**Sources:** the Hindu.

**INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD) REPORT**

**CONTEXT:**

IMD reported that 2019 is recorded as the seventh warmest year since 1901. It also said that the heating was substantially lower than the highest warming observed in 2016.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:**

- The reports stated that 1,562 people died due to extreme weather events including heatwave, avalanches floods, and thunderstorms.
• It highlighted that the average temperature over India during the year 2019 was above normal.
• The average annual mean surface air temperature in India during 2019 was 0.36 degree Celsius above average recorded between 1981 and 2010 period.
• It records the warming during 2019 was substantially lower than the highest warming which was observed over India with 0.71 degree Celsius during 2016.
• The five warmest years recorded by IMD are 2016 with 0.71 degree Celsius, 2009 with 0.541 degree Celsius, 2017 with 0.539 degree Celsius, 2010 with 0.54 degree Celsius and 2015 with 0.42 degree Celsius.

**WHAT’S IMPORTANT?**

**For prelims and mains:** about the report

**Sources:** the Hindu.
Q1. The "NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER" exercise will be carried out by which body/Ministry?

A. Office of the Registrar General of India, Union Home Ministry  
B. National Sample Survey Office  
C. Prime Minister’s Office  
D. None of the above

Q2. Consider the following statements about "5G"

1. While 4G LTE focused on delivering the data much faster, 5G will also support new services such as mission-critical communications and Internet of Things (IoT).
2. 5G has lower latency than 4G i.e. it has the potential to deliver more instantaneous, real-time access: a 10x decrease in end-to-end latency down to 1ms.

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

A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both 1 and 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. "BHAVANTAR BHUGTA YOJANA" was sought to provide relief to farmers by providing the differential between MSPs and market prices. it was launched by

A. Gujarat  
B. Odisha  
C. Bihar  
D. Madhya Pradesh

Q4. Consider the following statements about "NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE":

1. National Infrastructure Pipeline will ensure that infrastructure projects are adequately prepared and launched.
2. Regulation and monitoring will be under the sole prerogative of Ministry of Finance.
3. Central government and state governments have an equal share of 50% each in the NIP.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only  
B. 1 and 2  
C. 1, 2 and 3
Q5. Which one of the following best describes the term “MERCHANT DISCOUNT RATE” sometimes seen in news?

A. The incentive given by a bank to a merchant for accepting payments through debit cards pertaining to that bank.
B. The amount paid back by banks to their customers when they use debit cards for financial transaction for purchasing goods or services.
C. The charge to a merchant by a bank for accepting payments from his customers through the bank’s debit cards.
D. The incentive given by the Government to merchants for promoting digital payments by their customers through Point of Sale (PoS) machines and debit cards.

Q6. With reference to "SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA", consider the following statements

1. Under the scheme, Gram Panchayat is the basic unit.
2. The MP would be free to identify a suitable Gram Panchayat for being developed as Adarsh Gram, including his/her own village or that of his/her spouse.
3. Nominated MPs may choose a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country.
4. Primarily, the goal is to develop five Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be selected and developed by 2024.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q7. "SANGITA KALANIDHI" award, it is the title awarded yearly to

A. Carnatic Musician only
B. Hindustani Musician only
C. Folk Musician only
D. Both A & B

Q8. "MANI" app has been launched by RBI in order to

A. Detect and identify the denomination of fake currency notes
B. To help visually-impaired people to identify currency notes
C. Both A and B
D. None of the above

Q9. Consider the following statements about "NATIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME" (NSAP).

1. NSAP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Government of India that provides financial assistance to the elderly, widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions.
2. It represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles in Article 41 of the Constitution.
Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both 1 and 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q10. Recently "KALAPANI" territory issue was in news, the issue is between India and

A. Nepal  
B. Bangladesh  
C. Bhutan  
D. China

Q11. ‘CYBER SAFE WOMEN’ initiative has been launched by which of the following state?

A. Maharashtra  
B. Uttar Pradesh  
C. Tamil Nadu  
D. Karnataka

Q12. Consider the following statements with respect to "INDIAN DATA RELAY SATELLITE SYSTEM".

1. It will be a set of satellites that will track, send and receive information from Indian Satellites.
2. IDRSS satellites of the 2,000 kg class would be launched on the GSLV launcher to low earth orbits.
3. IDRSS is the first of its kind in the global space industry.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q13. "ROLLAPADU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY " is primarily a grassland ecosystem with mixed forests and thorny bushes, it is located in

A. Andhra Pradesh  
B. Telangana  
C. Tamil Nadu  
D. Kerala

Q14. Consider the following statements

1. NDRF funds managed by the Central Government
2. NDRF funds are part of contingency fund of India and kept as “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”.
3. NDRF amount can be spent only towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation.
4. Currently, a National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD) is levied to finance the NDRF.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?
Q15. Consider the following statements about "SMOG TOWERS"

1. These air filters shall draw in the air through fans installed at the top before passing it through the filters and releasing it near the ground.
2. The filters generally use carbon nanofibres as a major component and will focus on reducing particulate matter load.

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

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q16. With reference to "PRADHAN MANTRI LAGHU VYAPARI MAAN-DHAN YOJANA", consider the following statements:

1. The scheme is based on self-declaration as no documents are required except bank account, Pan Card and Aadhaar Card.
2. All small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders aged between 18-40 years can enrol for pension scheme.
3. Under the scheme, the government makes matching contribution in the subscribers’ account with quarterly assured pension of ₹3,000 after attaining the age of 60 years.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3
B. 2 only
C. 1 only
D. None of the above

Q17. Consider the following statements

1. Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) is the confluence of scientific knowledge with visionary leadership and social conscience.
2. SSR policy would involve three different categories of stakeholders: beneficiaries, implementers and supporters.
3. A special purpose vehicle will be established to take care of SSR policy implementation under the overall coordination of DST.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2
B. 2 and 3
C. 1 and 3
D. 1 only
Q18. Consider the following statements about "GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD"

1. It is the state bird of state of Rajasthan
2. It is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List

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

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q19. Consider the following statements about "NATIONAL PENSION SYSTEM" (NPS)

1. It is being implemented by Ministry of Labour.
2. Non-Resident India (NRI), OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO (Person of Indian Origin) card holders and Hindu Undivided Family (HUFs) are eligible for opening of NPS account.

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

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q20. Consider the following statements with reference to "MINERAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE" 2020:

1. Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 introduces the concept of Inter-Generational Equity.
2. The ordinance allows coal mining by any company present in sectors other than steel and power, and does away with the captive end-use criteria.
3. GOI has set a mining target of 1.5 billion tonnes of coal by 2020.
4. India is the world's fifth largest coal reserves nation.

Which of the above given statements is/are correct?

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

Q21. Which of the following pairs is/are correctly matched?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPORTS/INDEX</th>
<th>PUBLISHERS/ORG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Climate Finance Shadow Report</td>
<td>Oxfam International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Global Electric Vehicle Outlook</td>
<td>Tesla Motors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The Global State Of Democracy Index</td>
<td>Economist Intelligence Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fiscal Monitor Report</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1, 2, 3 and 4  
B. 1, 4 and 5  
C. 1 and 5  
D. 2, 3 and 4

Q22. Consider the following Statements:

1. "Sea Guardians" 2020 is the joint naval drill between India and China.
2. "Operation Sankalp" has been launched in order to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels through the Gulf of Oman.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both 1 and 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q23. Consider the following statements with reference to "INSTEX"

1. It is a project of government of Britain, Italy and Sweden.
2. It allow trade between EU and Iraq without relying on direct financial transaction.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both 1 and 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q24. Which of the following is/are the possible consequence/s of heavy sand mining in riverbeds?

1. Decreased salinity in the river  
2. Pollution of groundwater  
3. Lowering of the water-table

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Q25. In India, Right to have access to the Internet is part of

A. Right to privacy  
B. Right to education  
C. Right to equality
D. Both A and B

Q26. Eurasia Group, recently released a report titled “TOP RISKS 2020”, with reference to this consider the following statements:

1. India is one of the world’s top geopolitical risks for 2020 with 6th highest geopolitical risk.
2. The Sunni world may raise creating greater regional instability.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q27. Consider the following statements:

2. The Waigani Convention is a multilateral treaty to promote shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q28. Consider the following statements regarding "STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX" 2019.

1. Haryana, Karnataka and Kerala have topped the State Energy Efficiency Index 2019.
2. The index is developed by Energy Efficiency Service Limited in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q29. Consider the following statements.

1. Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre has been set up under the newly created Cyber-crime investigation cell division of the MHA.
2. National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal is the one of the seven components of newly created I4C.
3. I4C act as a nodal point in the fight against cybercrime.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?
Q30. "RASHTRIYA GARIMA ABHYAAN" is a national campaign to

A. rehabilitate the homeless and destitute persons and provide them with suitable sources of livelihood
B. release the sex workers from their practice and provide them with alternative sources of livelihood
C. eradicate the practice of manual scavenging and rehabilitate the manual scavengers
D. release the bonded laborers from their bondage and rehabilitate them

Q31. Which of the following report is released by ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE UNIT?

A. Global Liveability Index
B. Corruption Perceptions Index
C. Financial Inclusion report
D. All of the above

Q32. Consider the following statements:

1. Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD) project developed by IIT-Madras and implemented by C-DAC.
2. IRAD project is a central sector scheme.
3. Brasilia Declaration, adopted at the second global high-level conference on road safety.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is correct.
D. All are correct.

Q33. Consider the following statements about "SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION" (SCO):

1. It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
2. Heads of Government Council (HGC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO.
3. Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), Hq in Beijing, is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. Only 1 is correct.
B. Only 2 is correct.
C. Only 3 is correct.
D. All are correct.

Q34. Consider the following statements about "HORMUZ PEACE" initiative.

1. The initiative is led by Iraq.
2. The Traffic Separation system followed at Strait of Hormuz was ruled by International Maritime Organization.
3. Strait of Hormuz separates Iran and Oman, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q35. Which of the following programmes is/are supported by World Bank in India?

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
2. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Project (PMGSY)
3. Lighthouse India Initiative (LII)
4. Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY)

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1, 2 and 4
B. 1 and 4
C. 2 and 4
D. All of the Above.

Q36. Which of the following reports is/are published by World Bank?

1. World Development Report
2. Global Economic Prospect (GEP) Report
3. Remittance Report
4. Universal Health Coverage Index
5. Global Competitiveness Report

Select the correct answer using the code below:

A. 1, 2 and 5
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 1, 2, 3 and 4
D. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q37. Recently, HS code has been in news for sometimes, with reference to this considers the following statements:

1. It is a five-digit identification code.
2. It is developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
Q38. Consider the following statements:

1. Fiscal deficit is reflective of the total borrowing requirements of Government.
2. Higher fiscal deficit means higher borrowing by the government, which, in turn, mean lower interest rates in the economy.
3. In India, the FRBM Act suggests bringing the fiscal deficit down to about 3 percent of the GDP is the ideal target.
4. K. Singh committee recommended, a debt-to-GDP ratio of 20% for the central government, 40% for the state governments together and a fiscal deficit of 2.5% of GDP, both by financial year 2024.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 3  
B. 1, 2 and 3  
C. 1, 2 and 4  
D. All of the above

Q39. Consider the following statements:

1. The Standard Mark of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is mandatory for automotive tyres and tubes.
2. AGMARK is a quality Certification Mark issued by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only  
B. 2 only  
C. Both 1 and 2  
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q40. Which of the following diseases can be transmitted from one person to another through tattooing?

1. Chikungunya  
2. Hepatitis B  
3. HIV-AIDS

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

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

Q41. With reference to ‘BITCOINS’, sometimes seen in the news, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Bitcoins are tracked by the Central Banks of the countries.
2. Anyone with a Bitcoin address can send and receive Bitcoins from anyone else with a Bitcoin address.
3. Online payments can be sent without either side knowing the identity of the other.
Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

Q42. Consider the following statements about ASER 2019:

1. This is the largest government led survey in India.  
2. It has been conducted every year since 2005 in all rural districts of India.  
3. Its recommendations are not binding on government.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q43. Consider the following statements:

1. DFCCIL has been designated by Government of India as a special purpose vehicle.  
2. Chennai – Goa Dedicated Freight Corridor goes through Bangalore-Chennai Industrial Corridor promoted by World Bank & India.  
3. Dedicated Freight Corridor will help India to achieve target committed by India in the Paris climate accord.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2  
B. 2 and 3  
C. 1 and 3  
D. All of the above

Q44. Which one of the following handicrafts has been accorded the Geographical Indication tag and also belongs to the state of Jammu and Kashmir?

A. Khatamband  
B. Kani shawl  
C. Phulkarid  
D. Paper machie

Q45. Consider the following statements:

1. In tropical regions, Corona virus disease is transmitted by the same mosquito that transmits dengue.  
2. Sexual transmission of Corona virus disease is possible.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
A. 1 only
B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2
D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q46. Consider the following statements:

1. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test–Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a multilateral treaty that bans all nuclear explosions, for both civilian and military purposes, in all environments.
2. Currently only five countries have not signed Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
3. NPT represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States.
4. More countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

A. 1 only
B. 1, 2 and 3
C. 1, 3 and 4
D. All of the above

Q47. Consider the following statements with reference to "e-NAM".

1. eNAM is a pan-india electronic trading portal.
2. Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is the lead agency for implementing eNAM under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
3. NAM is completely virtual market without mandi at the back end.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

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

Q48. "TECHNICAL TEXTILES" are

A. The high tenacity fibres which are lightest and toughest fabrics mainly used in automobile and aerospace industries.
B. The toughest fabrics which are much heavier than polyesters and used in power industries.
C. The toughest fabrics having rigidity mainly used in polyhouse construction.
D. The high tenacity fabrics having fire resistance property.

Q49. Which one of the following termed as 'DRY ICE'?

A. Ice present in ice-cream
B. Solid water at Antarctica
C. Solid state of carbon dioxide
D. Solid water of ionosphere
Q50. The “RED DATA BOOKS” published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural resources (IUCN) contain lists of?

1. Endemic plant and animal species present in the biodiversity hotspots.
2. Threatened plant and animal species.
3. Protected sites for conservation of nature and natural resources in various countries.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

A. 1 and 3
B. 2 only
C. 2 and 3
D. 3 only
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<th>QUESTION'S NUMBERS</th>
<th>ANSWERS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana in Madhya Pradesh was sought to provide relief to farmers by providing the differential between MSPs and market prices.</td>
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</table>
| 4                  | A       | 1. It is estimated that India would need to spend $4.5 trillion on infrastructure by 2030 to sustain its growth rate. The endeavour of the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), is to make this happen in an efficient manner.  
2. Funding: The central government and state governments would have an equal share of 39% each in the NIP. The private sector, on the other hand, would have 22% share which the government expects to increase to 30% by 2025.  
3. National Infrastructure Pipeline will ensure that infrastructure projects are adequately prepared and launched.  
4. Each Ministry/Department would be responsible for the monitoring of projects so as to ensure their timely and within-cost implementation.  
5. It will help in stepping-up annual infrastructure investment to achieve the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $5 trillion by 2024-25. |
| 5                  | C       | “Merchant Discount Rate”  
1. It is a fee charged from a merchant by a bank for accepting payments from customers through credit and debit cards in their establishments.  
2. MDR compensates the card issuing bank, the lender which puts the PoS terminal and payment gateways such as Mastercard or Visa for their services.  
3. MDR charges are usually shared in pre-agreed proportion between the bank and a merchant and is expressed in percentage of transaction amount.  
4. From January onwards, all companies with a turnover of Rs 50 crore or more need to provide the facility of payment through RuPay Debit card and UPI QR code to their customers, under which no MDR fee will be charged from customers as well as merchants. |
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| 6 | C | 1. A Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit. It will have population 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in hilly, tribal and difficult areas.  
2. The MP would be free to identify a suitable Gram Panchayat for being developed as Adarsh Gram, other than his/her own village or that of his/her spouse.  
3. The MP will identify one Gram Panchayat to be taken up immediately, and two others to be taken up a little later.  
4. Lok Sabha MP has to choose a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency.  
5. Rajya Sabha MP a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected.  
6. Nominated MPs may choose a Gram Panchayat from the rural area of any district in the country. In the case of urban constituencies, (where there are no Gram Panchayats), the MP will identify a Gram Panchayat from a nearby rural constituency. |
| 7 | A | Sangita Kalanidhi Award was instituted by the Music Academy, Chennai. It is the title awarded yearly to a Carnatic Musician. |
| 8 | B | Now, the visually challenged people can identify the denomination of a currency note by using the mobile app, the RBI said. The application also works offline once installed, the central bank added. The RBI also said the app does not authenticate a note as either genuine or counterfeit. |
| 9 |   |   |
| 10 | A | Nepal and India are planning to resolve the Kalapani border issue through dialogue. India has clarified that the latest political map of India reflects the sovereign territory of India. |
| 11 | A | 1. Cyber Safe Initiative was launched by Maharashtra Government.  
2. The initiative was launched commemorating the birth anniversary of Indian Social Reformer Savitribai Phule.  
3. The aim of the initiative is to spread awareness against atrocities committed against children and women.  
4. The campaign is to be implemented all over the state by the State Government in collaboration with state police, public relations department and cyber cell. |
| 12 | B | 1. The IDRSS is planned to track and be constantly in touch with Indian satellites, in particular those in low-earth orbits which have limited coverage of earth.  
2. IDRSS satellites of the 2,000 kg class would be launched on the GSLV launcher to geostationary orbit around 36,000 km away.  
3. IDRSS will be similar to the American Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System, European Data Relay and the Luch Satellite Data Relay Network of Russia. |
| 13 | A | Rollapadu wildlife sanctuary (Andhra Pradesh), known primarily as a habitat of the great Indian bustard. Wildlife Sanctuary is primarily a grassland ecosystem with mixed forests and thorny bushes. Cotton, tobacco and sunflower are cultivated in the agricultural lands that |
14  B  1. National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) was renamed as National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) with the enactment of the Disaster Management Act in 2005.
2. It is a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
3. Located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”.
4. Currently, a National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD) is levied to finance the NDRF and additional budgetary support is provided as and when necessary.

15  C

16  D

17  C  1. Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) is the confluence of scientific knowledge with visionary leadership and social conscience. SSR is about building synergies among all stakeholders in our scientific knowledge community and also about developing linkages between science and society.
2. SSR policy would involve four different categories of stakeholders: beneficiaries, implementers, assessors and supporters (BIAS)
3. As a first step towards implementing SSR, a national digital portal would have to be established wherein societal needs requiring scientific interventions are captured and available for SSR implementers, in addition to providing a platform for reporting of SSR activities. A special purpose vehicle or body/agency needs to be established to take care of SSR policy implementation under the overall coordination of DST.
4. This body will evolve suitable changes for guidelines on SSR from time to time taking into consideration the dynamic changes in the economic and scientific environment of the country. This body would be guided by an advisory committee/board comprising of diverse stakeholders from science and society.

18  C

19  D

20  B  1. In an attempt to attract investments in coal mining, the Cabinet approved the promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020.
2. The ordinance allows coal mining by any company present in sectors other than steel and power, and does away with the captive end-use criteria.
3. While the move will help create an efficient energy market, usher in competition and reduce coal imports, it may also bring an end to state-run Coal India Ltd’s (CIL) monopoly.
4. The move will also help India gain access to sophisticated technology for underground mining used by global miners.
5. The Centre has set a mining target of 1.5 billion tonnes of coal by 2020. Of this, 1 billion tonnes was to be from CIL and 500 million tonnes
from non-CIL sources, in line with the government’s push to raise natural resources production to kickstart economic growth. This has now been revised down to 1 billion tonnes of coal by 2023-24.

6. Despite having the world’s fourth largest coal reserves, India imported 235 million tonnes (mt) of coal last year, of which 135mt valued at ₹171,000 crore could have been met from domestic reserves.

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4. The Global State Of Democracy Index – International Institute For Democracy And Electoral Assistance
5. The Democracy Index – Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)
6. Fiscal Monitor Report – International Monetary Fund (IMF) |
| 22 | D | Sea Guardians 2020 is the joint naval drill between Pakistan and India. Operation Sankalp has been launched in order to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. |
| 23 | D | Features of INSTEX
1. It is a payment mechanism being setup by the European Union to secure trade with Iran and skirt US sanctions after Washington pulled out of the landmark nuclear deal last May.
2. As the European signatories to the nuclear accord, Germany, France and Britain set up and will manage the clearing house.
3. The entity is based in France with German governance and financial support from all three countries. The three countries have sought broader support for the mechanism from all 28 EU member states to show European good faith in implementing commitments under the nuclear accord and to present a united front against any retaliation from Washington.
4. It will allow trade between the EU and Iran without relying on direct financial transactions.
5. It will initially be used for non-sanctionable trade, including humanitarian goods such as medicine, food and medical devices. |
| 24 | B |   |
| 25 | D | 1. The Kerala High Court has held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.
2. Right to internet is a fundamental right (subject to reasonable restrictions) included in the freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution. |
<p>| 26 | D | 1. India is one of the world’s top geopolitical risks for 2020. It is the 5th highest geopolitical risk. |</p>
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<td>2. A weakened economy will in turn feed further economic nationalism and protectionism, weighing on India’s troubled course in 2020. 3. The Shia world may rise creating greater regional instability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
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<td>1. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal first came into force in 1992. The Convention puts an onus on exporting countries to ensure that hazardous wastes are managed in an environmentally sound manner in the country of import. 2. As at December 2002, ten parties had ratified the Waigani Convention. The main effect of this Convention is to ban the import of all hazardous and radioactive wastes into South Pacific Forum Island Countries. 3. The Rotterdam Convention is a multilateral treaty to promote shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1. Union Government today released the State Energy Efficiency Index 2019, which tracks the progress of Energy Efficiency initiatives in 36 States and Union Territories. 2. The index is developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency in association with Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy. 3. It will help states to contribute towards national goals on energy security and climate action by helping drive Energy Efficiency policies and programme implementation at the state and local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1. Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre: It will be set up under the newly created Cyber and Information Security (CIS) division of the MHA. 2. The I4C will assist in centralising cyber security investigations, prioritise the development of response tools and bring together private companies to contain the menace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1. RGA is a campaign for eradication of inhuman practice of manual scavenging and comprehensive rehabilitation of manual scavengers in India. 2. Ashif Shaikh is well known for his role in the campaign (Rashatriya Garima Abhiyan) through various campaigns of Jan Sahas. 3. Rashtriya Garima Abhiyaan is also known as National Campaign for Dignity and Eradication of Manual Scavenging. 4. It is also associated with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, for the identification of manual scavengers and their rehabilitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1. The Economic Intelligence Unit considered 140 cities for rankings. 2. The ranking is based on a particular country’s scores in five broad categories, namely: (1) Stability, (2) Healthcare, (3) Culture and Environment, (4) Education, (5) Infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 32 | A | 1. Developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M). 2. It will be implemented by the National Informatics Centre. 3. The project costs ₹258 crore and is being supported by the World
Bank.
Brasilia Declaration: Hosted by the Government of Brazil on 18-19 November 2015 in Brasilia, Brazil, and co-sponsored by WHO, the 2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety represented a historic opportunity to chart progress at the mid-point of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

| 33 | A | 1. It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.  
2. Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO. It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.  
3. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism. The Head of RATS is elected to a three-year term. |

| 34 | B | 1. The initiative is led by Iran.  
2. It aims to stabilise the Strait of Hormuz, the gateway for a significant amount of global oil supplies.  
3. A traffic separation scheme is an area in the sea where navigation of ships is highly regulated. Each TSS is designed to create lanes in the water with ships in a specific lane all travelling in (roughly) the same direction.  
4. The Traffic Separation system is followed at Strait of Hormuz. It was ruled by International Maritime Organization. The system is used to regulate traffic at the strait. |

| 35 | D |

| 36 | C |

| 37 | B | HS code mean: Harmonised System, or simply ‘HS’:  
1. It is a six-digit identification code. Of the six digits, the first two denote the HS Chapter, the next two give the HS heading, and the last two give the HS subheading.  
2. Developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).  
3. Called the “universal economic language” for goods.  
4. It is a multipurpose international product nomenclature.  
5. The system currently comprises of around 5,000 commodity groups. |

| 38 | A | 1. It is the difference between the Revenue Receipts plus Non-debt Capital Receipts (NDCR) and the total expenditure.  
2. In other words, fiscal deficit is “reflective of the total borrowing requirements of Government”.  
3. Higher fiscal deficit means higher borrowing by the government, which, in turn, means higher interest rates in the economy.  
4. In India, the FRBM Act suggests bringing the fiscal deficit down to about 3 percent of the GDP is the ideal target.  
5. K. Singh committee recommendations, A debt-to-GDP ratio of 40% for the central government, 20% for the state governments together |
and a fiscal deficit of 2.5% of GDP (gross domestic product), both by financial year 2022-23.

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<td>39</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>B</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 42 | B | 1. ASER has been conducted every year since 2005 in all rural districts of India.  
   2. It is the largest citizen-led survey in India.  
   3. It is also the only annual source of information on children’s learning outcomes available in Indiaday. |
| 43 | C | Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL)  
   1. DFCCIL has been registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 on 30 October 2006.  
   2. DFCCIL has been designated by Government of India as a ‘special purpose vehicle’, and has been created to undertake planning & development, mobilization of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors.  
   3. Chennai – Goa Dedicated Freight Corridor: This DFC goes through Bangalore-Chennai Industrial Corridor promoted by Japan & India.  
   4. DFC will help India to achieve target committed by India in the Paris climate accord, by migrating from diesel propelled freight trains and fossil fuel-based road traffic to electricity based railway locomotives. India is leader in renewable energy with most of the new electricity generation capacity is added using solar, wind and nuclear sources |
| 44 | C | Apart from the three mentioned in the options, other J&K handicrafts accorded GI tags include:  
   1. Pashmina  
   2. Sozani craft  
   3. Walnut wood carving  
   4. Hand-knotted carpet |
| 45 | D |   |
| 46 | D | Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)  
   1. The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.  
   2. The Treaty represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970.  
   3. On 11 May 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely.  
   4. A total of 191 States have joined the Treaty, including the five nuclear-weapon States. More countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty’s significance. |
5. Currently only five countries have not signed NPT which are, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Sudan and North Korea.

| 47 | B | 1. National Agriculture Market (eNAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal which networks the existing APMC mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.
2. Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is the lead agency for implementing eNAM under the aegis of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India.
3. NAM is a “virtual” market but it has a physical market (mandi) at the back end. |

| 48 | A | 1. Technical Textiles are defined as Textile material and products manufactured primarily for their Technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic and decorative characteristics.
2. Technical textiles include textiles for automotive applications, medical textiles (e.g., implants), geotextiles (reinforcement of embankments), agrotextiles (textiles for crop protection), and protective clothing (e.g., heat and radiation protection for fire fighter clothing, molten metal protection for welders, stab protection and bulletproof vests, and spacesuits). |

| 49 | C | Dry ice, carbon dioxide in its solid form.
1. Dry Ice Applications: most common use of dry ice is to preserve food, using non-cyclic refrigeration, apart from this
2. Maintaining produce at chilled temperatures
3. Maintaining produce at frozen temperatures
4. Airline Shipping
5. Dry ice is sometimes used in the presentation of food in restaurants |