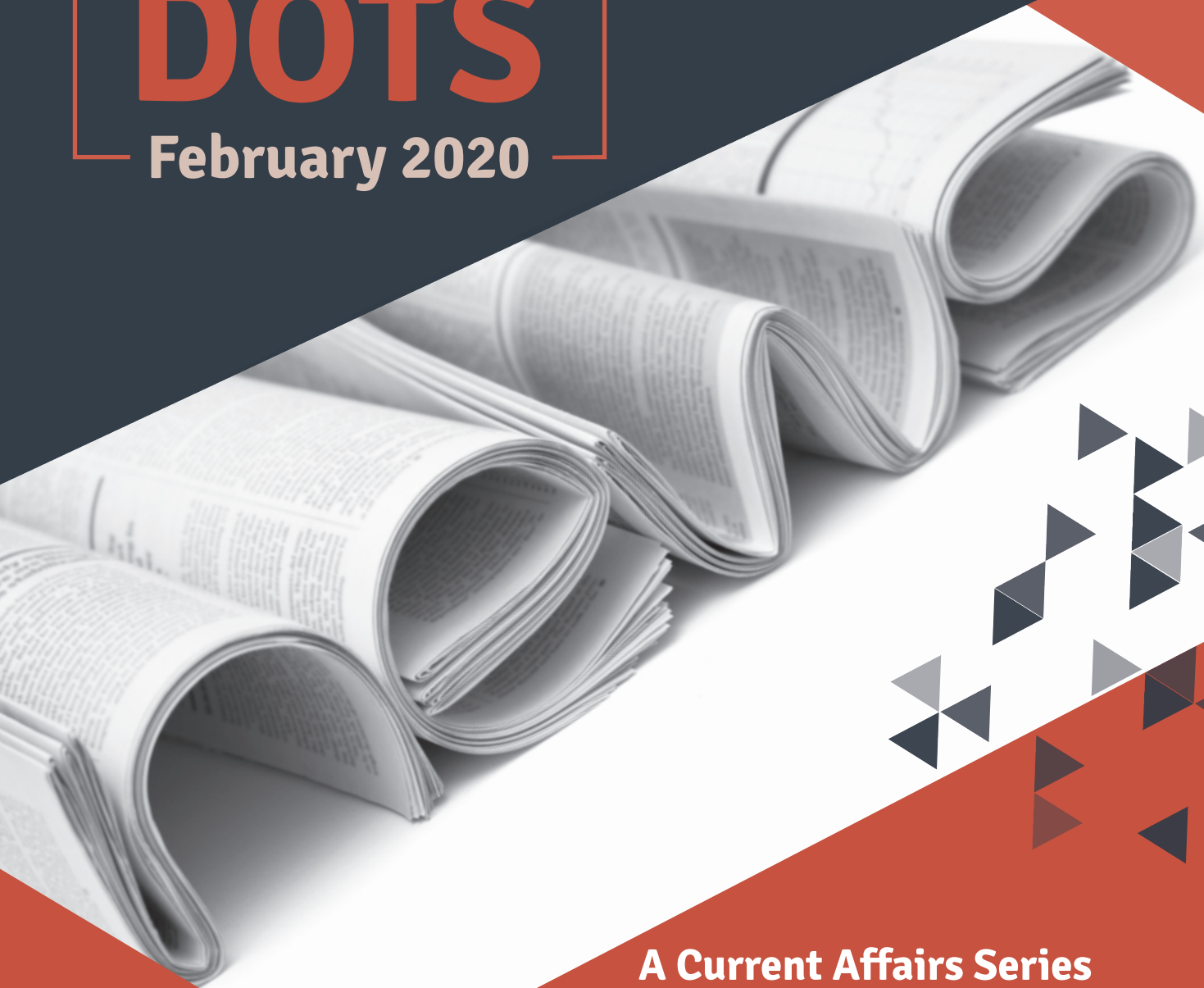


JOIN THE DOTS

February 2020



A Current Affairs Series for UPSC Examination

- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2020
- WHO Declares Coronavirus as Public Health Emergency of International Concern
- National Deworming Day (NDD)
- Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2019-20 (PART – I)
- Budget 2020-21: Tourism and Culture
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), COP13

JOIN THE DOTS!

Compendium – February 2020

Dear Students,

With the present examination pattern of UPSC Civil Services Examination, General Studies papers require a lot of specialization with 'Current Affairs'. Moreover, following the recent trend of UPSC, almost all the questions are based on news as well as issues. CL IAS has now come up with **'JOIN THE DOTS! FEBRUARY 2020'** series which will help you pick up relevant news items of the day from various national dailies such as The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, LiveMint, PIB and other important sources.

'JOIN THE DOTS! FEBRUARY 2020' series will be helpful for prelims as well as Mains Examination. We are covering every issue in a holistic manner and covered every dimension with detailed facts. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of June 2019. Also, we have introduced Prelim base question for Test Your Knowledge which shall guide you for better revision. In addition, it would benefit all those who are preparing for other competitive examinations.

We have prepared this series of documents after some rigorous deliberations with Toppers and also with aspirants who have wide experience of preparations in the Civil Services Examination.

For more information and more knowledge, you can go to our website <https://www.careerlauncher.com/upsc/>

"Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there"

All the best!!

Team CL

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Prelims Perspicuous Pointers

Join the dots!

A current affairs series for UPSC Examination

Global Traffic Index-2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Global Traffic Index and its findings)

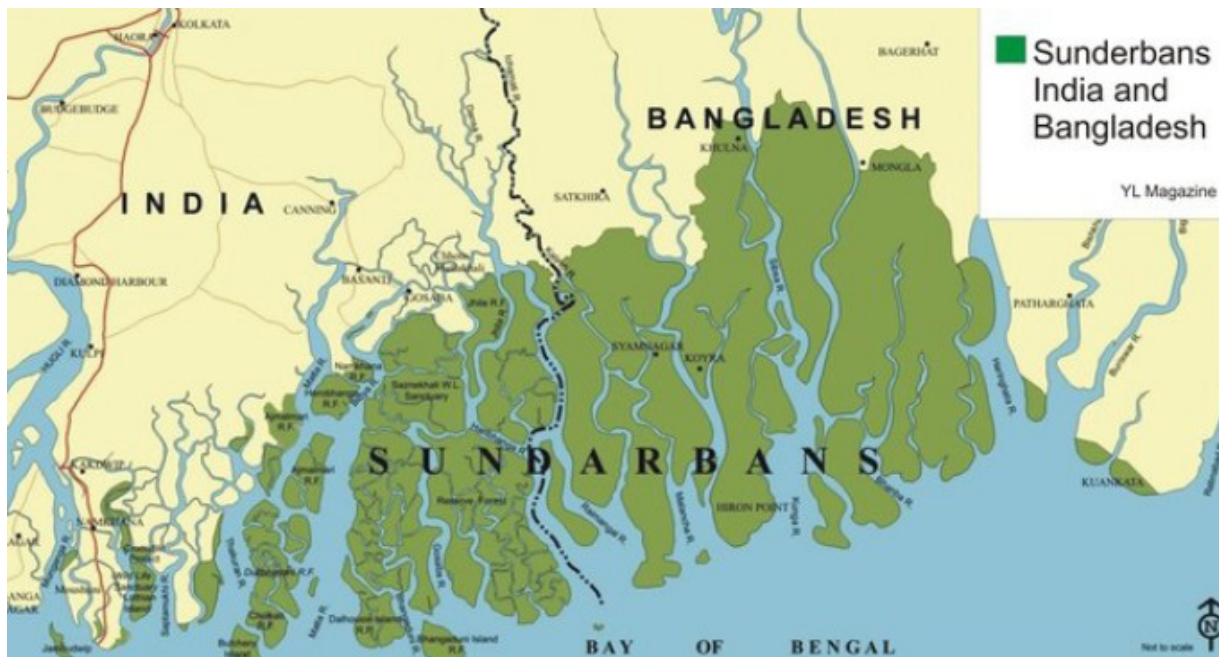
What's the NEWS

- Bengaluru emerged as the worst traffic congested city globally in the TomTom Traffic Index of 2019.
- Along with it, three other Indian cities have made it to the top 10 list of the Dutch real-time traffic information and services company.
- Global Traffic Index-2019, conducted by a Netherlands based firm Tom-Tom (vehicle navigation company)
- The annual traffic index has surveyed in 416 cities, in 57 countries and 6 continents. It is the ninth annual edition of TomTom.

Know! more about the index findings

- As per the results of the TomTom Traffic Index, a report detailing the traffic situation in 416 cities in 57 countries, Bengaluru takes the top spot this year with drivers in the southern Indian city expecting to spend an average of 71 per cent extra travel time stuck in traffic.
- Apart from Bengaluru, three other Indian cities are in the top 10 of the traffic index. These include Mumbai (65%), Pune (59%) and New Delhi (56%) at the fourth, fifth and eight position, respectively.

Defence: Matla Abhiyaan



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Matla Abhiyaan)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Navy carried out a five-day coastal security exercise, 'Matla Abhiyaan', with personnel of two naval boats, holding interactions with all stakeholders along the riverine border with Bangladesh.

Know! more about the exercise

- The exercise, named after Matla River, aimed to interact with coastal communities to spread awareness on coastal security and understand the navigational complexities in the Sunderban deltaic waters.
- During the exercise, the two boats undertook patrol in the Sunderban delta, and along the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route.
- The personnel of the naval boats interacted with the crew of fishing boats, tankers and launches operating in the Matla and Hooghly rivers and the narrow creeks of Sunderbans.
- The sailors also interacted with local fishermen to spread awareness on coastal security, and personnel of marine police stations at Maipith, Gobardhanpur and Gosaba enroute to Hemnagar

Prelims Factoids: The poets that FM quoted in her Budget speech

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the poets)

What's the NEWS

Finance Minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman quoted four poets in her Budget speech

- Pt. Dinanath Nadim
- Avvaiyar
- Thiruvalluvar and
- Kalidas

The FM also stated Chanakya Niti Sutra — “Karya purusha karena lakshyam sampadyate” which translates to “determined human efforts can ensure that a task is completed

Pt. Dinanath Nadim

- The Kashmiri nationalist poet Dinanath Nadim was at the centre of Kashmir's progressive movement, especially in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.
- Nadim wrote in Kashmiri, Hindi and Urdu, and inspired a powerful tradition of Kashmiri poetry.
- Nadim received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1986 for his opera Shuhul Kull (The Shady Tree).
- Sitharaman quoted from Nadim's poem “Myon Watan”, which translates into English as “My Motherland”.

Avvaiyar

- Avvaiyar translates to “Respected Woman”, and the title was used by several woman poets who contributed to Tamil literature during different periods of time.
- FM quoted from Aaathichoodi's verse 81 which translates to “first tend to till one's land and then eat. One must eat only after work.

Thiruvalluvar

- Thiruvalluvar, the Tamil poet and philosopher regarded as a cultural and moral icon for Tamils across caste and religious lines, is best known as the author of Thirukkural, a collection of couplets on ethics, politics, economics, and love.
- FM quoted Thiruvalluvar: “Pini Inmai Selvam Vilaivu Inbam Emam Ani Enba”, which loosely translates to having the “five jewels” required for a country that is without illness, with wealth, with good crops, with happiness, as well as safety and security.

Kalidas

- Kalidas, the legendary Sanskrit scholar, is believed to have lived during the middle of the fourth and early fifth centuries AD, during the reigns of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya and Kumaragupta.
- Raghuvamsa, from which Sitharaman quoted, is one of two long epic poems written by Kalidas.

Prelims Factoids: Madhya Pradesh Tourism announces festival in Orchha

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the festival Namaste Orchha)

What's the NEWS

- The Madhya Pradesh Tourism announced a three-day ‘Namaste Orchha’ cultural festival, beginning from March 6.

- Through 'Namaste Orchha', the Madhya Pradesh Tourism showcase the historic town on the offbeat destination map located on the banks of Betwa river.
- Madhya Pradesh Tourism want Orchha to become a part of the 'Golden Circle' (Jaipur-Agra-Delhi)

Know! more about the Cultural festival

- The three-day extravaganza in this ancient and quaint town will feature diverse activities of music, dance, art, wellness, travel, nature, adventure, history and culture.
- These activities would be led by experts in their respective fields with participants comprising invited delegates.
- The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board has recently won ten National Awards and the state has also been listed among the top three 'Best Value Destination' of the world by Lonely Planet.
- Orchha has been awarded the Best Heritage City at the National Tourism Awards 2019 and is being developed by the government as 'must-visit' destination
- The Orchha Fort Complex hosts the legendary and unique Ram Raja Temple, built in honour of Lord Ram and is the only place where he is worshipped both as a god and as a king.
- Already on the shortlist for UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Orchha has the potential to become an alternative destination as part of the Golden Triangle for travellers in India.

Tribal Affairs: Fashion Show "Naturally North East: Organised by TribesIndia at Suraj Kund Mela

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the fashion show + about TRIFED and Tribes India + about Suraj kund mela)

What's the NEWS

- A fashion show entitled "Naturally North-East: The Naga Narrative" curated by Mrs. Ritu Beri noted fashion designer and Chief designer of Tribes India and organised by TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs held at Suraj Kund Mela
- This fashion show showcased the Naga weave with modern touch and various other products from Northeast states.
- The event highlighted the culture of Nagaland through fusion attire mixed with their local beaded jewellery.

Know! about TRIFED

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987.
- It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India.
- TRIFED has its registered and Head Office located in New Delhi and has a network of 13 Regional Offices located at various places in the country.
- TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs aims to serve the interest of tribes through socio economic betterment.
- TRIFED has set up a retail chain known as Tribes India to buy the products from tribal and sell the same in market.
- This in turn is making tribal self-sufficient and providing them with better livelihood opportunities.

Know! about Surajkund Mela

- The Annual International Craft Festival is organised by the Surajkund Mela Authority & Haryana Tourism in collaboration with Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs.
- It was first hosted in the year 1987, and this year will mark the 34th year of the Surajkund Mela.
- The fortnight-long festival is celebrated from February 1 to February 16.
- It engages visitors in traditional folk dances, musical shows, and even puppet skits.
- The Surajkund Mela 2020 will be celebrated in Surajkund, Faridabad, Haryana.
- Every year, each theme state constructs a replica of one of the popular monuments of its state at the in the Surajkund Mela Grounds.
- Himachal Pradesh is the 'Theme State' of the 34th Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2020.
- The state will present a replica of 'Bhima Kali Temple'.

International: China Scientists Identify Pangolin as Possible Coronavirus Host

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Coronavirus and about Pangolin)

What's the NEWS

- The deadly coronavirus outbreak in China could have spread from bats to humans through the illegal traffic of pangolins, the world's only scaly mammals, which are prized in Asia for food and medicine, Chinese researchers said.
- The genome sequence of the novel coronavirus strain separated from pangolins in the study was 99% identical to that from infected people
- The research found that pangolins to be "the most likely intermediate host."



Know! about pangolin

- The pangolin is one of Asia's most trafficked mammals, although protected by international law, because its meat is considered a delicacy in countries such as China and its scales are used in traditional medicine
- Pangolins are listed under threatened in IUCN red list and have the highest protection under CITES
- The outbreak, which has killed 636 people in mainland China, is believed to have started in a market in the city of Wuhan, in central Hubei province that also sold live wild animals.
- Health experts think it may have originated in bats and then passed to humans, possibly via another species.
- Earlier in 2002-03, when the SARS outbreak occurred, the virus transferred to humans from civet (a mammal). The sale of Civet was outlawed in China in the wake of SARS epidemic.

Prelims Factoids: Sakhi Centres

Relevance IN – Prelims (Know! about the objective of Sakhi Centre)

- One Stop Centre(OSC) scheme, popularly known as Sakhi Centres, is being implemented across the country since 1st April 2015. As on date, 680 OSCs have been set up across 35 States/UTs.
- As per the OSC Scheme, OSCs are required to facilitate women affected by violence with a range of integrated services under one roof including police facilitation, medical aid, legal aid and legal counselling, psycho-social counseling and temporary shelter, and are to be located within 2 kms radius of the hospitals or medical facilities.
- The Government of India has approved setting up of 1023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTCSs) under Nirbhaya Fund across the country for expeditious trial and disposal of pending cases rape under POCSO Act, 2012 in a time-bound manner.

State Specific: First Disha police station



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Disha act)

What's the NEWS

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy inaugurated Disha police station in Rajamahendravaram city to address heinous crimes against women and children in Andhra Pradesh.
- He also launched the Disha app to help women in distress, and demonstrated how women can send SOS through the app which will alert the nearest police vehicle.
- It is the first of the 18 Disha police station promised under the Disha Act to fast-track the trials of crime against women, providing stringent punishment for rape crimes and others with conclusive evidence.
- While the state saw the first Disha police station set up within three months of passing the new law, the remaining police stations will be set up by the end of the month

Know! about Disha Act

- Disha Act is a state law passed by the government, soon after the brutal rape and murder of 26-year-old veterinarian in Telangana last year.
- Under the law, the investigation into cases of sexual offences are to be completed within seven working days from the time of record, and the trial must be concluded within 14 working days from the date of filing the charge sheet.
- The Disha law is designed in such a way that it awards the capital punishment for the convict in a rape case if the evidence is established during the 14-day of trial. The State ensures a fair investigation within seven days in the Disha cases
- The appeal against the sentence passed under the new law has to be disposed of within six months.
- Special courts in each district will take care of such cases. This is notably less than the four months' judgement period (two months each for investigation and trial) prescribed under the Nirbhaya Act of 2013 and the Criminal Amendment Act of 2018.
- Criminals will also be sentenced to two years' of imprisonment on the first conviction of cyber harassment and four years on repeated attempts.

Defence: Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR-2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR)

What's the NEWS

- Fifth edition of Joint Military Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR-2020 between India and United Kingdom will be conducted at Salisbury Plains, United Kingdom from 13 to 26 February 2020.

Know! more about the Exercise

- The exercise will comprise of 120 soldiers each from Indian and United Kingdom Army who would be sharing their experiences gained during conduct of various counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in the past.
- The aim of this exercise is to conduct company level joint training with emphasis on counter terrorists operation in Urban and Semi Urban areas.
- Training on modern weapon systems, equipment and simulator training have also been planned.
- Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR with United Kingdom is an important exercise in terms of the security challenges faced by both the nations in the realm of changing facets of global terrorism. The exercise is conducted alternatively in United Kingdom and India.
- Exercise AJEYA WARRIOR will promote defence cooperation and enhance interoperability while sharing experiences between both the armies.



Environment Conservation: Web Portal Launched for Star Rating of Mines in India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the web portal and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- In order to promote green, safe and sustainable mining practices using technology as a tool, Ministry of Coal (MoC) has launched a web portal for star rating of coal mines.

Know! more about the portal

- The Portal has been launched which enables all operational coal mines across India for self-rating, their subsequent validation by Coal Controller's Organization (CCO), further evaluation and finally award of star rating.
- Based on the star ratings obtained through a well-defined mechanism on this web portal, the highest scoring mines in the country will be awarded in a public ceremony.
- The mines that score from 91 to 100% will get 5 star, 81 to 90% 4 star, 71 to 80% 3 star, 61 to 70% 2 star, 41 to 60% 1 star and mines that score from 0 to 40% will get No star on the portal as per laid down procedures of the Star Rating Policy for Coal Mines in India.
- The portal will provide a login to each coal mine for self-evaluation along with necessary documents for testimonials.

e-Governance: DGT Proposes to Issue Digital 'E-Credentials/E-Certificates'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the digital e-credentials + about e-certificates)

What's the NEWS

- The Government is developing the Electronic Skill Credential Standard (ESCS) Specification.

Know! more about it

- Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship proposes to issue digital 'e-Credentials / e-Certificates' which are freely portable for candidates and easily verifiable at scale by employers and job matching platforms but continue to allow print and other visual forms for human consumption.
- This would enable candidates to verifiably state their skill levels with a high degree of trust in authenticity to aggregators, matchers, and employers.
- Now in the DGT ecosystem, all the certificates are 'e-Certificates', digitally signed.
- e-Credentials are an electronic scheme-based standard for describing credentials data in a machine-readable format (JSON-LD representation of RDFa- Resource Description Framework, a web standard) along with its printable human-friendly version to make credential exchange between digital agents open and reliable.

Economy: Digital Payments Index (DPI)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about DPI)

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a Digital Payments Index (DPI) to assess and capture the extent of digitalisation of payments effectively.

Know! more about it

- The DPI would be based on multiple parameters and shall reflect accurately the penetration and deepening of various digital payment modes.
- The DPI will be made available from July 2020 onwards

Steps taken to promote cashless transactions

- The banking regulator and the government have been working on facilitating adoption of cashless payment systems like digital wallets, internet banking, credit and debit cards.
- The government recently scrapped merchant discount rates (MDR) on payments made through Rupay debit cards and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

- There are reports of the government planning to scrap MDR on all debit cards.

Know! about Merchandise discount rate (MDR)

- MDR is the cost paid by a merchant to a bank for accepting payment from their customers via digital means. The merchant discount rate is expressed in percentage of the transaction amount. It is also applicable for online transactions and QR-based transactions.
- The amount that the merchant pays for every transaction gets distributed among three stakeholders--the bank that enables the transaction, vendor that installs the point of sale (PoS) machine and the card network provider such as Visa, MasterCard, RuPay.
- Payments via digital modes are expected to make transactions more transparent and thereby prevent tax evasion.
- The announcement on the DPI was made along with the RBI's monetary policy statement released
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously decided to leave the key lending rate unchanged for the second consecutive bi-monthly policy at 5.15% and maintained its accommodative stance.

State Specific: Arsenic-resistant rice cultivated in West Bengal

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Arsenic and about the new variety of rice)

What's the NEWS

- Researchers have developed and commercialised a rice variety that is resistant to arsenic.

Know! more about it

- West Bengal is among the States with the highest concentration of arsenic in groundwater, with as many as 83 blocks across seven districts having higher arsenic levels than permissible limits.
- The new rice variety, Muktooshi — also called IET 21845 —, was developed jointly by the Rice Research Station at Chinsurah coming under West Bengal's Agriculture Department and the National Botanical Research Institute, Lucknow, over several years.
- This variety uptakes very less amount of arsenic from soil and water in comparison to other varieties of rice.
- According to the World Health Organization, long-term exposure to arsenic, mainly through drinking water and food, can lead to poisoning. Skin lesions and skin cancer are the most characteristic effects.

Know! about Arsenic

- Arsenic is a naturally occurring element that is widely distributed in the Earth's crust. It is found in water, air, food, and soil.
- Several studies have shown that arsenic from groundwater and the soil can enter the food chain through paddy.
- Arsenic in groundwater is a widespread problem. Arsenic levels tend to be higher in drinking water that comes from ground sources, such as wells, than from water from surface sources, such as lakes or reservoirs.

State Specific: The Filament-free Kerala Project

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Filament-free Kerala project and about Urja Kerala mission)

What's the NEWS

- Kerala Finance Minister announced that the state will impose a ban on the sale of compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) and incandescent (filament) bulbs starting November this year as part of sustainable energy policy.

Know! more about it

- The streetlights and bulbs in government offices across the state will be converted to light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.
- It is in line with the government project of 'Filament-free Kerala' envisaged in 2018 as part of the state's Urja Kerala mission.
- LED bulbs are energy-efficient than filament or CFL bulbs and will, therefore, generate less waste. Also, filament bulbs contain the mercury element which, when broken, is polluting in nature.

Filament-free Kerala project

- The filament-free Kerala project will be implemented by the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) and the Energy Management Centre, Kerala.
- Consumers in the state can place orders for LED bulbs on the KSEB website in exchange for existing filament bulbs.

Defence: India developing new 200-km strike range Pranash ballistic missile

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Pranash ballistic missile)

What's the NEWS

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has started working on the development of the 200-km strike range Pranash ballistic missile which would be armed with conventional warheads

Know! more about Pranash

- The missile is an advanced version of the 150-km strike range Prahar missile which was being developed for tactical missions.
- The surface-to-surface ballistic missile will be of use for the Air Force and Army.
- The trials of the missile would be conducted in next couple of years and the single-stage solid-propellant missile would also be readied for exports to friendly foreign countries as its strike range is within the permissible limits of international regimes on missile sales.



Prelims Factoids: Nitin Gadkari Flags off Apiary on Wheels



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Apiary on Wheels + about National Honey Mission)

What's the NEWS

- 'Apiary on Wheels', a unique concept designed by KVIC for the easy upkeep and migration of Bee Boxes having live Bee colonies, was flagged off by the Union Minister of MSME Shri Nitin Gadkari

Know! about Apiary on Wheels

- Apiary on Wheels will make the migration easy, the maintenance easy, easy feeding of bees and it will also help the bees to sustain even in extreme summers.

- Apiary on wheels is a holistic approach to address the challenges faced by the beekeepers.
- It is designed so as to reduce the labour and cost of maintaining and upkeeping Bee Boxes and live bee colonies across India.
- Apiary on Wheels is a platform which can carry 20 Bee Boxes from one place to another without any difficulty.
- The Apiary on Wheels is also connected with a solar panel system which automatically triggers a fan inside the compartment as soon as the temperature reaches 35 degree centigrade or above.
- The Apiary on Wheels also has sugar drips which helps to feed the bees in the summer season.
- The Apiary on Wheels is like an attachment which can be easily connected with a Tractor or a Trolley and may be pulled to any suitable destination.
- As a pilot project the Apiary on Wheels will be placed near the mustard farms near the Delhi

National Honey Mission

- KVIC launched Honey Mission in 2017 and has been training beekeepers, distributing Bee Boxes and helping rural, educated but unemployed youth to earn extra income through beekeeping activities, at their doorstep.

Prelims Factoids: Organic Food Festival for women entrepreneurs

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the organic food festival and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- An organic food festival for women entrepreneurs will be held during February 21-23 in the national capital as part of the government's effort to boost organic products and promote women entrepreneurship in the area of production and processing
- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) and Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) will jointly be organising the event.

Know! more about the fest

- This will be the first such event where over 150 women entrepreneurs and self help groups will be participating and in future will be showcased in different parts of the country
- It will feature organic produce, processed food, fabric, cosmetics, pesticides and fungicides among many products.
- the festival will strive to provide linkages to women producers to market and supply chain, thereby facilitating their financial inclusion.
- The festival aims to encourage Indian women entrepreneurs and farmers to connect with buyers and thus, empower them through financial inclusion, while also promoting organic food produce in India.
- Demand for Indian organic food products is on a constant increase with India annually exporting \$ 515 million worth of produce according to Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- As per the Indian organic sector -vision 2025 report, India's organic business has immense potential to reach Rs 75000 crore by 2025 from Rs 2700 crore in 2015.

Prelims Factoids: World Radio Day 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Radio Day and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- World Radio Day is celebrated on February 13 every year, to celebrate radio as a medium of entertainment and information and the mode of communication.
- The theme of this year's World Radio Day is 'Radio and Diversity'.
- The main object behind celebrating World Radio Day is to raise awareness among the public and the media of the importance of radio



Know! the genesis of World Radio Day

- In 2011, UNESCO's General Conference, at its 36th session, proclaimed February 13 as World Radio Day.
- The day February 13 was proposed by the Director-General of UNESCO because it coincides with the anniversary of the United Nations Radio, the UN's international broadcasting service was established on February 13, 1946.
- During its 67th Session, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on January 14, 2013, the United Nations General Assembly formally endorsed UNESCO's proclamation February 13 as World Radio Day.

National: The Union Cabinet had approved Pesticides Management Bill, 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the pesticides management bill and its important highlights)

What's the NEWS

- The bill seeking to promote safe and effective pesticides will be introduced in the current session of Parliament
- The main objective of the Bill is to protect the interest of farmers and ensure they get safe and effective pesticides.
- The bill seeks to replace the existing Insecticide Act, 1968

Know! the highlights of the Bill

- Farmers would be empowered to get all information regarding the available pesticides, their strength, weaknesses, and risks from the dealers they choose to purchase the pesticide from
- Farmers will not get spurious pesticides
- Farmers will know about the strength and weakness of pesticides, the risk and alternatives and this will be an open data in digital format also.
- Farmers would essentially get these information from the dealers selling pesticides.
- The bill also intends to promote organic pesticides.
- All pesticide manufacturers have to be registered and bound by the new Act, once it is passed.
- If there is any loss because of the spurious or low quality of pesticides then there is a provision for compensations.

Know! the use of pesticides in India

- India is among the leading producers of pesticides in Asia. In the domestic market, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana are among the states with the highest recorded consumption.
- There are 234 pesticides registered in India. Out of these, 4 are WHO Class IA pesticides, 15 are WHO Class IB pesticides and 76 are WHO Class II pesticides, together constituting 40% of the registered pesticides in India.

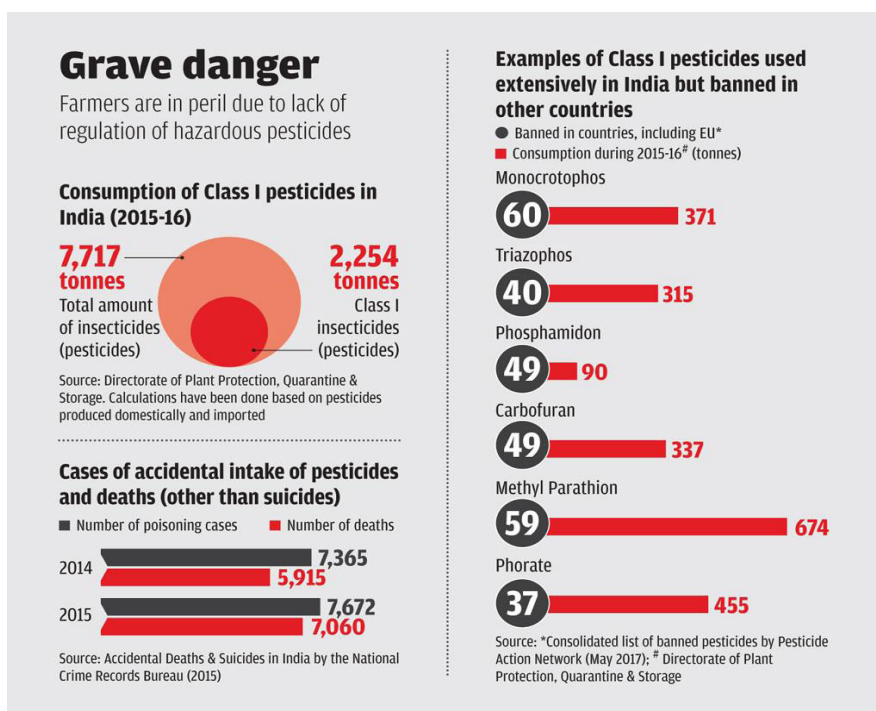


Table 2. Classification of Pesticides (Toxicity).

Divisions	Toxic level	Examples
Class IA	Extremely dangerous	Parathion, Dieldrin
Class IB	Highly dangerous	Eldrin, Dichlorvos
Class II	Moderately hazardous	DDT, Chlordane
Class III	Slightly hazardous	Malathion,

International Organisations: 43rd Session of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2020



Relevance IN – Prelims (about IFAD and its objective + about FAO)

What's the NEWS

- The 43rd session of the Governing Council, the decision making body of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2020, under the theme Investing in sustainable food systems to end hunger by 2030, which is being held at the headquarters of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, capital of Italy, from February 11th to 12th.

Know! the important takeaways

- The United Nations will miss its target of achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 stated by UN representative
- Set in 2015 by the UN General Assembly, the self development goals (SDGs) are the “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”, intended to be achieved by 2030.
- The goals include zero poverty, zero hunger, good health and well being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, sustainable cities and communities, and climate action.
- IFAD, a UN financial institution that offers grants and low-interest loans to projects that help reduce poverty and increase food security, is particularly interested in fighting hunger.

Know! about International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, was one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.
- The conference was organized by the United Nations in response to the food crises of the early 1970s
- an International Fund for Development established to finance agricultural development projects, primarily for food production in the developing countries
- The Fund shall provide financing primarily for projects and programmes specifically designed to introduce, expand or improve food production systems and to strengthen related policies and institutions
- Three years after the Rome conference, IFAD was set up as an international financial institution in 1977.

Know! about FAO

- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security.

- Founded in October 1945, the FAO is the oldest existing agency of the U.N.
- Composed of 197 member states, the FAO is governed by a biennial conference representing each member country and the European Union, which elects a 49-member executive council

Prelims Factoids: SPICe+ (Simplified Proforma for Incorporating a Company Electronically plus)



Relevance IN – Prelims (about SPICe+ and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has come out with the format of the new web form — SPICe+ — for incorporation of companies.
- The web form — issued as part of the Centre's Ease of Doing Business initiative — has replaced the existing SPICe form.

Know! more about SPICe+

- Central Government has amended Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 by issue of Companies (Incorporation) Amendment Rules, 2020.
- The rule shall be made applicable for all new company incorporation with effect from 15th Feb, 2020.
- To implement these rules MCA is going to release new incorporation Form 'SPICe+'.
- The integrated web form will, among other things, offer 10 services by three Central Government Ministries and Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Department of Revenue in the Finance Ministry) and one State Government (Maharashtra).
- SPICe+ will be an integrated Web Form that will have two Parts, 'Part A' for reservation of Name of Company and 'Part B' for registration related services.

Part B for registration related services.

- It has been now made mandatory for the new companies to apply for "EPFO Registration", "ESIC Registration", "Professional Tax Registration (For Maharashtra)" and "Opening of Bank Account".

Way Forward

- It's a good move by government to afford a single window for the new companies to get all registrations on a single go, but at the same time making PF and ESI registrations mandatory for new companies will add further to the compliance burden on the new companies.

Defence: President's Colour to INS Shivaji



RELEVANCE IN – Prelims (about INS Shivaji + about President's colour)

What's the NEWS

- President Ram Nath Kovind presented President's Colour to INS Shivaji, a premier Indian Navy training establishment located between Mumbai and Pune.
- The President's colour is the highest honour bestowed upon any Indian military unit.
- The conferral of the President's Colour marks an extremely significant milestone in the history of INS Shivaji.
- INS Shivaji is one of the leading training establishments of the Indian Navy established in 1945.

Know! more about INS Shivaji

- INS Shivaji is an Indian Naval station located in Lonavala, Maharashtra, India.
- It houses the Naval College of Engineering which trains officers of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard.
- It was commissioned on 15 February 1945 as HMIS Shivaji. It is located close to the Bhushi Dam.
- INS Shivaji is commemorating its 75 years of its service to the Indian Navy this month
- Indian Navy already operates a first damage control simulator Akshat at INS Shivaji to train its officers and sailors on damage control on a warship at sea.
- Indian Navy's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence (NBCD) School and Center for Marine Engineering Technology are also based here
- The unit has largely contributed in training modern-day Marine Engineers.
- INS Shivaji also imparts training to personnel from 20 countries across the world
- The President's Colour will now be proudly displayed and carried at all ceremonial parades at INS Shivaji to inspire all future Marine Engineers of the Indian Navy.

Judiciary: All India Conference of Central Administrative Tribunal 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CAT)

What's the NEWS

- The annual All India Conference of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) was held in New Delhi
- The one day conference was attended by Judicial and Administrative Members from all 17 Benches of CAT from across the country, members of the CAT Bar Association and eminent Jurists

Know! all about Central Administrative Tribunal

- Central Administrative Tribunal has been established for adjudication of disputes with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the

Union or other local authorities within the territory of India or under the control of Government of India and for matters connected therewith.

- CAT was set up in pursuance of the amendment of Constitution of India by Articles 323A (1976) which empowers the Parliament to set up Tribunals for dealing with disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to service and posts connected with the Union of India.
- Accordingly the Administrative Tribunals Act was passed by the Parliament in 1985.
- Administrative Tribunals were established under the Act in 1985 at Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta and Allahabad. Today, there are 17 Benches of the Tribunal located throughout the country wherever the seat of a High Court is located, with 33 Division Benches.
- In addition to Central Government employees, the Government of India has notified 45 other organizations to bring them within the jurisdiction of the Central Administrative Tribunal.
- The provisions of the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 do not apply to members of paramilitary forces, armed forces of the Union, officers or employees of the Supreme Court, or to persons appointed to the Secretariat Staff of either House of Parliament or the Secretariat staff of State/Union Territory Legislatures.
- A Chairman who has been a sitting or retired Judge of a High Court heads the Central Administrative Tribunal. Besides the Chairman, the authorized strength consists of 16 Vice-Chairmen and 49 Members.
- The Tribunal is not bound to follow the procedures laid down in the Code of Civil Procedure 1908 or Evidence Act, but shall be guided by the principles of natural justice in deciding cases and the procedure.

Prelims Factoids: India Pavilion at GulFood 2020 in Dubai



Relevance IN – Prelims (about GulFood 2020 + about APEDA)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Food Processing Industries, Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated the India Pavilion at 25th Edition of the GulFood 2020, Dubai being held from 16th to 20th February 2020.
- Indian exhibitors can make use of the platform of GulFood 2020 for facilitating tie-ups between foreign investors and accelerate the pace of export of food products from India to the western market.
- The display put forward by APEDA and APEDA is participating with more than 100 exporters in the Gulf Food.
- India and UAE have been amongst each other's largest trading partners for the last several years. Currently UAE is the third largest trading partner with bilateral trade reaching US\$ 59.909 in 2018-19.

Know! about APEDA

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is an apex body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, responsible for the export promotion of agricultural products

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) was established by the Government of India under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act passed by the Parliament in December, 1985.
- The Authority replaced the Processed Food Export Promotion Council (PFEPCC).

APEDA is mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the following scheduled products:

- Fruits, Vegetables and their Products.
- Meat and Meat Products.
- Poultry and Poultry Products.
- Dairy Products.
- Confectionery, Biscuits and Bakery Products.
- Honey, Jaggery and Sugar Products.
- Cocoa and its products, chocolates of all kinds.
- Alcoholic and Non-Alcoholic Beverages.
- Cereal and Cereal Products.
- Groundnuts, Peanuts and Walnuts.
- Pickles, Papads and Chutneys.
- Guar Gum.
- Floriculture and Floriculture Products.
- Herbal and Medicinal Plants.
- In addition to this, APEDA has been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor import of sugar.

Prelims Factoids: Seedsowing festival 'Lui-Ngai-Ni' celebrated at Ukhrul Manipur



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Lui-Ngai-Ni)

What's the NEWS

- The Naga tribes of Manipur celebrated its seed sowing festival 'Lui-Ngai-Ni', under the theme "Oneness through Culture", with much fanfare at Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL) ground in Ukhrul

Know! more about the fest

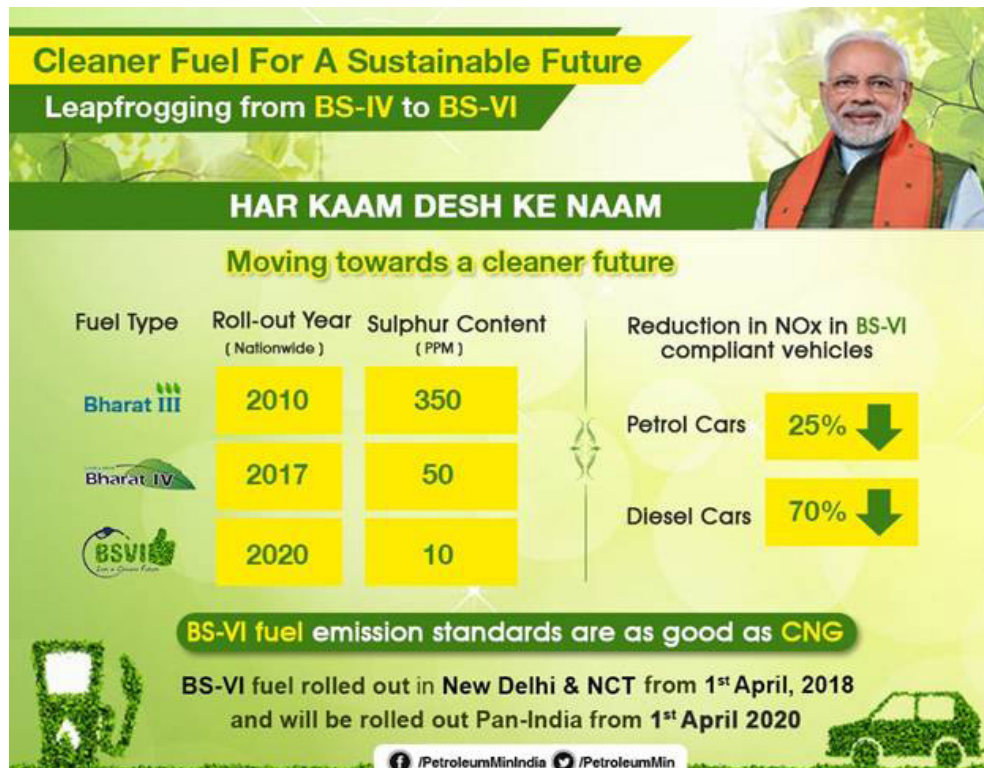
- Leaders from other communities of the State, mainly Meitei, Kuki and Zomi also participated at Lui-Ngai-Ni Festival to show mutual solidarity for peaceful co-existence.
- The two-day event was organised by the United Naga Council and hosted by the Tangkhul Naga Long, an apex body of the Tangkhul community in Manipur.
- Lui-Ngai-Ni is one of the biggest festivals of the Naga community in Manipur. The festival is marked by a plethora of cultural displays and events including the lighting of the sacred fire, blessing of seeds to be sown for the season.

Environment Conservation: Rollout of BS-VI on 1st April 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BS-VI)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas reviewed the preparations and instructed officials to accelerate the efforts, in wake of the planned country-wide rollout of BS-VI on 1st April 2020.
- BS-VI, which is comparable with CNG in terms of providing clean energy, is expected to bring down sulphur level by 5 times from the BS-IV levels.
- This will go a long way in mitigating the problem of air pollution and improving air quality.



Agriculture: Finance Commission constitutes High Level Expert Group on Agriculture Exports

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of the high level expert group)

What's the NEWS

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission has decided to constitute a High Level Expert Group on Agriculture Exports in pursuance of its ToR i.e, to recommend measurable performance incentives for States to encourage agri exports as well as to promote crops to enable high import substitution.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee are

- To assess export & import substitution opportunities for Indian agricultural products in the changing international trade scenario and suggest ways to step up exports sustainably and reduce import dependence.
- To recommend strategies and measures to increase farm productivity, enable higher value addition, ensure waste reduction, strengthen logistics infrastructure etc. related to Indian agriculture, to improve the sector's global competitiveness.
- To identify the impediments for private sector investments along the agricultural value chain and suggest policy measures and reforms that would help attract the required investments.
- To suggest appropriate performance-based incentives to the state governments for the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, to accelerate reforms in the agriculture sector as well as implement other policy measures in this regard.

Prelims Factoids: KALA KUMBH – Handicrafts Exhibitions for promotion of GI Crafts

Relevance IN – Prelims (about KALA KUMBH and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- With an objective to promote Geographical Indication (GI) crafts and heritage of India the Ministry of Textiles is organising Kala Kumbh - Handicrafts Thematic Exhibition in various parts of the country

Know! more about the exhibition

- The exhibitions are planned in various major cities and it is sponsored by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)
- The GI tag is used on handicrafts which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g., a town, region, or country).
- As on August 2019, 178 GI handicraft products were registered from all over India.
- During the 10 day exhibitions, the visitors will be able to see a wide variety of handicrafts with their friends and family and by buying these handicrafts they can directly contribute in the improvement of the livelihood of these artisans and also create awareness of the rich heritage of the country.

NITI Aayog: North East Sustainable Development Goal Conclave 2020 in Assam

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the conclave and its objective + about North eastern Council)

What's the NEWS

- NITI Aayog is organising “Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Conclave 2020: Partnerships, Cooperation and Development of North Eastern States” in Guwahati, in association with the North Eastern Council, Government of Assam, Tata Trusts, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).

Know! more about it

- NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs at the national and sub-national level.
- Progress in the northeast region is crucial in this decade of action for the country to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and this conclave is part of NITI Aayog's continuous efforts towards fostering partnerships at the sub-national level.
- In terms of SDG localisation, the states in the region have taken major strides in integrating the Agenda 2030 framework in their developmental planning and vision documents.

North Eastern Council (NEC)

- It is a statutory advisory body constituted under the NEC Act 1971 and came into being on the 7th November, 1972 at Shillong.
- The eight States of Northeast India viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, are members of the council, with their respective Chief Ministers and Governors representing them. Sikkim was added to the council in the year 2002.
- The headquarters of the council is situated in Shillong and functions under the ministry of home affairs of the Government of India.

Miscellaneous: Cabinet approves the Constitution of an empowered “Technology Group”

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Technology group and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- Cabinet has approved constitution of a 12-Member Technology Group with the Principal Scientific Adviser to Government of India as its Chair which

Know! more about the Technology Group

- This group will advise the Government on priorities and strategies for research on emerging technologies across sectors.
- The group intends to ensure that India has appropriate policies and strategies for effective, secure and context-sensitive exploitation of the latest technologies for economic growth and sustainable development of the Indian Industry.
- This Group is mandated to render timely policy advice on the latest technologies, mapping of technology and technology products, commercialization of dual-use technologies developed in national laboratories and government Research and Development.

The Technology Group will :-

- a. render the best possible advice on technology to be developed for a technology supplier and the technology procurement strategy;
- b. develop in-house expertise in aspects of policy and use of emerging technologies; and
- c. ensure sustainability of public sector technology developed/being developed at PSUs, national labs and research organisations.

The three pillars of the work of the Technology Group include:

- I. Policy Support;
- II. Procurement Support; and
- III. Support on Research and Development proposals.

Defence: INS Jamuna Progresses joint Hydrographic Operations off Sri Lanka

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Indian Naval Hydrographic Department (INHD + National Hydrographic Office (NHO))



What's the NEWS

- The Indian Navy Hydrographic Survey Ship, INS Jamuna is on a deployment to carry out Joint Hydrographic Survey off the South – West coast of Sri Lanka
- The ship has undertaken several survey activities as part of the Foreign Cooperation Survey along with the Sri Lanka Navy hydrographers.

Know! about INHD, NHO and IHO

- The Indian Naval Hydrographic Department (INHD) functions under the Chief Hydrographer to the Government of India.
- The Department, being the nodal agency for Hydrographic surveys and Nautical charting in India, has a very well established organizational setup.
- The National Hydrographic Office (NHO) is located at Dehradun
- NHO is the National Authority for publication of nautical charts and publications.
- NHO provides coverage for marine safety information in the NAVAREA VIII region (in accordance with IHO Publication S-53) comprising of the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

- As part of NHO, Indian Naval Hydrographic Department has eight naval ships assisting in Survey duties and a well established 'National Institute of Hydrography' which is recognized as the Centre for Imparting training in Hydrography' for South East Asia by IHO.
- Surveys are conducted in strict compliance with the 'IHO standards for Hydrographic surveying (S-44)'.
- The department also pioneered in making official Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) for Indian waters.

International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO)

- Established 21 June 1921, International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), Monaco oversees the safety of sea navigation during a passage for all ships and sets the Standards for various procedures and Survey equipment to be complied with for the Survey work.
- Every year, the date of 21 June is celebrated as 'World Hydrography Day' to mark the importance of IHO's role.
- Various seafaring countries are a member of IHO and abide by IHO's hydrographic and nautical charting standards.
- As a member country of IHO, India too regularly shares its part of obligations through the Chief Hydrographer to the government of India, who is a Vice Admiral rank naval officer.

Prelims Factoids: RailMadad gets Silver award under Category II of National e-Governance Awards – 'Excellence in providing Citizen Centric Delivery'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Rail Madad portal)

What's the NEWS

- RailMadad, the grievance redressal portal of Indian Railways, has been awarded **Silver** under Category II of National e-Governance Awards – "Excellence in providing Citizen-centric Delivery".
- This award was conferred during the 23rd National Conference on e-Governance
- To recognize and promote excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) presents National e-Governance Awards every year.

Know! about Rail Madad Portal

- RailMadad portal can be accessed by Railways customers using RailMadad Helpline 139 (with IVRS, voice and SMS facility), RailMadad website: railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & RailMadad App

RailMadad adds to 'ease of living' of Railway customers in the following ways:

1. **Convergence & Integration:** RailMadad is now the single portal for grievance, inquiry and assistance, for all railway customers – passenger, freight & parcel. Customers can also give their suggestions on RailMadad.
2. **Ease of Access:** Customers can access RailMadad through RailMadad no. 139, Web, App, SMS, Social media & Manual Dak.
3. **Ease of Registering complaints:** RailMadad is linked with Railways' existing ticketing systems like PRS & NTES. Hence journey details of passengers are automatically fetched when passenger enters PNR details, making complaint registration process simpler and easy.
4. **Delaying - Redressal on fast forward:** RailMadad is linked with NTES. So, complaint goes automatically to the concerned field unit, which accelerates grievance redressal.
5. **Accountability:** For every registered grievance, the complainant gets a unique CRN (complaint reference number), using which one can check the status of one's grievance.
6. **Citizen empowerment:** RailMadad incorporates citizen charter commitment of Indian Railways.

EdCIL (India) Limited

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EdCIL)

What's the NEWS

- EdCIL (India) Limited, a Mini Ratna Category-I CPSE under Ministry of HRD, Government of India, has paid a *dividend* of Rs 9.5 Crore for the year 2018-19.

Know! about Educational Consultants India Limited (EdCIL)

- EdCIL offers Project Management and Consultancy solutions across education verticals covering ICT/IT Solutions, Online Testing and Assessment Services, Advisory Services, Infrastructure, PMC, Procurement and Overseas Education Services.
- The Government of India has designated Education Consultants of India (Ed.CIL) as the Single Window agency to facilitate the admission of children of Indian Diaspora and foreign students
- The company is executing a mega-project of Ministry of HRD called “Study in India” to increase the number of inbound foreign students to India.
- The program includes setting-up of a large portal, call centre, social media campaign, branding, event management and setting-up of facilitation centres.

Nature Ranking Index-2020

CSIR tops scientific research institutional ranking

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Nature Ranking Index)

What's the NEWS

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has been ranked first in the Nature Ranking Index-2020.
- Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, has been ranked second.

Know! more about the Nature Ranking Index

- The rankings are based on total research output which the institutions have carried out from December 01, 2018 to 30th November, 2019.
- CSIR-New Delhi has achieved the top position with 142 counts (C) and a share percentage (SP) of 87.74 while IISc-Bengaluru stands second with 211 counts and 83.61 in share percentage.
- The total research output indicated the counts which mean total citations in numbers and shares which mean the sharing percentage per article.
- The top subjects so associated with the research work includes: Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physical Science, Chemistry and Life Sciences.
- The third place in India is secured by Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR-Mumbai) with a research count of 232 and share percentage of 62.18.

Prelims Factoids: Bharat-Bangla Tourism festival

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Bharat – Bangla tourism fest)

What's the NEWS

- In Tripura, a two-day long first-ever Bharat-Bangla Paryatan Utsav- Tourism festival began with spectacular cultural events

Know! more about the fest

- The State Tourism Department has organized the festival in memories of the contribution of Tripura in 1971 Bangladesh liberation war as well as giving a fillip to the Tripura tourism sector.



Herath festival: PMO

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Herath festival)

What's the NEWS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today greeted people on the occasion of Herath, one of the biggest festivals of Kashmiri Pandits.

Know! more about the fest

- In Kashmir Shaivism, Maha Shivaratri is celebrated by the Hindus of Kashmir and is known as Herath in Kashmiri, a word derived from the Sanskrit word “Hararatri” or the “Night of Hara” (another name of Shiva).
- Prayers held on the day after nightlong Maha Shivaratri are called ‘salaam’.

NIT, Trichy develops a mobile app for Self Help Group products - Thirumathikart

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Thirumathikart mobile app)

What's the NEWS

- The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Trichy, Tamilnadu has developed Thirumathikart - a mobile app for SHG (Self Help Group) products.
- The application was developed in coordination with the Union Department of Science and Technology.

Know! more about the app

- The main objective of the app is to empower women and help them access market opportunities in a seamless manner.
- The platform will also enable Self Help Groups to showcase their products to a wider audience.

Prelims Factoids: HRMS Mobile App



Relevance IN – Prelims (about HRMS Mobile App)

What's the NEWS

- The Chairman of Railway Board launched HRMS Mobile App which has been designed and developed by Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS).
- All employees of Indian Railways can now see data related to their service and communicate with administration for any changes, if required.

Know! more about the Mobile app

- This Mobile Application allows employee to view his historical data since his date of joining in Railways including details related to his Increments, Promotions, Awards, Transfers, Postings, Leave, Training, and composition of

Family as per records and Nominations for retirement benefits.

- This information is not readily available to employee at present. It brings transparency to administration. This application will be single window communication system between Railway employees and Administration.
- This Mobile App provides an important link to Railway employees to communicate with administration regarding change required in their data for validation.

Matribhasha Divas

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Matribhasha Divas)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development is celebrating Matribhasha Divas which falls on 21st February every year

Know! more about it

- The Matribhasha Divas is celebrated to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism in the world, as well as to spread awareness about languages.
- Every year UNESCO celebrates International Mother Language Day with a new theme.
- The theme of this year (2020) is “**Languages without Borders**” which means languages across/devoid of geographical boundaries.

One in 10 calls on abuse to helpline made by children

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CIF)

What's the NEWS

- Of every 10 calls made to the emergency helpline 1098 to report abuse against children, one was from a survivor desperately seeking help, according to data compiled by the CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF).
- CHILDLINE helpline 1098 — a free, emergency phone service for children in need of help. It is also the largest network of agencies involved in protection of children.

CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF)

- CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) is the nodal agency of the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development acting as the parent organisation for setting up, managing and monitoring the CHILDLINE 1098 service all over the country.
- CIF is the sole agency/body responsible for establishing the CHILDLINE service across the country, monitoring of service delivery and finance, training, research and documentation, creating awareness, advocacy as well as resource generation for the service.

International: Dams to control rising sea levels

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NEED)

What's the NEWS

- A mammoth Northern European Enclosure Dam (NEED) enclosing all of the North Sea has been proposed to protect the Northern European countries from rising seas as a result of climate change:

Know! more about the proposal (NEED)

- The scientists have proposed the construction of two dams of a combined length of 637 km — the first between northern Scotland and western Norway, measuring 476 km and the second between France and southwestern England, of length 161 km.



- Separating the North and Baltic Seas from the Atlantic Ocean may be the “most viable option” to protect Northern Europe against unstoppable sea level rise (SLR).

Prelims Factoids: MCA inaugurates SPICe+ web form

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SPICe+ app)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs(MCA) inaugurated the 'SPICe+' Web Form
- As part of Government of India's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) initiatives, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has notified a new **Web Form** christened '**SPICe+**' (pronounced 'SPICe Plus') replacing the existing SPICe form. **SPICe+** would offer 10 services by 3 Central Govt Ministries & Departments (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour & Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance) and One State Government (Maharashtra), thereby saving as many procedures, time and cost for Starting a Business in India and would be applicable for all new company incorporations.

Following are the features of the new Spice+ web form:

- **SPICe+** would be an integrated Web Form.
- SPICe+** would have two parts viz.: **Part A**-for Name reservation for new companies and **Part B** offering a bouquet of services viz.
- Incorporation
 - DIN allotment
 - Mandatory issue of PAN
 - Mandatory issue of TAN
 - Mandatory issue of EPFO registration
 - Mandatory issue of ESIC registration
 - Mandatory issue of Profession Tax registration(Maharashtra)
 - Mandatory Opening of Bank Account for the Company and
 - Allotment of GSTIN (if so applied for)

More about SPICE+

- Registration for EPFO and ESIC shall be mandatory for all new companies to be incorporated through **SPICe+** and no EPFO & ESIC registration nos. shall be separately issued by the respective agencies.
- Registration for Profession Tax shall also be mandatory for all new companies to be incorporated in the State of Maharashtra through **SPICe+**.
- All new companies incorporated through **SPICe+** would also be mandatorily required to apply for opening the company's Bank account through the AGILE-PRO linked web form.



Prelims Factoids: Online Chatbot 'ASKDISHA'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Online chatbox ASKDISHA)

What's the NEWS

- In order to resolve queries of railway passengers over the internet pertaining to various services offered, Indian Railways had introduced the services of Artificial Intelligence based ASKDISHA chatbot in October 2018 for the benefit of the users of the ticketing website www.irctc.co.in and tourism website www.irctctourism.com of its PSU, Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC).



Know! more about ASKDISHA

- The ASKDISHA Chatbot was initially launched in English language but in order to further enhance the customer services rendered and to further strengthen the services of the chatbot, IRCTC has now powered voice enabled ASKDISHA to converse with customers in Hindi language also in the e-ticketing site www.irctc.co.in. The customers can now ask queries to ASKDISHA in Hindi language by voice as well as text.
- The chatbot is a special computer programme designed to simulate conversation with users, especially over the internet.
- The first-of-its-kind initiative by IRCTC is aimed at facilitating accessibility by answering users' queries pertaining to various services offered to railway passengers.
- Since its initial launch, more than 150 million passengers have been benefited by ASKDISHA with 10 billion interactions for seeking help on reservation of tickets, cancellation, enquiry of refund status, fare, PNR search, train running status, enquiry about retiring rooms and tourism products.

Miscellaneous: CCI approves 100% acquisition of NEEPCO by NTPC

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CCI)

What's the NEWS

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) approves the acquisition of 100% of the issued and paid-up share capital of North Eastern Electric Power Corporation by NTPC Limited from Government of India ("GoI"), under Section 31(1) of the Competition Act, 2002
- The Proposed Combination relates to the acquisition of 100% of the issued and paid-up share capital of the Target by the Acquirer from GoI.

Know! about NTPC and about NEEPCO

- NTPC is a Maharatna Company having presence in the power generation business.
- The principal business activity of the company is electric power generation through coal based thermal power plants.

- NTPC is also engaged in the business of generation of electricity from hydro and renewable energy sources.
- NEEPCO is a power utility, primarily operating in the north-eastern region of India.
- The principal business activity of the Target is generation of power through hydro, thermal and solar power stations.
- The CCI approved the Proposed Combination under Section 31(1) of the Act.

Know! about Competition Commission of India

- Competition Commission of India is a statutory body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- It was established on 14 October 2003. It became fully functional in May 2009
- The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, follows the philosophy of modern competition laws.
- The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.
- CCI goal is to create and sustain fair competition in the economy that will provide a 'level playing field' to the producers and make the markets work for the welfare of the consumers.
- CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

Prelims Factoids: 1st Khelo India Winter Games in Leh, Ladakh inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Khelo India winter games + about khelo India)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has inaugurated the first-ever Khelo India Winter Games in the Union Territory of Ladakh at Leh, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir
- The event, which is first of its kind in India, is being organised to promote winters sports in India and to popularise these games among the youth of the country.
- To channelize 20 percent share of youth energy of the world from India, the government is conducting University Games, Youth Games and Winter Games for the first time under the Khelo India programme.



- The second leg of the Khelo India Winter Games will be held at Kongdori, Gulmarg from 7th till 11th March
- A total of three winter sporting competitions are being held during the Ladakh leg of Khelo India Winter Games, these are – Open Ice Hockey Championship, Figure Skating, Speed Skating.

Know! about Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)

- **Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG)**, formerly **Khelo India School Games (KISG)**, means Play India Youth Games, held annually in January or February, are the national level multidisciplinary grassroots games in India held for two categories, namely under-17 years school students and under-21 college students.
- Every year best 1000 kids will be given an annual scholarship of 5 lakh (US\$7,000) for 8 years to prepare them for the international sporting events
- The first edition of the event was held in New Delhi, second edition in Pune and the recent third edition in Guwahati, Assam.

Know! about TOT

- The Training of Trainers (TOT) Programme will be held in December 2018- January 2019 in the first phase.
- A total of 160 trainers will be trained in 4 batches of 40 each in December-January period.
- This TOT Programme will be carried out semi-annually or quarterly to include all the interested teachers, principals, vice-principals and physical education trainers.

NITI Aayog: North East Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the conclave highlights)

What's the NEWS

- The North East Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020 is currently underway in Guwahati.

Know! more about the conclave

- North East Sustainable Development Goals Conclave 2020 commenced on 24th February 2020, at the Assam, Guwahati with the goal of identifying solutions as well as accelerators for the implementation of SDGs in the North Eastern Region (NER).
- The 3-day Conclave is being organized by NITI Aayog, in partnership with the North Eastern Council, Govt. of Assam and Tata Trust, the conclave is supported by UNDP and RIS.
- NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs at the national and sub-national level.
- Progress in the northeast region is crucial in this decade of action for the country to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and this conclave is part of NITI Aayog's continuous efforts towards fostering partnerships at the sub-national level.
- In terms of SDG localisation, the states in the region have taken major strides in integrating the Agenda 2030 framework in their developmental planning and vision documents.

Defence/Prelims Factoids: Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about MIDHANI)

What's the NEWS

- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reviewed the performance of Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI)

Know! ABOUT MIDHANI

- Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited, abbreviated as MIDHANI, is a specialized metals and metal alloys manufacturing facility in India, located in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- It is a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU), under the administrative control of Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.
- MIDHANI is the only producer of Titanium in India.
- MIDHANI specializes in manufacturing a wide range of superalloys, titanium, special purpose steels and other special metals and alloys meeting stringent international standards for application in aerospace, defence, atomic energy, power generation, chemical and various other high technology industries.

- Import substitution of high-pressure discs for compressor of Adour MK 811 engines for Jaguar fighter plane and 74 kg titanium casting for naval application are some of the prominent achievements.

Prelims Factoids: SERB Women Excellence Award-2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Science and Engineering Research Board)

What's the NEWS

- Dr Niti Kumar, Senior Scientist from Division of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow has received SERB Women Excellence Award-2020.
- Award will be conferred by the President of India during National Science Day Celebrations on February 28, 2020, in Vigyan Bhawan.

Know! more about the award

- This award is given to women scientist below 40 years of age who have received recognition from national academies.
- The women researchers will be supported by research grant of 5 lakhs per annum for 3 years by Science and Engineering Research Board, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (SERB-DST).

Know! about Science and Engineering Research Board

- The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, established by an Act of the Parliament of India in 2009.
- The Board is chaired by the Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Science and Technology and shall have other senior government officials and eminent scientists as members.
- The Board was set up for promoting basic research in science and engineering and to provide financial assistance to scientists, academic institutions, R&D laboratories, industrial concerns and other agencies for such research.
- Supporting basic research in emerging areas of Science & Engineering are the primary and distinctive mandate of the Board.
- The Board structure, with both financial and administrative powers vested in the Board, would enable quicker decisions on research issues, greatly improving thereby our responsiveness to the genuine needs of the research scientists and the S&T system.
- The Board has schemes for funding extramural research, for providing grants for start-up research and for using the scientific expertise of retired scientists.
- The Board also has programmes for intensifying research in high priority areas, for supporting international travel of scientists, for giving assistance to professional bodies for conducting seminars and symposia, and for awarding fellowships.

Science and Technology: Department of Telecommunications launches '5G Hackathon'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the 5G Hackathon)

What's the NEWS

- Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched '5G Hackathon' in association with government, academia and industry stakeholders.

Know! more about the Hackathon

- Aimed at shortlisting India's focused cutting edge ideas that can be converted into workable 5G products and solutions, the Hackathon will be spread across three phases
- The event will culminate in a grand felicitation ceremony at India Mobile Congress on the 16th of October this year.
- Winners of the various phases will share a total prize pool of 2.5 crore rupees.
- The 5G technology provides quantum leap over 4G in terms of speed, peak data rate, latency, spectrum efficiency and connection density.

- The Hackathon will convert innovating ideas into products and solutions in different verticals and develop India specific use cases around 5G.
- The 5G Hackathon is open to developers, students, start-ups, SMEs, academic institutions and registered companies in India and NRIs.
- Stakeholders can participate as individuals or as a team to present use cases for the 5G network in the Indian context.

Environment: Dolphin population in Odisha's Gahirmatha halves: Annual census



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Irrawaddy dolphins+ about Gahirmatha marine sanctuary + about Chilika lake)

What's the NEWS

- An annual census found the number of dolphins at Odisha's Gahirmatha marine sanctuary has nearly halved over a year, pushing down the state's overall count.

Total 233 dolphins spotted across Odisha

- In 2020 -233
- In 2019 - 258
- In 2015 -270

Know! more about the findings of Annual Census 2020

Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and its nearby areas within Bhitarkanika National Park

- The January 2020 census spotted only 62 of the marine mammals at Gahirmatha — also the world's largest rookery of sea turtles — down from 126 found last year.
- Gahirmatha is located within Bhitarkanika National Park in Odisha's Kendrapara district.
- During the dolphin census forest officials sighted 60 Irrawaddy dolphins and only two bottle-nose dolphins in Gahirmatha.
- Officials conducted a dolphin census for the first time in Gahirmatha in 2015.
- The census in 2016 and 2017 had been cancelled due to bad weather. The 2020 census was the fourth such dolphin census undertaken in the marine sanctuary.

Chilika lake

- The population of Irrawaddy dolphin has increased in Chilika lake and other water bodies of the State. As many as 146 Irrawaddy and 17 Bottle-Nose were sighted in Chilika.
- Chilika — spread across Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts — had been designated a Ramsar site in 1981.
- A Ramsar site is a wetland site which comes under the Ramsar Convention of 1971 and allows for measures to conserve biodiversity in these areas.
- Chilika Lake is the largest brackish water (mixture of saline and fresh water) lagoon of India, spread over the districts of Odisha State on the east coast of India.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India, located at the mouth of the Daya River, which is flowing into the Bay of Bengal, covering an area of over 1,100 km.

Know! about Gherries

- In 2019, the Odisha High Court had ordered the state government to initiate the demolition of illegal prawn gherries in Chilika Lake to restore the wetland's ecology.
- Gherries are encroached areas used for illegal prawn cultivation inside wetland areas. Illegal prawn farming has choked Chilika's biodiversity.

Know! about Dolphins

- The dolphin has been included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- The sea mammal is also included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and in Appendix II of the Convention on Migratory Species.
- It is also categorised as endangered on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.

Irrawaddy Dolphin

- It is not a true river dolphin and prefers to live in estuaries and brackish water near coasts and besides the Irrawaddy River, it is also found in India's Ganges, and Southeast Asia's Mekong River.
- Irrawaddy dolphins are classified as 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Miscellaneous: International Conference on Standardisation of AYUSH Terminologies

Relevance IN – Prelims (about ICoSDiTAUS-2020)

What's the NEWS

- ICoSDiTAUS-2020, the two-day International Conference on Standardisation of Diagnosis and Terminologies in Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha Systems of Medicine concluded in New Delhi today with adopting the "New Delhi Declaration on Collection and Classification of Traditional Medicine (TM) Diagnostic Data".

Know! more about ICoSDiTAUS -2020

- ICoSDiTAUS-2020 is the biggest ever international event dedicated to standardisation of Diagnosis and Terminologies of Traditional Medicine in terms of the broad level of participation covering virtually all the continents.
- The conference succeeded in taking forward the objective of expanding the International Classification of Diseases(ICD) into the realm of Traditional Medicine systems at a conceptual level with all the countries endorsing the same.
- There was also a consensus that work on the second module of the Traditional Medicine Chapter of ICD should be expedited, and collaborative efforts of stake-holding countries are needed for this.
- The suitability of Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha systems for inclusion in the TM Chapter of ICD was also pointed out.
- The New Delhi declaration emphasised the commitment of the countries to Traditional Medicine as a significant area of health care.
- It further sought the opportunity for including traditional systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha in the International Classification of Diseases of WHO which is the standard diagnostic tool for health management across the world.

Prelims Factoids: Offshore Patrol Vessel-6 "VAJRA" launched

Relevance IN – Prelims (about OPV-6 Vajra)

What's the NEWS

- The launching ceremony of 6th Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV-6) 'VAJRA' held at Chennai
- 6th OPV is getting launched in the sea which will strengthen the efforts Indian Coast Guard for securing over 7500 km vast coastline, an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of over 20 lakh sq kms and more than one lakh merchant ships transiting per year through Indian waters for global trade .



Know! more about OPV-6

- Manufactured indigenously by L&T Shipbuilding this OPV launched is the sixth in the series of seven OPV projects being built by M/s L&T Shipbuilding under the 'Make in India' policy.
- OPV-6 is truly state of the art platform which will enhance the capabilities of Indian Coast Guard in terms of Operation, Surveillance, Search & Rescue.
- The ship would be utilized for day and night patrol/surveillance along with anti-terrorist/ anti-smuggling operations in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as well as Coastal Security.
- The OPV will have two Navigation Radars with ultra-modern technology, Sophisticated navigational and latest communication systems.
- It is also capable of carrying a twin-engine helicopter, which will enhance its surveillance, search and rescue capability.



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GENERAL STUDIES I

**Indian Heritage and Culture,
History and Geography of
World and Society**

Indian Heritage and Culture

Poompuhar: Scientists to digitally recreate Tamil Nadu port city swallowed by sea 1,000 years ago



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the port city Poompuhar) + Mains GS I (Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times)

What's the NEWS

- The **Chola Dynasty port city in Tamil Nadu** that vanished from maritime history around 1,000 years ago will be digitally reconstructed by a consortium led by the Department of Science and Technology

Know! about the port city

- There are exhaustive narrations in works of Sangam Tamil literature to infer that the city, located 30 km from the existing Poompuhar town in southern TN, was submerged due to “kadalkol” or rising sea levels.
- The mystery of the exact location of initial establishment of Poompuhar, its age, later shifts, along with periods, time-series spatial evolution in the present location at the mouth of river Cauvery, and the reasons and periods of its extinction, remain unresolved
- The port city flourished in inter-continental trade but vanished.
- Initial studies carried out by the Indian Remote Sensing Satellites show that the city was established initially in the Cauvery Delta-A about 30km away from the present town around 15,000 years ago.

Know! about the study to be done by DST

- The study involves underwater surveys and photography by remotely operated vehicles and sea bed drilling, remote sensing-based geodynamic studies to bring out comprehensive information on the time series evolution and extinction.
- It also involves the visualisation of geodynamic processes of the last 20,000 years like land subsidence, sea-level rise, Cauvery's migration, floods, tsunamis, cyclones and erosion.
- The information extracted from the studies will help digitally reconstruct the life history of Poompuhar
- The reconstruction of Poompuhar is part of DST's Indian Digital Heritage project — an exhibition of its first project 'Digital Hampi' is currently on display at the National Museum



Culture: Historical Gastronomica – The Indus Dining Experience



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Historical Gastronomica + about Indus valley civilization) + Mains (GS I Indian Heritage and Culture)

What's the NEWS

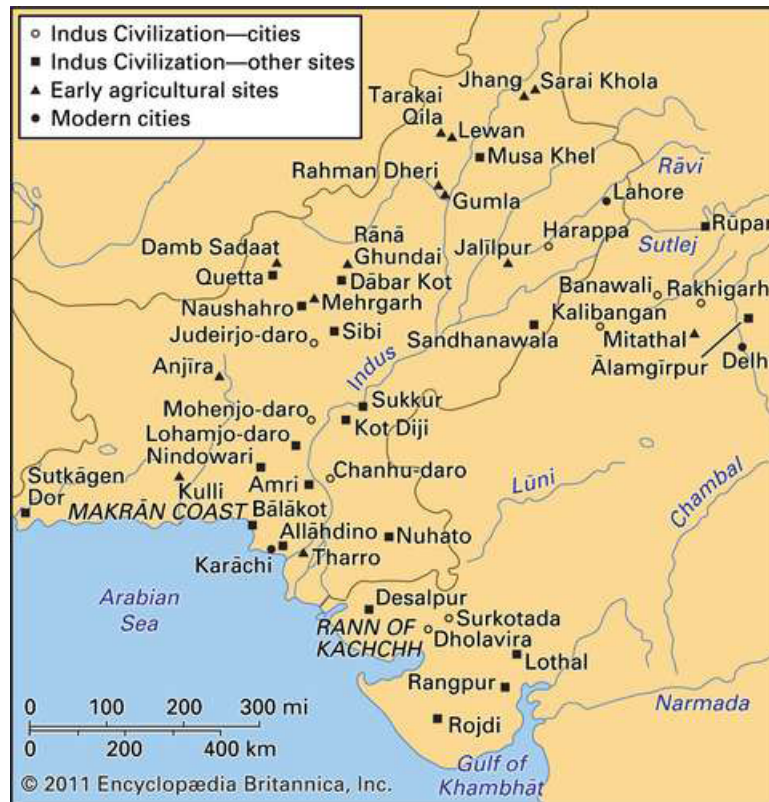
- The National Museum, New Delhi is hosting a unique exhibition on India's ancient food history "Historical Gastronomica – The Indus Dining Experience" from 19th to 25th February that goes back to more than 5000 years ago.

Know! more about it

- The National Museum houses an impressive collection of Indus valley Civilization artefacts.
- The Indus Valley Civilization gallery has one of the world's most significant collections of this glorious Indian civilization.
- This thematic gallery also displays the famous Bronze Dancing Girl, which was excavated from Mohenjodaro, a Harappan site.
- 'Indus Dining Experience' – curated jointly by the National Museum and One Station Million Stories (OSMS) – is based on archaeological research, museum artefacts and their characteristics.
- The exhibition in the National Museum features an illustrative story of man's food history since his evolution and continues to conclude at the Indus-Saraswati Civilization
- The exhibition demonstrates how the first humans evolved due to food habits, learnt to distinguish edible from non-edible substance, food processing techniques and related architecture of the Harappans.
- One Station Million Stories is a Delhi-based dynamic team that specializes in the craft of storytelling through extensive technical research.

Know! about Indus civilization

- Indus civilization, also called Indus valley civilization or Harappan civilization, the earliest known urban culture of the Indian subcontinent.
- The nuclear dates of the civilization appear to be about 2500–1700 BCE, though the southern sites may have lasted later into the 2nd millennium BCE.



- The civilization was first identified in 1921 at Harappa in the Punjab region and then in 1922 at Mohenjo-daro (Mohenjodaro), near the Indus River in the Sindh (Sind) region.
- Both sites are in present-day Pakistan, in Punjab and Sindh provinces, respectively. The ruins of Mohenjo-daro were designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980.



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GENERAL STUDIES II

**Governance, Constitution,
Polity, Social Justice and
International relations**

Health Sector: WHO declares coronavirus as Public Health Emergency of International Concern

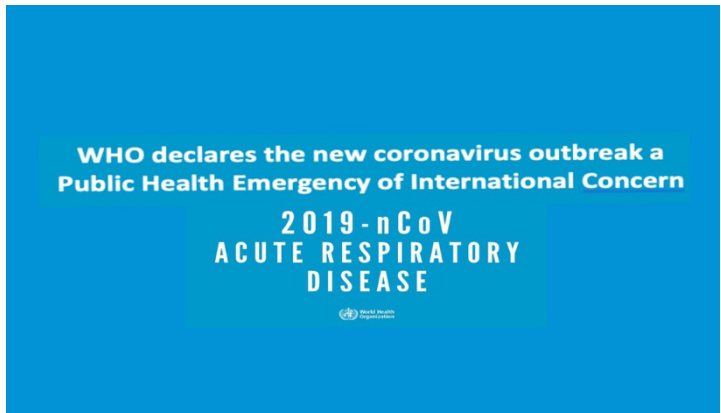
Relevance IN – Prelims (about coronavirus + about PHEIC declaration by WHO)

What's the NEWS

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) as the outbreak continues to spread outside Wuhan, China, the epicentre of the virus.

Know! the current status of Coronavirus

- 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. 124 people have recovered and been discharged from hospital.
- With the number of cases spreading outside China, the Committee agreed that the outbreak now meets the criteria for a PHEIC and proposed the following advice to be issued as Temporary Recommendations.
- In the past, the WHO declared five diseases as PHEIC i.e. pandemic influenza (H1N1) in 2009, polio resurgence in 2014, the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014, the Zika virus outbreak in 2016 and Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019.



Know! about Coronavirus

- The novel coronavirus (a new strain of coronavirus which has not been previously identified in human beings) is one among a large family of coronaviruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to the more serious Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).
- The source of the novel coronavirus is not yet known and there is no treatment for it so far.

Know! the criteria WHO follows to declare PHEIC and what is its implications

- PHEIC is declared in the event of some “serious public health events” that may endanger international public health.
- Under the International Health Regulations (IHR), a public health emergency is defined as “an extraordinary event which is determined, as provided in these Regulations: to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease; and to potentially require a coordinated international response”.
- The responsibility of declaring an event as an emergency lies with the Director-General of the WHO and requires the convening of a committee of members.
- A declaration of an Health emergency would lead to a boost in public health measures, funding and resources to prevent and reduce international spread.
- There are some implications of declaring a PHEIC for the host country, which in the case of the coronavirus is China. Declaring a PHEIC may lead to restrictions on travel and trade.

Social Issues: Anti-superstition act comes into force in Karnataka

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the bill and its provisions) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- For, three years after the Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Act was passed, the act has finally come into force January 2020.
- The state social welfare department has issued a gazette notification for implementation of the controversial Act and has already prepared the draft rules for implementing the same.
- The bill was passed by both houses of the state legislature in 2017 when the Siddaramaiah led Congress government was in office.

Know! about the provisions of the bill

- The act bans performing any black magic, inhumane act and evil practices in search of treasure or bounty, tantric acts which include physical and sexual assault, practices such as parading people naked, ostracising a person in the name of a ritual and encouraging inhumane acts during said rituals, exorcism, assaulting people under the pretext of exorcism, misinformation and creating a panic-like situation under the pretext of ghosts and black magic and others.
- The practice of Vaastu, astrology, pradakshina or circumambulation of holy places, yatras, parikramas performed at religious places were kept out of the purview of the law.
- Practices such as barring menstruating women from entering houses of worship and their homes, coercing people to take part in fire-walks, and beating up people by declaring them evil, are among the irrational practices that have been banned under the 2017 law. A total of 16 practices have been banned under the law.
- The law stipulates “imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to seven years and with fine which shall not be less than five thousand rupees but which may extend to fifty thousand rupees”, as punishment for violations.
- The law is to be implemented by the state police with the appointment of vigilance officers under the law at police stations.
- Those who violate the provisions of the Act will be tried under various sections of IPC including Section 302 (murder) and section 307 (attempt to murder) 308 (abetting suicide) if a person dies, gets hurt or commits suicide due to offence under the Act.

International Organisations/Education Sector: Union HRD Minister chairs the meeting of the Indian National Commission For Cooperation (INCCU) with UNESCO

Relevance IN – Prelims (about INCCU and about UNESCO) + Mains (GS II international organisations+ Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

What's the NEWS

- Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' chaired the meeting of the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (INCCU)
- The membership of National Commission consists of members of five Sub Commissions namely, Sub Commission for (i) Education (ii) Natural Sciences (iii) Social Sciences (iv) Communication (v) Culture.

Know! about INCCU

- Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO is a governmental body formed by the Government of India which functions under the Department of Secondary and Higher Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The objective of the commission is to advise the Government in matters relating to the UNESCO.
- National Commissions for UNESCO are national organizations which are part of UNESCO and which are the only such bodies in the whole UN system.
- They were established under Article VII of the Constitution of the UNESCO by UNESCO member countries on a permanent basis and are associated with the government bodies of the member countries.
- Currently, there are 198 such National Commissions.
- The Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO was established in 1951, when the constitution was approved.

Know! about UNESCO

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris, France.
- Its declared purpose is to contribute to promoting international collaboration in education, sciences, and culture in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom.

- UNESCO has 193 member states and 11 associate members
- India has been a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations **since** its inception in 1946
- UNESCO pursues its objectives through five major programs: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information.

Social Issues: National Consultation on the review of Beijing +25

Relevance IN – Prelims (about of Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing +25) + Mains (Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

What's the NEWS

- To mark of 25 years of the adoption of Beijing Platform for Action, Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD), the National Commission for Women (NCW) and UN Women organized a National Consultation on the Review of Beijing+25

Objective

- To galvanize all stakeholders to implement actions that remove the most conspicuous barriers to gender equality.
- The aim of the consultation was to bring together civil society and the women and youth of India, gender equality advocates from all walks of life, in a national public conversation on the urgent actions that need to be taken for the realization of gender equality.

Know! about Beijing Platform for Action

- The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, was one of the largest ever gatherings of the United Nations, and a critical turning point in the world's focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), (Beijing + 25).

Know! the steps taken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao was expanded to all 640 districts resulting in a 13-point improvement in the sex ratio from 918 (2014-15) to 931 (2018-19)

Under the Beti Bachao Beti Padao, the Gross Enrolment ratio of girls is higher than boys.

- At Elementary level, girls' enrollment is 94.32% and boys' is 89.28%
- At secondary level, girls' enrollment is 81.32% as against 78% for boys
- At higher secondary level, girls' enrollment is 59.7% as compared to 57.54% for boys.

Poshan Abhiyan

- To improve health of children in the age of 0 to 6 years of age, adolescent girls and lactating women, Poshan Abhiyan was introduced. More than 6 lakhs Anganwadi workers are equipped with smart phones to upload the status of nutrition of more than 10 crore house hold.

PMMMY

- Over 17.43 lakh women were reached out under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY Maternity Benefit Programme) and over 18.6 lakh were addressed through Women Helpline Number (181) across country

Representation of women

- To improve the overall gender responsiveness of the police and encourage participation of women in the force, advisory have been issued to increase representation of women to 33 percent resulting in extension of reservation in 15 additional States in the last 5 years.

Extension of maternity leave

- To strengthen the ecosystem for working women and encourage economic participation, extension of maternity leave duration from 12 to 26 weeks and compulsory establishment of crèche in work spaces have been effectuated through legislative amendment.

Bilateral Relations: India, Maldives sign five MoUs for establishing Addu Tourism zone

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the MoU and the geographical location of Addu) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- India and Maldives signed five MoUs for establishing the Addu Tourism zone in five islands of Addu atoll at a cost of 2.49 million dollars.
- A 6th MoU to set up a bottled water plant in Hoarafushi was also signed.
- All six projects are grant projects falling under India's High Impact Community Development Scheme (HICDP).
- These projects are driven by the needs of communities on the islands.

Know! about Addu

- Addu City is a city in Maldives that consists of the inhabited islands of the southernmost atoll of the archipelago.



- Addu City is the second-largest urban area in Maldives, in terms of population, and is one of the two urban areas to get the status of “city” other than the capital city, Malé, and Fuvamulah.
- Addu City has 6 districts. These divisions are naturally islands, but are well connected.
- Addu Atoll itself has islands in addition to the above, that are uninhabited.

Governance: Launch of Portal Santusht

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Santusht + about CPGRAM) +Mains (GS II e-governance, accountability and transparency)

What's the NEWS

- ‘Santusht’ - Implementation Monitoring Cell (IMC) has been constituted in the Office of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Labour and Employment in January 2020.

Know! more about Santusht

- The objective of ‘Santusht’ is to promote transparency, accountability, effective delivery of public services and implementation of policies, schemes of Ministry of Labour and Employment at grassroot level through constant monitoring.

- For public grievances, Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAM) portal is already functional.

Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAM) portal

- A web based Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) has been designed and implemented in all the Ministries / Departments of Government of India.
- A customized software with local language interface has also been designed for the state governments. This software is called CPGRAMS - States.
- The state module of CPGRAMS has been implemented in 9 States/Union Territory namely Haryana, Odisha, Rajasthan, Puducherry, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and Punjab.
- CPGRAM is an online web-enabled system developed by NIC, in association with Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- Prime Minister is the supreme head of the public grievances
- Public Grievances Redressal is one of the flagship initiatives for the reformation in governance started by the Indian central government through addressing the grievances of general public.

Polity: SC directs states to issue notification for establishing 'Gram Nyayalayas'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Gram Nyayalaya)+Mains (GS II Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government)

What's the NEWS

- The Supreme Court has directed the states, which are yet come out with notifications for establishing 'Gram Nyayalayas', to do so within four weeks, and asked the high courts to expedite the process of consultation with state governments on this issue.
- An Act passed by Parliament in 2008 provided for setting up of 'Gram Nyayalayas' at the grass roots level for providing access to justice to citizens at the doorstep and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to anyone by reason of social, economic or other disabilities.
- Several states have issued notifications for establishing 'Gram Nyayalayas' but all of them were not functioning except in Kerala, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

Know! more about Gram Nyayalayas.

- The Act came into force on October 2, 2009
- Gram Nyayalaya is a mobile court and exercises the powers of both Criminal and Civil Courts
- The seat of the Gram Nyayalaya will be located at the headquarters of the intermediate Panchayat
- Gram Nyayalaya are courts of Judicial Magistrate of the first class and its presiding officer (Nyayadhikari) is appointed by the State Government in consultation with the High Court of the State concerned
- The Nyayadhikaris who will preside over these Gram Nyayalayas are strictly judicial officers and will be drawing the same salary and deriving the same powers as First Class Magistrates working under High Courts.
- The Gram Nyayalaya will not be bound by the rules of evidence provided in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 but shall be guided by the principles of natural justice and subject to any rule made by the High Court
- Appeal in criminal cases shall lie to the Court of Session, which shall be heard and disposed of within a period of six months from the date of filing of such appeal.
- Appeal in civil cases shall lie to the District Court, which shall be heard and disposed of within a period of six months from the date of filing of the appeal.

Governance: Govt approves ordinance to remove end user restrictions, boost FDI in coal mining

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the amendments in Mining act + about the provisions in the ordinance) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- India has opened up the coal sector completely for commercial mining for all local and global firms after easing restrictions on end-use and prior experience in auctions via an ordinance
- The Union Cabinet approved promulgation of Mineral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 to amend the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015, as well as the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Know! more about the Ordinance passed (reforms)

- The ordinance puts an end to captive coal block auctions in future and will have to be adopted in the upcoming Budget session once it is cleared by the President.
- Earlier, the government used to auction coal and lignite mining licences only to companies engaged in iron and steel but now the ordinance opens up coal mining to any firm whose office is registered in India.
- The ordinance allows any India-registered company to bid and develop coal blocks. Section 11A of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act provides that the central government can auction coal and lignite mining licences only to companies engaged in iron and steel, power and coal washing sectors.
- The Ordinance removes the present restriction on the use of coal mined by companies only for specific end-uses such as power generation and steel production.
- Currently, separate licenses are provided for prospecting and mining of coal and lignite called prospecting license and mining lease respectively. Prospecting includes exploring, locating, or finding mineral deposits. The Ordinance provides for a composite type of license called prospecting license-cum-mining lease.
- The amendment will help attract more participation in coal block auctions.
- The amendments will create an efficient energy market and bring in more competition as well as reduce coal imports.

Health Sectors: 10% Indians to develop cancer, 1 in 15 will die of disease: WHO

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the findings of the report + about UICC) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.)

What's the NEWS

- One in 10 Indians will develop cancer during their lifetime, and one in 15 Indians will die of cancer, according to a latest World Health Organization (WHO) report.

World Cancer Day

- February 4 is World Cancer Day and the WHO has released two global reports on the occasion.
- The report aims to set the global agenda on cancer, mobilise stakeholders and help countries set priorities for investing in cancer control and universal health coverage.
- According to the report, the six most common cancer types in India are breast cancer (1,62,500 cases), oral cancer (1,20,000 cases), cervical cancer (97,000 cases), lung cancer (68,000 cases), stomach cancer (57,000 cases), and colorectal cancer (57,000).
- Together, these account for 49 per cent of all new cancer cases
- Tobacco-related cancers account for 34-69 per cent of all cancers in men, and constitute 10-27 per cent of all cancers in women in most regions in India, the report notes.

Know! about World Cancer 4TH Feb. Day 2020

- World Cancer Day is an international day marked on February 4 to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.

- World Cancer Day is led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) to support the goals of the World Cancer Declaration, written in 2008.
- The 2019-2021 campaign theme is 'I Am and I Will'
- The primary goal of World Cancer Day is to significantly reduce illness and death caused by cancer and is an opportunity to rally the international community to end the injustice of preventable suffering from cancer. The day is observed by the United Nations.

Know! about UICC

- The Union for International Cancer Control is a membership based, non-governmental organization that exists to help the global health community accelerate the fight against cancer.
- Founded in 1933 and based in Geneva, Switzerland, UICC has a membership of over 800 organisations across 155 countries, and features the world's major cancer societies, ministries of health, research institutes and patient groups.
- UICC partners with its members, key partners, the World Health Organization, World Economic Forum and others, to tackle cancer on a global scale.

Governance: Ease of Living Index and Municipal Performance Index 2019 Launched



Relevance IN – Prelims (about EoLI and MPI) + Mains(GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- Two Assessment Frameworks, viz. Ease of Living Index (EoLI) and Municipal Performance Index (MPI) 2019 have been launched by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs.
- Both these indices are designed to assess quality of life of citizens in 100 Smart Cities and 14 other Million Plus Cities.

Know! more about the Indexes

Municipal Performance Index 2019

- With the Municipal Performance Index 2019, the Ministry has sought to assess the performance of municipalities based on five enablers namely Service, Finance, Planning, Technology and Governance which have been further divided into 20 sectors which will be evaluated across 100 indicators.

- This will help Municipalities in better planning and management, filling the gaps in city administration, and improving the liveability of cities for its citizens.

Ease of Living Index

- Ease of Living Index is aimed at providing a holistic view of Indian cities - beginning from the services provided by local bodies, the effectiveness of the administration, the outcomes generated through these services in terms of the liveability within cities and, finally, the citizen perception of these outcomes.
- The key objectives of the Ease of Living Index are four-folds, viz.
 1. generate information to guide evidence-based policy making;
 2. catalyse action to achieve broader developmental outcomes including the SDG;
 3. assess and compare the outcomes achieved from various urban policies and schemes; and
 4. obtain the perception of citizens about their view of the services provided by the city administration.
- EoLI 2019 will facilitate the assessment of ease of living of citizens across three pillars: Quality of Life, Economic Ability and Sustainability which are further divided into 14 categories across 50 indicators.
- For the first time, as part of the Ease of Living Index Assessment, a Citizen Perception Survey is being conducted on behalf of the Ministry (which carries 30% of the marks of the Ease of Living Index).

International Organisations: Annual meeting of the African Union (AU)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the annual meeting of AU leaders and the takeaways + about AU) + Mains (GS II International Organisations)

What's the NEWS

- The African leaders are meeting in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa for the annual meeting of the African Union (AU) leaders.

Know! more about the meeting outcomes

- The 33rd summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government is being held under the theme of Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development.
- Silencing the Guns is a commitment that the leaders vowed seven years ago to end all wars and conflicts by 2020, but failed.
- The two-day leaders' summit is being attended by more than 35 heads of state and government, as well as representatives of regional and international organizations.
- Issues deliberated during the summit include sustainable funding of Africa's development agenda, specifically addressing the scale of assessment and contributions to the AU's budget; progress made in the implementation of the 2063 agenda; operationalization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA); African candidatures in the international system, the International Criminal Court, and Africa's digital transformation strategy.

Know! about African Union

- The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).
- The AU was announced in the Sirte Declaration in Sirte, Libya, on 9 September 1999, calling for the establishment of the African Union.
- The bloc was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and launched on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa.
- The intention of the AU was to replace the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa by 32 signatory governments.



- The most important decisions of the AU are made by the Assembly of the African Union, a semi-annual meeting of the heads of state and government of its member states.
- The AU's secretariat, the African Union Commission, is based in Addis Ababa. The largest city in the AU is Lagos, Nigeria, while the largest urban agglomeration is Cairo, Egypt.
- Morocco is the newest member state, having joined in January 2017.
- The AU spans the entirety of the African continent, with the exception of Ceuta, Melilla, and the plazas de soberanía. Also excluded are offshore islands that are integral parts of the transcontinental countries of France, Portugal, Spain and Yemen.

Know! about AGENDA 2063

- It is Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future.
- It is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance

Social Issues: National Deworming Day (NDD)

NATIONAL DEWORMING DAY
February 10, 2020

Know your program

- 1** National Deworming Day aims to deworm all preschool and school-age children between the ages of 1-19 years at anganwadis and schools.
- 2** To combat parasitic worm infections, all children will be dewormed using the effective and risk-free chewable tablets.
- 3** Albendazole is a universally accepted treatment for worm infections.

AGE

1-2 years **2-19 years**

DOSAGE

HALF Albendazole 400mg

FULL Albendazole 400mg

Children and adolescents who could not be dewormed on National Deworming Day due to sickness or absenteeism will be dewormed on February 17, 2020 mop-up day.

For more information on National Deworming Day contact ANM/ASHA/Anganwadi worker/Teacher

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NDD) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) conducted the tenth round of National Deworming Day (NDD)
- As part of this campaign, children and adolescents aged 1-19 years are being administered Albendazole (400 mg) across government, government-aided schools, anganwadis, private schools and other educational institutions.

National Deworming Day (NDD)

- The NDD is implemented with an objective to reduce the prevalence of Soil Transmitted Helminths (STH), commonly called the parasitic intestinal worms, among all children and adolescents.
- Infections with the main STH – roundworm, whipworm and hookworms – contribute to 50.1 lakh disability adjusted life-years (DALYs) worldwide (WHO, 2010).

- One DALY can be thought of as one lost “healthy” year from a life. In India, over 22 crore children under 14 years are at risk of STH infections (WHO, 2017).
- Launched in 2015, the NDD is the largest public health program implemented on a single day reaching crores of children and adolescents through two NDD rounds every year.
- Implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Human Resource Development, NDD is a key intervention of Anemia Mukh Bharat.

Deworming through Albendazole

- Deworming through Albendazole is an evidence-based, globally-accepted, effective solution used to control worm infections in all children
- Albendazole and Mebendazole are the names of the deworming drugs used by the Government of India and is a safe treatment for intestinal worms.

Know! about National Deworming Day (NDD)

- With an aim to intensify efforts towards STH control among children in India, the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India (GoI) observes the National Deworming Day (NDD) bi-annually on 10th February and 10th August in all states and UTs followed by mop-up activities.
- **Target audience** - All children (both boys and girls) in the age group of 1-19 years.
- The NDD is being implemented through the combined efforts of Department of School Education and Literacy under Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Indian and its Neighbourhood: India, Bangladesh, Nepal move to facilitate vehicle movement within three nations, leaving aside Bhutan



Relevance IN – Prelims (about BBIN) + Mains (GS II Indian and its neighbourhood)

What's the NEWS

- India, Nepal, and Bangladesh decided to go ahead to implement a four-nation agreement inked almost five years ago to facilitate hassle-free movement of vehicles within the three nations, in spite of dilly-dallying by the pact's fourth signatory – Bhutan.

Know! about the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

- The officials of India, Bangladesh, and Nepal met in New Delhi and agreed to ink a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which would be similar to the four-nation pact signed on June 15, 2015, but would be effective only for movement of vehicles within the three nations without any obligation for Bhutan.
- They also agreed to work fast on two separate protocols, which, once finalized, would govern the movement of passenger and cargo vehicles among the three nations.

- Bhutan also sent its officials to take part in the meeting hosted by India but as observers.

Know! about BBIN

- The BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) for Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic was inked on June 15, 2015.
- New Delhi took the lead in negotiating the four-nation agreement, which, if implemented, would have made it possible for vehicles registered in one of the four countries to move into or transit through the other three nations without any hassle.
- India was keen to ink such an agreement to promote sub-regional connectivity as similar initiatives involving all the eight nations in entire South Asia region could not move ahead due to the reluctance of Pakistan.
- Bhutan – like India, Nepal and Bangladesh – did sign the agreement, but the upper House of the tiny nation's Parliament – National Council – declined to ratify it.
- The members of the National Council had apprehension that Bhutan's unspoiled environment and culture would be in peril when such a large number passenger and cargo vehicles from Bangladesh, Nepal and India would be allowed to roll into the tiny Himalayan Shangri La.
- The BBIN motor vehicle pact was conceived after a similar agreement proposed within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was blocked by Pakistan in November 2014.

Written reply in the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha (important takeaways: Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative Report

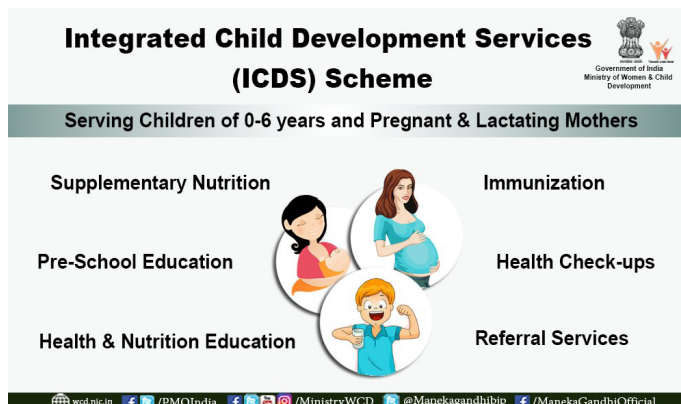
- The report observes that in India, there were 271 million fewer people in poverty in 2016 than in 2006, which shows improvement in status.
- The report noted that of the 10 selected countries for which changes over time were analysed, India and Cambodia reduced their Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) values the fastest—and they did not leave the poorest groups behind.
- Several schemes with direct as well as indirect interventions to address the problem of malnutrition among women and children are being implemented as direct targeted interventions across the country like Anganwadi Services, Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) and PradhanMantriMatruVandanaYojna (PMMVY) under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- The goals of POSHAN Abhiyaan are to achieve improvement in nutritional status of children from 0-6 years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers in a time bound manner with fixed targets.

Information was given by the Minister of Women and Child Development, Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha; Schemes for Welfare of Women and Children

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing two Centrally Sponsored Umbrella schemes – Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mission for Empowerment and Protection for Women across the country



Umbrella ICDS :

- The Anganwadi Services Scheme is a unique programme for early childhood care and development.

It offers a package of six services

1. Supplementary Nutrition
 2. Pre-School Non-Formal Education
 3. Nutrition and Health Education
 4. Immunization
 5. Health Check-Up and
 6. Referral Services.
- The beneficiaries under the Scheme are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Poshan Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission)

- targets to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies by reducing mal-nutrition/under nutrition, anemia among young children as also, focus on adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- PMMVY scheme provides cash incentive amounting to Rs.5,000/- in three instalments directly to the Bank/ Post Office Account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mother(PW&LM) in DBT Mode during pregnancy and lactation in response to individual fulfilling specific conditions.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls

- aims at out of school girls in the age group 11-14, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills and home skills.

National Creche Scheme

- It provides day care facilities to children of age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women.
- The facilities are provided for seven and half hours a day for 26 days in a month. Children are provided with supplementary nutrition, early childcare education, and health and sleeping facilities.

Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme

- It empowers rural women through community participation by involvement of Student Volunteers.
- The scheme is envisaged to work at various levels and at the national and state level technical support to the respective government on issues related to women is provided.

Swadhar Greh scheme

- targets women victims of unfortunate circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they can lead their life with dignity.

Ujjawala

- It is a comprehensive scheme with the objective to prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, to facilitate rescue victims and placing them in safe custody, to provide rehabilitation services by providing basic amenities/needs, to facilitate reintegration of victims into the family and society, to facilitate repatriation of cross border victims.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme

- It is a tri-ministerial initiative of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development with a focus on awareness and advocacy campaign for changing mindsets, multi-sectoral action in select districts, enabling girls' education and effective enforcement of Pre-Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act.
- The specific objectives of the scheme is to address declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) by preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

One Stop Centre (OSC)

- It facilitates access to an integrated range of services including police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter to women affected by violence. The Scheme is funded through the Nirbhaya Fund.

Women Helpline Scheme

- It is being implemented since 1st April, 2015 to provide 24 hours emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence through referral and information about women related government schemes/programmes across the country through a single uniform number (181).

Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) Scheme

- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It envisages engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs who act as a link between police and community and facilitates women in distress.

Global Gender Gap Index

- Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) published by the World Economic Forum in 2018 ranks 149 countries on their status of gender equality through various parameters.
- On this index, India ranked 108th on its performance on gender equality.
- In the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, the number of countries increased to 153 in which India's ranking was 112th.
- India's score has moved from 0.665 in 2018 to 0.668 in 2020.

Some of the major initiatives taken by Government of India to ensure that women gain equal rights, opportunities and access to resources are:

- **Constitutional Provisions** – Articles such as Article 14, Article 15 (3), Article 39A, and Article 42 make special provisions for rights of women to ensure gender equality.
- **Legislative Provisions** – Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostics Act (PCPNDT), 1994; Sexual Harassment of Women and Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976; Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 2017) aimed at mandating women's rights.

Schemes/Programmes –

- BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (BBBP) ensures the protection, survival and education of the girl child.
- Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) aims to empower rural women with opportunities for skill development and employment.
- Working Women Hostel (WWH) ensures the safety and security for working women.
- Mahila Police Volunteers(MPV) envisages engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers in States/UTs who act as a link between police and community and facilitates women in distress.
- RashtriyaMahilaKosh (RMK) is an apex micro-finance organization that provides micro-credit at concessional terms to poor women for various livelihood and income generating activities.
- The National Crèche Scheme ensures that women take up gainful employment through providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment to the children.
- Pradhan MantriMatruVandnaYojna aims to provide maternity benefit to pregnant and lactating mothers.
- Pradhan MantriAwaasYojana aims to provide housing under the name of the woman also.
- DeenDayalUpadhyay National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) focuses on creating opportunities for women in skill development, leading to market based employment.
- Pradhan MantriUjjwalaYojana empowers women and protects their health by providing LPG cylinder free of cost.
- Pradhan MantriSukanyaSamriddhiYojna- Under this scheme girls have been economically empowered by opening their bank accounts.
- Female Entrepreneurship: To promote female entrepreneurship, the Government has initiated schemes like Stand Up India and Mahila e-Haat (online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs/ SHGs/NGOs). Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) provides access to institutional finance to micro/small business.

Education

- Several steps and initiatives have also been taken up in school education system such as National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 and flagship programme like SamagraShiksha and the subsequent Right to Education Act (RTE).
- Kasturba Gandhi BalikaVidyalayas (KGBVs) have been opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs).

Political Participation

- Government has reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions for women.
- Capacity Building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) programme by Ministry of Women and Child is conducted with a view to empower women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

Polity: SC upholds constitutional validity of SC/ST Amendment Act, 2018

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the provisions of SC/ST act) + Mains (GS II Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

What's the NEWS

- The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act of 2018 enacted to nullify the effects of the March 20, 2018 judgment of the court which had diluted the provisions of the Act.
- The Centre had filed a review petition before the Supreme Court asking to review its order passed on March 20, 2018.

Know! the March 20, 2018 judgment

- A two-judge bench of the Supreme Court had held in its March 20, 2018 verdict that there will be no automatic arrest on a complaint filed under the SC/ST Amendment Act 2018. The bench had also introduced anticipatory bail provision under the Act.
- However, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court on September 30, 2019 restored the automatic arrest in cases of atrocities against SC and STs.
- The Centre had filed a review petition before the Supreme Court asking it to review its March 2018 order.

Know! the Amended SC/ST Act

- In the amended SC/ST Act, preliminary inquiry is not a must and no prior approval is also required for appointing authorities for senior police officers to file FIRs in cases of atrocities on SC and ST.
- The Act also does not provide for anticipatory bail to the accused being charged with SC/ST Act. Courts can, however, quash FIRs in exceptional circumstances.
- The apex court stated that pre-arrest bail should be granted only in extraordinary situations where a denial of bail would mean miscarriage of justice.

Bilateral Relations: Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival to showcase special links between two cities

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the festival and its objective) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The first 'Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival' will be held in the capital of Maharashtra this week to showcase the special links between the two cities and to promote ties between India and Israel

Know! more about the festival

- The two-day festival starting on February 15 will seek to promote artistic cooperation in the diverse fields of culture, such as culinary art, music and dance.
- In the first such collaborative cultural event for the Jerusalem municipality in an Asian city, Jerusalem-Mumbai Festival looks to showcase the special links between the two cities while demonstrating their unique cultural

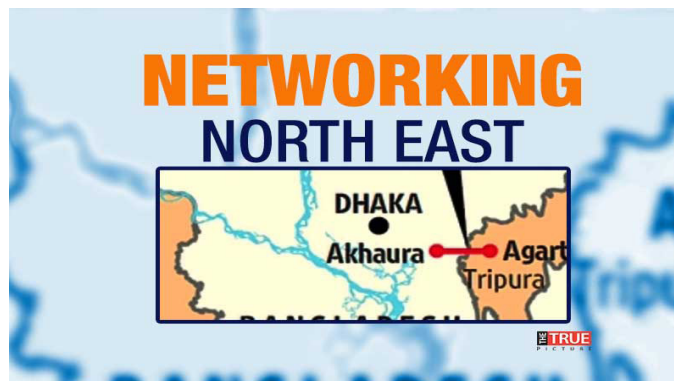
traditions

- The event is also an opportunity to promote collaborations between Jerusalem and Maharashtra in the cultural domain and will serve as another milestone in the growing partnership between the two countries.
- The decision was taken to promote such collaboration between India and Israel during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Jewish state in July 2017.
- The Jerusalem municipality has done such cultural collaborations in cities like Prague, Moscow and Brussels in line with its tradition to expose young artists to different cultures.

Know! about India-Israel Relations

- In July 2017, Narendra Modi became the first ever Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel.
- The Israeli PM also visited India in January 2018 in a highly televised visit to commemorate 25 years of Indian-Israeli relations.
- India is the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment and Israel is the second-largest defence supplier to India after Russia.

Bilateral Relations: India-Bangladesh rail link to be ready by 2021



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the rail link and its benefits) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The landmark rail line to connect the northeastern region with Bangladesh will be ready by the end of 2021

Know! more about the Rail link Project

- The completion of the line between Agartala in Tripura and Akhaura in Bangladesh would pave the way for the first train to run from the northeastern region to Bangladesh on the eve of the 75th anniversary of India's independence in 2022.
- Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) would bear the cost of laying the 5.46-km track on the Indian side and the cost of the 10.6-km track on the Bangladesh side was being borne by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- The link will connect Gangasagar in Bangladesh to Nischintapur in India and from there to Agartala.

Health Sector: The Illness Now Has a Name, COVID-19

Relevance IN – Prelims (guideline for choosing an official name by WHO)

What's the NEWS

- The World Health Organization proposed an official name for the illness caused by the new coronavirus: COVID-19.
- "CO" stands for "corona", "VI" for "virus" and "D" for "disease", while "19" was for the year, as the outbreak was first identified on December 31.

Know! more about it

- The World Health Organization said it had chosen a name for the disease that makes no reference to places, animals or people to avoid stigma.

- The acronym stands for coronavirus disease 2019, as the illness was first detected toward the end of last year.
- Under international guidelines, the W.H.O. “had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people, and which is also pronounceable and related to the disease,”
- Under a set of guidelines issued in 2015, WHO advises against using place names such as Ebola and Zika — where those diseases were first identified and which are now inevitably linked to them in the public mind.
- More general names such as “Middle East Respiratory Syndrome” or “Spanish flu” are also now avoided as they can stigmatise entire regions or ethnic groups.
- WHO also notes that using animal species in the name can create confusion, such as in 2009 when H1N1 was popularly referred to as “swine flu”.
- This had a major impact on the pork industry even though the disease was being spread by people rather than pigs.

Health Sector: Medical devices to be treated as drugs from the next financial year

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 +Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) + Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)

What’s the NEWS

- All medical devices sold in the country would be treated as drugs and would be regulated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940. This is to come into effect from April 1, 2020
- According to the regulation, every product that is used to treat a patient will now be under the ambit of DCA
- Medical devices -This would cover all devices, including apparatus, appliances, MRI, CT scan, thermometer, dialysis machines, implants, instruments (including a software or accessory) used on humans as well as animals

Know! more about it

- At present, only 23 medical devices have been classified as drugs. Of these, only a few including cardiac stents, drug eluting cardiac stents, condoms, intrauterine devices, have been brought under price control.
- The decision was taken after consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), the apex decision making body on technical matters related to drugs.
- The health ministry made some amendments to the Medical Devices Rules, 2017 (which was made public and suggestions were invited from stakeholders). This will be called Medical Devices (Amendment) Rules, 2020 and would also come in force from April 1.
- The medical devices shall be registered with the Central Licensing Authority through an identified online portal established by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)

- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) is the national regulatory body for Indian pharmaceuticals and medical devices,
- The government has announced its plan to bring all medical devices, including implants and contraceptives, under the view of the Central Drugs and Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)
- Within the CDSCO, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) regulates pharmaceutical and medical devices, under the gamut of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The DCGI is advised by the Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and the Drug Consultative Committee (DCC).

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

- The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 is an Act of the Parliament of India which regulates the import, manufacture and distribution of drugs in India.
- The primary objective of the act is to ensure that the drugs and cosmetics sold in India are safe, effective and conform to state quality standards.
- The related Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 contains provisions for classification of drugs under given schedules and there are guidelines for the storage, sale, display and prescription of each schedule.

Bilateral Relations: BIMSTEC 'Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking'



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Conference and its objective) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the two-day BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) 'Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking'.
- Organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) the conference was attended by the delegations, coming from the Partner Nations including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and different State Governments of India

Steps taken by India and the benefits of hosting the conference

- India has adopted the zero tolerance policy follo against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances trade
- Various steps have also been taken by India on national as well as international levels, including those at UN, INTERPOL, to combat this menace.
- The Home Ministry has established a joint coordination committee to increase surveillance over drug trafficking.
- The Ministry has also started an e-portal for digitalisation of drug data that may be utilized by various drug enforcement agencies.
- India taking the lead in organising this BIMSTEC conference would act as the harbinger of new avenues within the region that will help bringing other Nations on such similar platforms to find solutions to tackle drug trafficking.
- The Bay of Bengal littoral States as the focus of India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies and India being the largest country in the region will not shy away from its responsibilities in fighting drug trafficking and terrorism.

Know! the need of such conference

- According to the UN's World Drug Report over 5% of the global population between 15-64 years of age is addicted to narcotics and use of illicit drugs.
- The rate of addiction is showing a fast increase i.e. a 30% rise in the last 10 years.
- An estimate of over \$ 400 billion of yearly illicit drug trade happening globally, giving an idea of the size of the mammoth issue facing humanity.

Health Sector: Govt launches school health programme under Ayushman Bharat

Relevance IN – Prelims (about school health programme and its objective) +Mains (GSII Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.)

What's the NEWS

- Government launched a School Health Programme under Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centres that will teach skills ranging from emotional wellbeing, mental health, interpersonal relationships to values and maintaining healthy lifestyle.

Know! more about the programme

- The first phase of implementation will be in all the public upper primary, secondary and senior secondary schools of aspirational districts.
- The program has been jointly rolled out by Ministries of Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.
- It will strengthen the concept of preventive, promotive and positive health
- This initiative will be effectively linked with other government initiatives such as Fit India movement, Eat Right campaign, Poshan Abhiyaan for an all-round and holistic development model of health for the school children
- Health screening and provision of services are ongoing activities, the newly added health promotion and prevention component will be implemented by two teachers identified in every school as “Health and Wellness Ambassador”.
- These ambassadors will be supported by class monitors as “Health and Wellness Messengers”
- A National Resource Group (NRG) of 40 members has already been constituted by NCERT to train the State Resource Group which will comprise of 2 persons
- Through this program, the children will also act as “Health and Wellness Ambassadors” and will disseminate key information by organising culturally sensitive activity based sessions for one hour per week for 24 weeks in a year to promote joyful learning.

The Fit India Movement (by the Ministry of Youth affairs and sports)

- It is a movement to take the nation on a path of fitness and wellness.
- It provides a unique and exciting opportunity to work towards a healthier India.
- As part of the movement, individuals and organisations can undertake various efforts for their own health and well-being as well as for the health and well-being of fellow Indians.

The Eat Right Movement

- To improve public health in India and combat negative nutritional trends to fight lifestyle diseases, FSSAI launched ‘The Eat Right Movement
- The food industry, public health professionals, civil society and consumer organizations, influencers and celebrities came together on a common platform and pledged to take concrete steps to amplify ‘The Eat Right Movement’ in the country.
- The strength of the ‘The Eat Right Movement’ lies in its holistic and collaborative approach, with stakeholders on both the demand and supply-side joining to make a difference through some clearly identified steps.

POSHAN Abhiyaan

- The Prime Minister’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition or POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission, is Government of India’s flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

- NITI Aayog has played a critical role in shaping the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- The National Nutrition Strategy, released by NITI Aayog in September, 2017 presented a micro analysis of the problems persisting within this area and chalked out an in-depth strategy for course correction.

Ayushman Bharat

- Ayushman Bharat is National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes - Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

Social Issues: Lok Sabha clears Bill to include more tribes in

Karnataka in ST category

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Parivara and the Talawara communities and Siddi tribes)

What's the NEWS

- The Lok Sabha passed The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2019 by voice vote.

Know! more about the bill

- The Bill seeks to include the Parivara and the Talawara communities in the ST category to ensure they get reservation and other benefits provided by the government.
- The Siddi tribes of Belagavi and Dharwad would also be included in the category apart from those living in the Uttar Kannada districts.
- The amendments had been made in the list of the STs in Karnataka.
- The Bill amends the 1950 order by granting ST status to and including the communities “Parivara and Talawara as Synonyms of ‘Nayaka’ at Sl. No.38 and (ii) “Siddi” community of Dharwad and Belagavi districts along with existing ‘Siddi’ community of Uttar Kannada district at Sl. No. 50, in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Karnataka
- The first specification of Scheduled Tribes in relation to a particular State or Union territory is by a notified Order of the President after consultation with the State Government / UT concerned.
- Any subsequent inclusion in or exclusion from and other modifications in the list of Scheduled Tribes can be made only through an amending Act of Parliament

Bilateral Relations: Cabinet approves MoU between India and Iceland in the field of Sustainable Fisheries Development

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the MoU and its objective) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Iceland in the field of Fisheries

The salient features of the MoU are:

- a. Creation of facilities for exchange of scientists and technical experts and their proper placement, especially in areas of estimating Total Allowable Catches in off shore and deep sea areas;
- b. Provision of training to fisheries professionals from key fisheries institutions in the various management aspects on areas of modern fisheries management and fish processing
- c. Exchange of scientific literature research findings and other information.
- d. Exchange of experts / expertise to study the prospects of fishing. Processing and marketing of products from high seas fisheries for entrepreneurship development.

Bilateral Relations: Cha-Chai, an installation of art work of Joana Vasconcelos inaugurated at National Museum, New Delhi



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Cha-Chai installation and its significance) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Culture & Tourism Shri Prahlad Singh Patel and President of the Portuguese Republic Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa jointly inaugurated the Cha-Chai, an installation of art work of Joana Vasconcelos at National Museum in New Delhi

Know! more about it

- The installation represents the five o'clock tradition of serving tea in Portugal that originated in the 17th century.
- India and Portugal are collaborating to develop various cultural projects in India.
- The 'tea pot' art work is symbolic depicting cultural bridges between people and people to people relation.
- The century old 5 pm tea is a family tradition in Portugal that strengthens family bonding.
- This exhibition brings Cha-Chai, a wrought-iron sculpture shaped as a teapot, by the renowned artist, Joana Vasconcelos.
- The 'Tea Pot' and its iron railings represent the bridge between urban and rural landscape.
- Century old, long lasting connection between Portugal and India shines through tea or chai. The Portuguese adopted chá (Sha) as their word for it, incredibly close to the Indian chai.

India, Portugal ink seven pacts

Know! some key highlights and important takeaways

- The pacts provide for cooperation in areas of investment, transport, ports, culture and industrial and intellectual property rights.
- Portugal is an important country for India in Southern Europe, and bilateral ties have witnessed a steady progress in the last 15 years.
- Prime Minister Modi visited Portugal in June 2017 during which 11 agreements were signed covering a large number of areas including space, avoidance of double taxation, nano-technology, biotechnology and higher education.

Some important signed MoUs

- MoU for Cooperation for setting up a National Maritime Museum Heritage Complex in Lothal (Gujarat) between Portuguese Ministry of Defence and Indian Ministry of Shipping.

- MOU between Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE) and DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce for co-operation in the field of industrial and intellectual property rights.
- MOU between The National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), Thiruvananthapuram and Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), Portugal, for collaboration in higher sciences
- MOU between TERI-DEAKIN Centre, Gurugram and International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL) Braga for co-operation in Nano-biotechnology
- MOU between VYASA, Bangalore and Portuguese Yoga Confederation for collaboration in a Scientific Validation project on the benefits of Yoga for Portuguese schoolchildren

e-Governance: Election Commission of India gets ‘Silver’ award for Excellence in Government Process re-engineering for digital transformation



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the award)+ Mains (GS II Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures

What's the NEWS

- The Election Commission of India has been awarded ‘Silver’ for Excellence in Government Process re-engineering for digital transformation for the year 2019-20.

Know! more about the award

- The award seeks to recognize the projects that involved analysis and re-design of workflow and which resulted in improvement in outcomes related to efficiency, effectiveness of process, cost, quality, service delivery or a combination of these.
- The award was presented during the 23rd National Conference on e-Governance February 7-8, 2020 at Mumbai by Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of India.

- ERONET standardised forms processing, standard database schema, and a standard template for enrol printing.
- It automates the process of electoral roll management starting from elector registration, field verification of electors, decision support system for Electoral registration officers and for providing extensive integrated value-added services.
- ERONET is a common database for all States and UTs with data of 91 crore electors. It provides bedrock of electoral roll in providing various web services to Conduct of Elections applications of Election Commission of India.

Governance: New World Bank Project to Improve Groundwater Management in Select States of India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the agreement and its objective) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- The Government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$450 million loan agreement to support the national programme to arrest the country's depleting groundwater levels and strengthen groundwater institutions.

Know! more about the agreement

- The World Bank-supported **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) – National Groundwater Management Improvement Programme** will be implemented in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh and cover 78 districts.
- These states span both the hard rock aquifers of peninsular India and the alluvial aquifers of the Indo-Gangetic plains.
- India groundwater is an important source for rural and urban domestic water supplies and its depletion is a cause of concern.
- The Atal Bhujal Yojana intends to strengthen the institutional framework for participatory groundwater management and encourage behavioral changes at the community level for sustainable groundwater resource management.
- The use of cutting-edge technology, involving Artificial Intelligence and space technology will further help in better implementation of the programme.

Know! the status of groundwater

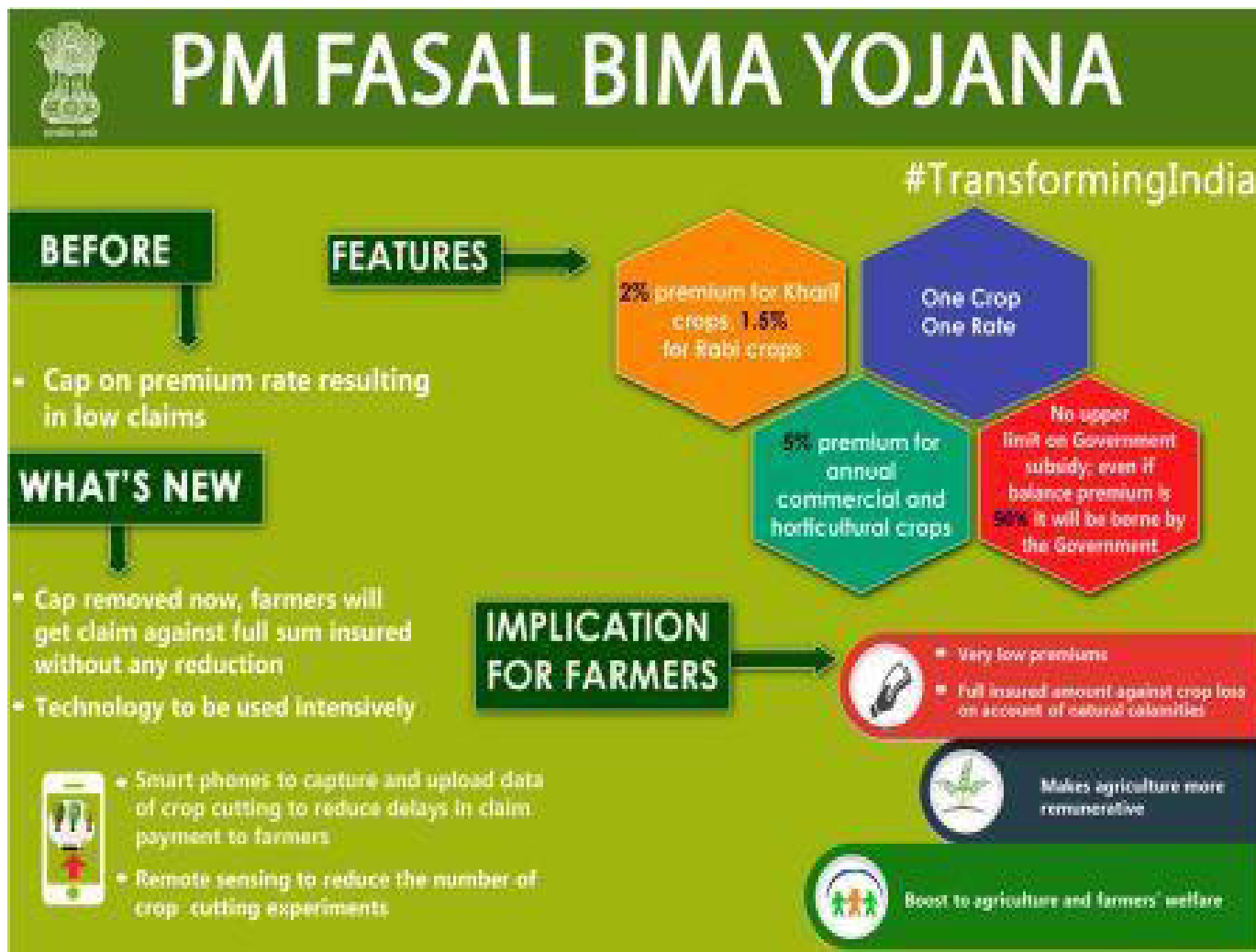
- Groundwater currently provides approximately 60 percent of irrigation water. Over 80 percent of the rural and urban domestic water supplies in India are served by groundwater making India the world's largest user of groundwater.
- If the current trends persist, 60 percent of districts are likely to reach critical level of groundwater depletion within two decades, which in turn will render at least 25 percent of the agriculture production at risk. Climate change will likely exacerbate current pressures on groundwater resources.
- The programme will introduce a bottom-up planning process for community-driven development of water budgets and Water Security Plans (WSPs).

Agriculture: 4th National Conference on Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PMFBY)

What's the NEWS

- The two-day long 4th National Conference on Review of Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) began in Udaipur, Rajasthan.
- The conference which saw participation of around 140 members representing different states, banks, insurance companies, RBI, NABARD, among others.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare had previously organised first three editions of the National Conference in Lucknow, Bangalore, and Guwahati respectively.



Know! more about PMFBY

- The new Crop Insurance Scheme is in line with One Nation – One Scheme theme.
- The PMFBY will replace the existing two schemes National Agricultural Insurance Scheme as well as the Modified NAIS.

Objectives

- To provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
- To stabilise the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming.
- To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
- To ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

Highlights of the scheme

- There will be a uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
- In case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, the premium to be paid by farmers will be only 5%.
- The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and balance premium will be paid by the Government to provide full insured amount to the farmers against crop loss on account of natural calamities.
- There is no upper limit on Government subsidy. Even if balance premium is 90%, it will be borne by the Government.

Social Justice: India is the World's First Country with 100 % digital process for Haj 2020(Ease of Doing Haj)

Relevance IN – Prelims (factual info about Haj process + about e-Masiha app) + Mains (GS II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

What's the NEWS

- 100 per cent digital/online Haj process in India has fulfilled the dream of “Ease of Doing Haj” for the Indian Muslims.

Know! the steps taken by the Ministry for the ease of doing Haj

- The entire Haj process has been made digital and transparent and this has removed the middlemen ensuring Haj pilgrimage become affordable in comparison to last several decades.
- Even after removal of Haj subsidy, no additional financial burden has been put on the pilgrims
- India has become the first country in the entire world which has made the entire Haj 2020 process 100 per cent digital.
- Online application, E-Visa, Haj mobile app, “E-MASIHA” health facility, “E-luggage pre-tagging” providing all information in India itself regarding accommodation/transportation in Makkah-Madinah have been provided to Indian Muslims going for Haj.

E-MASIHA (E-Medical Assistance System for Indian Pilgrims Abroad)

- An online system to create and maintain the complete health database of Indian pilgrims along with doctors' prescriptions, medical treatment as well as medicine disbursements, has been developed to deal any emergency in Makkah-Madinah

Haj Group Organisers (HGOs)

- Haj Group Organisers (HGOs) have also been connected with 100 per cent digital system which has ensured transparency in their functioning and it has also ensured better facilities to Indian Haj pilgrims.
- For the first time, a portal of HGOs - <http://haj.nic.in/pto/> (Portal for Haj Group Organisers) has been developed which contains all the details of HGOs, their packages etc.
- In 2020, a total of 2 lakh Indian Muslims will perform Haj that too without any subsidy and about 1 lakh 23,000 Indians Muslims will go through Haj Committee of India and remaining through Haj Group Organisers.
- This year more than 2100 Muslim women will go to Haj without “Mehram” (male companion)

International Organisations/Conventions: 3rd High Level Global Conference on Road Safety

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the 3rd high level global conference on road safety + about Brasilia Declaration) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari reached Stockholm to represent India at the 3rd High Level Global Conference on Road Safety for Achieving Global Goals 2030.

Know! more about the Conference

- The objective of the two-day conference is to bring road safety on the global agenda and renew the world community's commitment to safer roads.



- Leaders from participating countries will draw up a road-map for reaching the United Nation's goal set under the UN Decade of Action of reducing road crashes by 2030.
- The conference is being organised in active collaboration with World Bank, World Health Organisation and other agencies

Know! about Brasilia Declaration

- The 2nd Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety Hosted by the Government of Brazil on 18-19 November 2015 in Brasilia, Brazil, and co-sponsored by WHO, adopted the "Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety" and declared Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.
- They agreed ways to halve road traffic deaths by the end of this decade – a key milestone within the new Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.6.
- The Brasilia Declaration is a call to rethink transport policies in order to favour more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and using public transport.
- India had signed the Brasilia Declaration at the 2nd High Level Global Conference on Traffic Safety Brazil in 2015 which committed the world community to reducing the number of deaths in road accidents.

e-Governance: National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA) 2019

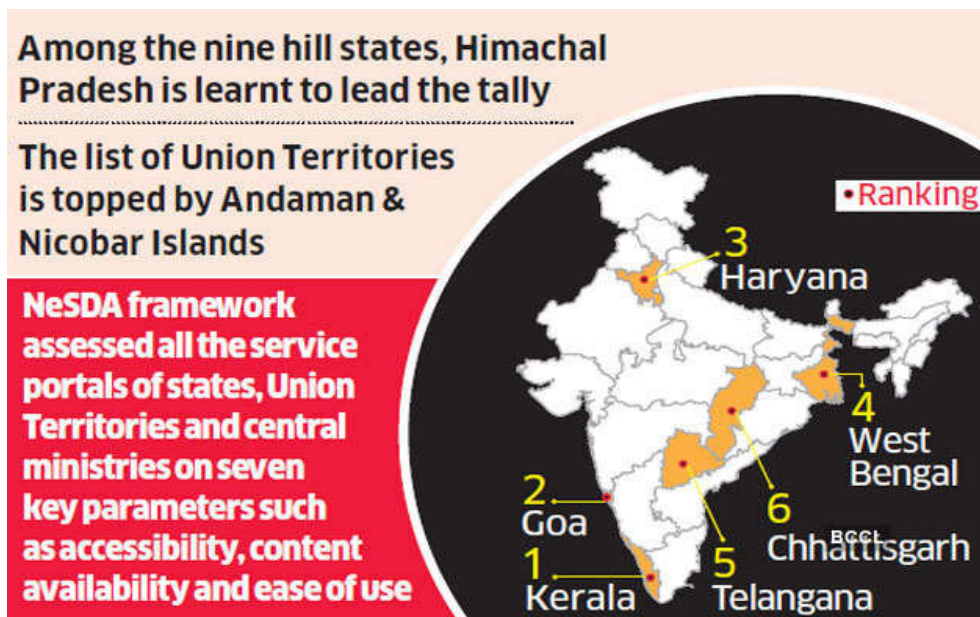
Relevance IN – Prelims (about National Conference on e-Governance and NeSDA) + Mains (GS II Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

What's the NEWS

- **23rd edition of National Conference on e-Governance 2020** based on the **theme "India 2020: Digital Transformation"** with 6-sub themes

The six sub-themes of the conference include:

- Digital Platforms and Digital Economy
- Improving Service Delivery
- Building Digital Trust – Transparency, Security and Privacy
- Digital Payments and Fintech
- National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA)/ Digital Service Standard (DSS)
- Skilling and Capacity Building



Know! about NeSDA

- NeSDA was a key initiative announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018 to push the government machinery towards his promise of 'minimum government, maximum governance'.
- It is also aimed at pushing up India's overall performance on the global e-governance index, an important parameter to attract investment.
- India was ranked 96 among 193 countries in the United Nations E- Government Survey of 2018.
- While this was an improvement over the 118 rank in 2014 and the 107 position in 2016, more effort is clearly needed.
- The NeSDA framework is a step in that direction to nudge states and government interfaces to become more people -friendly.

Know! more about the assessment

- The assessment was aimed at improving the overall e-Government development by evaluating the efficiency of service delivery mechanism from a citizen's perspective.
- The assessment is done broadly for four categories – Union territories, remaining states, union territories and central government ministries websites

Know! more about the conference

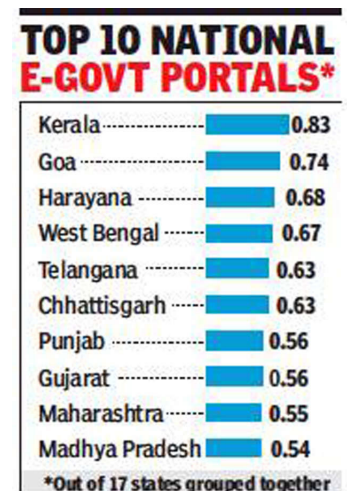
- The conference, is being jointly organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Government of Maharashtra and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- The index has been prepared by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances(DARPG) with NASSCOM as the designated knowledge partner.

The NeSDA framework

- The NeSDA framework primarily assessed all the service portals (state/UT and central ministry service portals) on seven key parameters, namely accessibility, content availability, ease of use, information security & privacy, end service delivery, integrated service delivery and status & request tracking.
- The framework covers six sectors, namely finance, labour & employment, education, local government & utilities, social welfare (including agriculture & health) and environment (including fire) sectors.

Know! the Ranking

- Kerala has topped the index followed by Goa at the second spot and Haryana at the third spot.



- Delhi and Chandigarh are the leading UTs with their service portals
- Among the north-east and hill states, Nagaland has got the first rank
- The website of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) under the finance ministry is the winner under
- The index, which also assesses central ministries, has given the top spot to the ministry of health & family welfare, while the second position has been secured by the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) for its SWAYAM education platform and the National Scholarship Portal.
- The CBDT portal has been ranked first under the assessment of central ministry service portals, according to the report.
- The list of Union Territories is topped by Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

North East States and Hill States

Rank	State Name	Overall Score
1	Nagaland	0.47
2	Assam	0.28
3	Manipur	0.23
4	Himachal Pradesh	0.19
5	Tripura	0.18
6	Meghalaya	0.14
7	Mizoram	0.08
8	Arunachal Pradesh	0.04
9	Sikkim	0.03

Other Awards

- The Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) has clinched a national award for e-Governance 2019-20 for the Board's Real-Time Pollution-Monitoring System (RTPMS) project.
- Odisha Govt's GO SWIFT Portal won the National e-Governance **Silver** award for the year 2019-20 under the Category-1 'Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering for Digital Transformation'.
- The Election Commission of India has been awarded 'Silver' for Excellence in Government Process re-engineering for digital transformation for the year 2019-20.
- Antyodaya Saral of Department of IT, Haryana was awarded Gold for Excellence in providing citizen-centric delivery.
- IIT(Indian Institute of Technology) Roorkee's (Uttarakhand) Satellite-based Agriculture Information System: An Efficient Application of ICT received the Gold Award for Outstanding Research on Citizen-Centric Services.

Know! about ERONet

- ERONet, a web portal launched by the Election Commission of India through which citizens can now not only register for their voter-ID cards online but also choose to change the state in which they want to enrol as a voter without going through unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles. Persons can apply online throughout the entire year at any time through this portal.
- The system strives to make an applicant's entry in e-roll unambiguous and error free without much of hassle.
- For poll officials, meanwhile, this portal will help them deal with inaccuracies in voter-related information, besides preventing the proliferation of duplicate cards.
- The software will allow officials to discern whether the person they are enrolling in the voters' list is a first-timer or someone who has registered multiple times across India.
- ERONet system will ensure that everything related to a voter is stored in a computer and the process is digitized



Social Justice: Cabinet approves the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020 and its provisions) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources + Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- The cabinet approved Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020 proposing a legal framework and code of conduct to keep a check on in vitro fertilisation, embryo transfers and sperm banks

Know! more about the bill

- The bill proposes a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh for anyone indulging in sale of embryo or trafficking at the first instance, and jail term of up to 12 years after that.
- It seeks to establish a national registry and registration authority which will be applicable to all medical professionals and clinics operating or providing services in the field of ART.
- The bill also envisages setting up a national board and a state board to help implement the legal framework.
- Besides, it proposes to create a Central database of all clinics and banks across the country.
- The database will also include detailed information about services like the nature of the method through which the outcome is achieved
- The Bill prohibits sex determination and sex selection. It also contains provisions to ensure confidentiality of the donor as well as the recipient of such services.

Benefits

- The major benefit of the Act would be that it will regulate the Assisted Reproductive Technology services in the country. Consequently, infertile couples will be more ensured/confident of the ethical practices in ARTs.

Know! about the bill and about Assisted reproductive technology (ART)

- The bill makes provisions for safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology services in the country.
- Assisted reproductive technology (ART) has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years. India has one of the highest growths in the ART centers and the number of ART cycles performed every year.
- Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), including In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), has given hope to a multitude of persons suffering from infertility, but also introduced a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.
- India has become one of the major centres of this global fertility industry, with reproductive medical tourism becoming a significant activity
- The need to regulate the Assisted Reproductive Technology Services is mainly to protect the affected Women and the Children from exploitation.

Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2020

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020 proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing National Board at the central level and State Boards and Appropriate Authorities in the States and Union Territories.
- The Bill has been examined by the Select Committee and the report has been tabled in the Rajya Sabha on the 5th of February 2020.
- The major benefit of the Act would be that it will regulate the surrogacy services in the country.
- While commercial surrogacy will be prohibited including sale and purchase of human embryos and gametes, ethical surrogacy to the Indian Married couple, Indian Origin Married Couple and Indian Single Woman (only widow or Divorcee) will be allowed on fulfilment of certain conditions.
- As such, it will control the unethical practices in surrogacy, prevent commercialization of surrogacy and will prohibit potential exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy.

Medical Termination Pregnancy Amendment Bill 2020

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 was enacted to provide for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- The said Act recognised the importance of safe, affordable, accessible abortion services to women who need to terminate pregnancy under certain specified conditions.
- Besides this, several Writ Petitions have been filed before the Supreme Court and various High Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at gestational age beyond the present permissible limit on the grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women.

Taken together, the three proposed legislations create an environment of safeguards for women's reproductive rights, addressing changing social contexts and technological advances.

Polity: Cabinet approves Constitution of 22nd Law Commission of India for a term of three years

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Law Commission and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved Twenty-second Law Commission of India for a period of three years
- The Government will have the benefit of recommendations from a specialised body on different aspects of law which are entrusted to the Commission for its study and recommendations, as per its terms of reference.

The Law Commission of India shall, inter-alia,;-

- a. identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed;
- b. examine the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and suggest ways of improvement and reform and also suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble of the Constitution;
- c. consider and convey to the Government its views on any subject relating to law and judicial administration that may be specifically referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);
- d. Consider the requests for providing research to any foreign countries as may be referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);
- e. take all such measures as may be necessary to harness law and the legal process in the service of the poor;
- f. revise the Central Acts of general importance so as to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities;

Know! about the Law Commission of India

- The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory body constituted by the Government of India from time to time.
- The Commission was originally constituted in 1955 and is re-constituted every three years. The tenure of twenty-first Law Commission of India was upto 31st August, 2018.
- The various Law Commission have been able to make important contribution towards the progressive development and codification of Law of the country. The Law Commission has so far submitted 277 reports.

The 22nd Law Commission will be constituted for a period of three years from the date of publication of its Order in the Official Gazette. It will consist of:

- a. a full-time Chairperson;
- b. four full-time Members (including Member-Secretary)
- c. Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs as ex-officio Member;
- d. Secretary, Legislative Department as ex officio Member; and
- e. not more than five part-time Members.

Government Schemes: 4th Anniversary of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM)



SHYAMA PRASAD MUKHERJI RURBAN MISSION

SPMRM launched by Prime Minister on 21st February, 2016

24/7 piped
Water supply



Inter Village
Road Connectivity



Health



Sanitation



Skill Development
Training



Agri services
& Processing



Education



Tourism
Promotion



Environment



Employment
& SHG Formation



Rural
Housing



Social
Infrastructure



Sports
Infrastructure



Social
Welfare



Village
Streets Lights



Public
Transport



LPG
Connection



Solid & Liquid
Waste Management



Drain
Facility



Digital
Library



Citizen
Service Center





**Mission's
Vision**

The National Rurban Mission follows the vision of "Development of a cluster of villages that preserve and nurture the essence of rural community life with focus on equity and inclusiveness without compromising with the facilities perceived to be essentially urban in nature, thus creating a cluster of "Rurban Villages".



**Mission's
Objective**

The objective of the National Rurban Mission (NRuM) is to stimulate local economic development, enhance basic services, and create well planned Rurban clusters.



**Mission's
Outcomes**

The larger outcomes envisaged under this Mission are:

- Bridging the rural-urban divide-viz: economic, technological and those related to facilities and services.
- Stimulating local economic development with emphasis on reduction of poverty and unemployment in rural areas.
- Spreading development in the region.
- Attracting investment in rural areas.

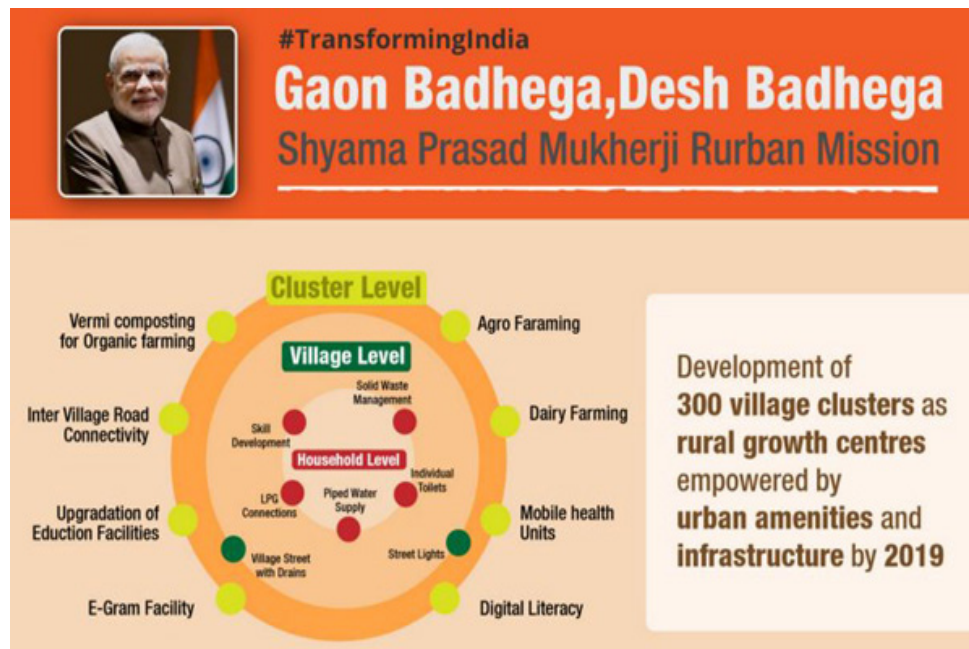
Relevance IN – Prelims (about SPMRM and its objective) + Mains (GS II • Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

What's the NEWS

- The 4th Anniversary of the launch of Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission (SPMRM) observed on 21st February
- The objective is to develop the clusters by providing all the basic amenities, infrastructure as well as economic development opportunities in an integrated and timebound manner.

Know! all about SPMRM

- The SPMRM focuses on cluster-based integrated development through Spatial Planning.
- Rurban clusters are identified across the country's rural areas showing increasing signs of urbanization – i.e. increase in population density, high levels of non-farm employment, presence of growing economic activities and other socioeconomic parameters.
- The Mission aims to transform these Rurban clusters by stimulating local economic development, enhancing basic services, and creating well planned Rurban clusters.
- This would lead to holistic development of the region and encourage integrated and inclusive rural development.



- Under the mission 300 Rurban clusters are envisaged to be developed in a timebound manner.
- Of these 296 clusters have been selected and number of Integrated Cluster Action Plans (ICAPs) approved are 288 and Detailed Project Reports of 240 have been approved.
- SPMRM is a Core Centrally Sponsored Scheme

The Mission has two fund streams:

1. Convergence through various Central sector schemes, centrally sponsored schemes, State sector/ sponsored schemes/ programmes, CSR funds, and
 2. Critical Gap Funds (CGF) – It provides for CGF upto Rs. 30 crore per cluster for Non-tribal clusters, and upto Rs. 15 crore per cluster for Tribal and Hilly State clusters.
- Infrastructure planned in these clusters includes provision of 24/7 water supply to all households, Solid and Liquid Waste Management facilities at the household and cluster level, provision of Inter and Intra village roads within the cluster, adequate street lights and public transport facilities using green technologies.
 - Economic amenities in a cluster comprise various thematic areas in the sectors of Agri Services and Processing, Tourism, and Skill Development to promote Small and Medium Scale Enterprises.
 - NITI Aayog has recently proposed a new and extended programme for over 1,000 clusters in next three years. In Sikkim, three such clusters are being developed in the South, East and West districts.

Bilateral Relations: Launch of joint research initiatives and teaching programmes and establishment of Centre of Excellence for Next Generation Transportation Systems by Indian Railway

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of research initiative and about NRTI) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations + GS III infrastructure development – railways)

What's the NEWS

- Indian Railways has announced the launch of a Joint Masters programme in Railway Systems Engineering and Integration in academic year 2020-2021 by the National Rail Transportation Institute (NRTI) in partnership with the University of Birmingham
- The programme that has been launched leads to dual M.Sc. that would see NRTI students obtaining two post graduate degrees from both institutions, after spending a year studying at each institution.
- This initiative will benefit NRTI students by providing them access to world class expertise and facilities in railway systems at the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education (BCRRE).

- BCRRE is also expected to gain valuable insights into India's transport sector and get involved in related research and development issues in the country.
- The initiative has been taken under the Centre of Excellence for Next Generation Transportation Systems that had been set up by an MoU between the National Rail Transport Institute with the University of Birmingham on December 18th, 2019.

About the National Rail Transport Institute

- The National Rail Transport Institute has been set up as a deemed to be university and has been operational since 2018.
- NRTI aims to develop interdisciplinary Centres of Excellence which would be collaborative constructs to promote research and education to the transportation sector.
- NRTI's strategy is focussed upon sourcing the best expertise from around the world from leading global institutions through institutional partnerships for collaborating on developing curriculum, research projects and executive education programs

About University of Birmingham

- The University of Birmingham is home to the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education (BCRRE) with over 150 academics, researchers and professional services staff, delivering world-class research, education and leadership to the global rail industry.
- The BCRRE is the largest university-based centre for railway research and education in Europe, involved in developing world-leading new technologies alongside higher education programmes, research and innovations in Climate Change, Aerodynamics and International Benchmarking, Power Systems and Energy Use, Railway Control and Operations Simulation.

SC passes interim order on Mahadayi tribunal's award

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Mahadayi Water Dispute and about Kalasa-Banduri Nala project) + Mains (GS II Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.)

What's the NEWS

- The Supreme Court passed an interim order allowing an application by the State of Karnataka to notify the Mahadayi Water Dispute Tribunal's award.
- The implementation of the award would, however, be subject to the final judgment of the Supreme Court in the civil appeals filed by Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra, challenging the allocation of water from the Mahadayi river among them.

Know! about the water sharing allocation by the tribunal

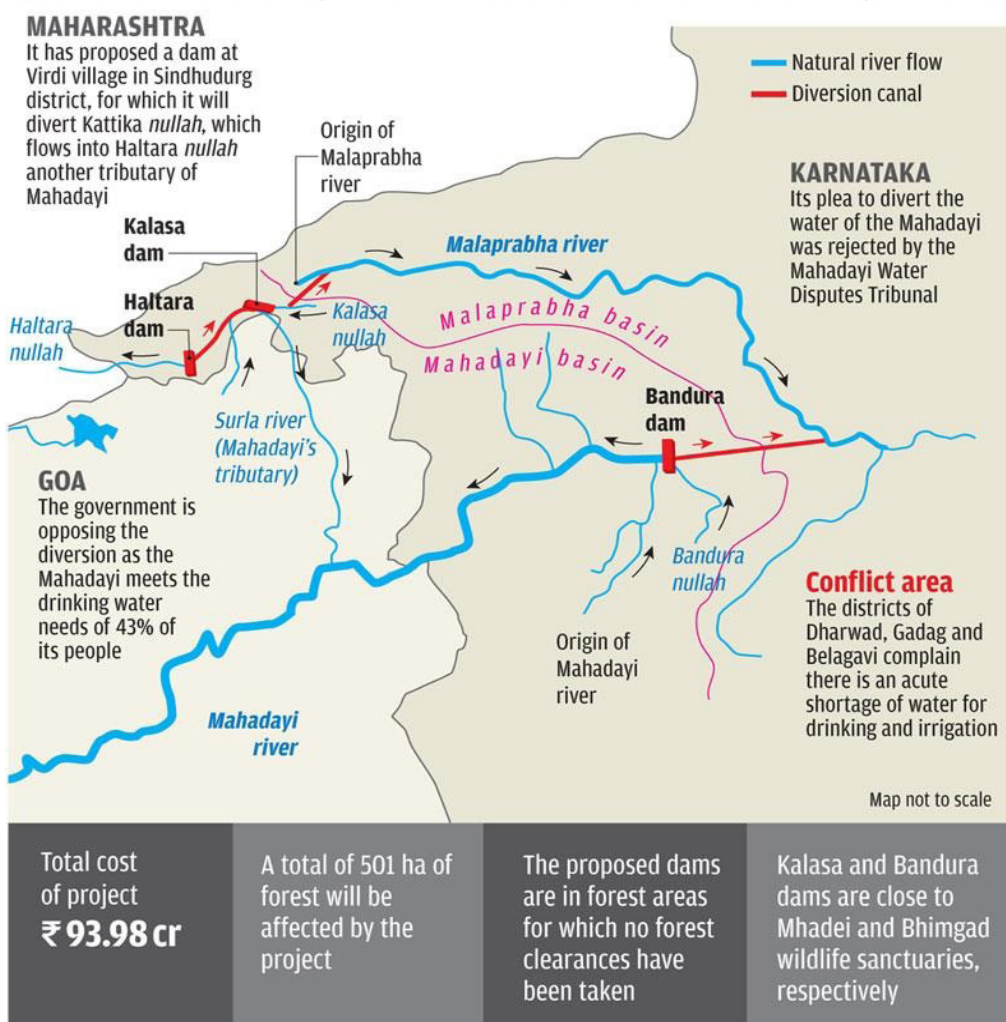
- The tribunal had allocated 13.42 TMC water (including 3.9 TMC for diversion into the depleted Malaprabha river basin) from the Mahadayi river basin to Karnataka.
- Maharashtra was allotted 1.33 TMC water while Goa was given 24 TMC in the final decision of the tribunal.
- The Karnataka government had petitioned the tribunal seeking the release of 7.56 TMC of water for the Kalasa-Banduri Nala project.

Kalasa-Banduri Nala project.

- The Kalasa-Banduri Nala (diversion) project, which will utilise 7.56 TMC of water from the inter-State Mahadayi river, is being undertaken by Karnataka to improve drinking water supply to the twin cities of Hubballi-Dharwad and the districts of Belagavi and Gadag.

Controversial water diversion plan

Under the Kalasa Bandura project, the Karnataka government has proposed dams and canals to divert the Mahadayi's water to address the water deficit in the Malaprabha basin



- It involves building barrages across Kalasa and Banduri, the tributaries of the Mahadayi river, to divert 7.56 TMC water to the Malaprabha river, which fulfils the drinking water needs of the twin cities.

Mahadayi River

- Mahadayi is the west-flowing river which rises in the Western Ghats from the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Khanapur taluk of Karnataka's Belagavi district and it drains into the Arabian Sea at Panaji.

Human Resource Development: Chatra Vishwakarma Awards 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Chatra Vishwakarma awards and its objective) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

What's the NEWS

- AICTE has been organizing Vishwakarma Awards since the year 2017.
- The awards have been instituted for promoting innovative spirit and scientific temperament for holistic development of society through the stakeholders of its approved institutes.
- The Awards are aimed at motivating young individuals, inspiring leaders and institutions/ organizations to raise their performance in their specific domains leading to significant contribution towards the growth and development of the Nation as a whole.



- The competition/ call for entries for the third edition of Vishwakarma Award for the year 2019 were earlier announced by HRD Minister on 11 Sep 2019 and was based on the theme of **“How to enhance the income of Village”**
- Indian Society of Technical Education (ISTE) and Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Ayog also agreed to collaborate with AICTE for the Vishwakarma Awards 2019.

Applications were called in 02 categories:

- Category-I : Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards (CVA) for Outstanding Innovative Team (for Students & Mentor).*
 - Category-II : Utkrisht Sansthan Vishwakarma Award (USVA) for exemplary Institutional intervention.*
- NITI Ayog has agreed to support the shortlisted students by bringing their ideas into reality by supporting them through their pre-incubation centres of ATAL Community Innovation centre (ACIC).
 - AICTE & MHRD’s Innovation Cell has also announced to provide financial assistance to a few of the best teams of Chhatra Vishwakarma Awards after following the due process of evaluation.
 - In addition to this, IIT Delhi has also agreed to support the best technical interventions of Vishwakarma Awards through their Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan (UBA) program by providing financial support to the institution for implementing their ideas in the village.

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare: 1st Anniversary of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PM-KISAN) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Know! all about PM-KISAN

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) is a Central Sector scheme with 100% funding from Government of India.
- The Scheme is effective from 1.12.2018.
- Under the Scheme an income support of Rs.6000/- per year is provided to all farmer families across the country in three equal installments of Rs.2000/- each every four months.
- Definition of family for the Scheme is husband, wife and minor children.
- The entire responsibility of identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with the State / UT Governments.
- The fund is directly transferred to the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

- Farmers covered under the Exclusion Criteria of the Operational Guidelines are not eligible for the benefit of the Scheme.
- For enrollment, the farmer is required to approach the local patwari / revenue officer / Nodal Officer (PM-Kisan) nominated by the State Government.
- The Common Service Centres (CSCs) have also been authorized to do registration of the farmers for the Scheme upon payment of fees.
- Farmers can also do their self-registration through the Farmers Corner in the portal.
- Farmers can also edit their names in PM-Kisan database as per their Aadhaar database / card through the Farmers Corner in the portal.
- Farmers can also know the status of their payment through the Farmers Corner in the portal.

Infrastructure Development: 'Har Kaam Desh Ke Naam': Corporates joins Ganga Rejuvenation effort

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Har kaam desh ke naam initiative + about the tripartite MoU) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation).

What's the NEWS

- A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), State Program Management Group-Uttarakhand (SPMG-UK) and Indorama Charitable Trust (ICT) to work together for renovation/ development of the Ghat at Badrinath and Ghats and Crematoria at Gangotri in Uttarakhand at a total cost of 26.64 Crore.
- Gangotri and Badrinath being part of the Char Dham Yatra, are especially important.
- This MoU is a significant step for improving amenities and sanitation at these holy locations with the underlying spirit of partnership and of private corporates taking responsibility by contributing to the National Mission: Rejuvenation of the sacred river Ganga.
- This project is being taken up under the Government initiative of 'HarKaamDeshKeNaam'.
- The Minister lauded the Indorama Group for financing the project and hoped this will inspire other entrepreneurs as part of their companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.
- For the first time the novel Operation and Maintenance Clause has been inserted, which will take care of the project's upkeep over a period of time.

The activities under the project include:

- Construction of Bathing Ghats and Crematoria
- Repair and modernization of existing Ghats and Crematoria
- Providing public amenities on Ghats
- Bank erosion protection works
- Operation & Maintenance (O&M) for 5 years

Badrinath Bathing Ghat

- Badrinath Bathing Ghat is situated along the bank of river Alaknanda. Through local consultation, the sites of Ghat was identified.

Gangotri Bathing Ghat and Crematoria

- Gangotri Ghat is situated along the bank of river Bhagirathi at Gangotri. One bathing ghat and one crematoria to be developed at Gangotri.

Government Schemes: Cabinet approves Revamping of “Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)” and “Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)”

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PMFBY and RWBCIS changes) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation).

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet, has approved revamping of “Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)” and “Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS)” to address the existing challenges in implementation of Crop Insurance Schemes.

It is proposed to modify certain parameters / provisions of ongoing schemes of PMFBY and RWBCIS as under:

- a. Allocation of business to Insurance Companies to be done for three years (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- b. Central Subsidy under PMFBY/RWBCIS to be limited for premium rates upto 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.
- c. Districts having 50% or more irrigated area will be considered as irrigated area/district (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- d. For estimation of crop losses/admissible claims, two-Step Process to be adopted based on defined Deviation matrix
- e. Technology solutions like Smart Sampling Technique (SST) and optimization of number of CCEs to be adopted in conducting CCEs (PMFBY).
- f. Enrolment under the Scheme to be made voluntary for all farmers (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- j. Central Share in Premium Subsidy to be increased to 90% for North Eastern States from the existing sharing pattern of 50:50 (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).
- k. Provisioning of at least 3% of the total allocation for the Scheme to be made by Government of India and Implementing State Governments for administrative expenses. This shall be subject to an upper cap fixed by DAC&FW for each State (Both PMFBY/RWBCIS).

Benefits

- With these changes it is expected that farmers would be able to manage risk in agriculture production in a better way and will succeed in Stabilizing the farm income.
- Further, it will increase coverage in north eastern region enabling farmers of NER to manage their agricultural risk in a better way. These changes will also enable quick and accurate yield estimation leading to faster claims settlement.
- These changes are proposed to be implemented from Kharif 2020 Season throughout the Country.

Cabinet Decision: Cabinet approves Elevation of BISAG as BISAG(N) under MEITY, Government of India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BISAG (N) + Mains (GS II Centre-State relations + GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved Elevation of Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG), Gujarat as Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG(N)) under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MEITY), Government of India.

Know! the Benefits

- To maintain efficiency and innovation of services, the current skilled manpower working at BISAG may join the national level institute on as-is and where-is basis.
- To facilitate implementation of expanded scope of activities aid research & development and technology development.

Know! all about BISAG

- At present, BISAG is a state agency of Department of Science and Technology Government of Gujarat, located at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- It is registered as a Society and Trust with the Charity Commissioner of Ahmedabad.
- Its Governing body is chaired by the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat.
- Its charter is based on the philosophy that modern day planning for a holistic development calls for transparent, efficient and low-cost decision-making systems.
- This involves multi-disciplinary information that encourages people's participation and ensures equitable development.
- The application of space technologies (especially the space based remote sensing technology), satellite communication and geo-informatics has contributed significantly towards the socio-economic development.

Elevation of BISAG

- This is not a new organisation but only an elevation of existing body which will be an Autonomous Scientific Society under Government of India instead of State Government
- The elevation of BISAG has been done to maintain efficiency and innovation of services, facilitate implementation of expanded scope of activities, efficient rollout of GIS projects and facilitate aid, research and development at the institute, according to the statement.

Tribal Affairs: 16th foundation of day of NCST

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NCST and its objective) + Mains (GS II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.)

What's the NEWS

- The celebration for the 16th Foundation of Day of National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)"organised by National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

Know! all about NCST

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was set up with effect from 19th February, 2004 by amending Article 338 and by inserting a new article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment Act, 2003 which inter-alia enjoins upon the Commission to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Govt. and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- Former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee created a separate Ministry of Tribal Affairs in year 1999 and later on separate National Commission for Scheduled Tribes was created on 19th February, 2004.
- The Commission comprise a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson and three full time members (including one lady member).
- The term of office Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Members of NCST is three years from the date of assumption of charge.
- The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Ministries, the Vice Chairperson have the rank of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India.

Constitution of India under Clause (5) of Article 338A has assigned the following duties and functions to the Commission:

1. To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Schedule Tribes under the Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
2. To inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Scheduled Tribes.
3. To participate and advice in the planning process of socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State.

4. To present to the President, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, report upon the working of those safeguards.
5. To make in such reports, recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes.
6. To discharge such other function in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes as the President may subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament by rule specify.

Social Justice: Cabinet approves Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020 highlights)

What's the NEWS

- The cabinet approved Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020 proposing a legal framework and code of conduct to keep a check on in vitro fertilisation, embryo transfers and sperm banks

Know! the highlights of the bill

- The bill proposes a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh for anyone indulging in sale of embryo or trafficking at the first instance, and jail term of up to 12 years after that.
- It seeks to establish a national registry and registration authority which will be applicable to all medical professionals and clinics operating or providing services in the field of ART.
- The bill also envisages setting up a national board and a state board to help implement the legal framework.
- Besides, it proposes to create a Central database of all clinics and banks across the country.
- The database will also include detailed information about services like the nature of the method through which the outcome is achieved.
- The Central database will also be used for research purposes in this particular segment of health

Bilateral Relations: Donald Trump's India visit



Relevance IN – Prelims (India- US bilateral relations -important takeout) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relation)

What's the NEWS

- India and the US inked three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on US President Donald Trump's maiden visit
- The two countries have decided to take their ties to a comprehensive global partnership level.

Know! the important takeaways

- The agreements were signed in the health and oil sectors. An MoU was signed on mental health between the health departments of the countries.
- In the field of health a memorandum of understanding on the safety of medical products was signed between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization with the US Food and Drug Administration.
- A letter of cooperation was signed between Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Exxon Mobil India LNG Limited and Chart Industries Inc, US.
- Helicopter deals worth \$3 billion were also finalized, in yet another sign of India's shift to the US for military supplies from its traditional supplier, Russia.
- The two countries also agreed on new mechanism to contain drug trafficking.

Cabinet Decisions: Cabinet approves National Technical Textiles Mission

Relevance IN – Prelims (about National Technical Textiles Mission) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

What's the NEWS

- The government approved setting up of a National Technical Textiles Mission with a total outlay of 1,480 crore with a view to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles.
- The domestic market size of the technical textiles is expected to cross 2 lakh crore by the year 2020-21.
- The 1,480-crore Mission, to be implemented from 2020-2021 to 2023-2024, aims at positioning India as a global leader in technical textiles
- Budget 2020-21 proposes National Technical Textile Mission at 1,480-cr outlay

Know! more about the mission

- The Mission will aim at average growth rate of 15-20% per annum taking the level of domestic market size to \$40-50 billion by the year 2024 through market development, market promotion, international technical collaborations, investment promotions and 'Make in India' initiatives
- It envisages export promotion of technical textiles, enhancing it from the current annual value of approximately ₹14,000 crore to ₹20,000 crore by 2021-22, and ensuring 10% average growth in exports per year up to 2023-24.
- An Export Promotion Council for Technical Textiles will be set up for effective coordination and promotion activities in the segment.
- The Mission will have four components including research, innovation and development with outlay of 1,000 crore; promotion and market development; export promotion; education, training and skill development.
- The Mission will promote technical education at higher engineering and technology levels related to technical textiles and its application areas covering engineering, medical, agriculture, aquaculture and dairy segments.

Technical textiles

- Technical textiles are futuristic and niche segment of textiles, which are used for various applications ranging from agriculture, roads, railway tracks, sportswear, health on one end to bullet proof jacket, fire proof jackets, high altitude combat gear and space applications on the other end of spectrum.
- In India, the segment is estimated at \$16 billion (about 1.14 lakh crore) which is approximately 6% of the \$250 billion (about 17.75 lakh crore) global technical textiles market.
- The penetration level of technical textiles is low in India, varying between 5-10% against the level of 30-70% in developed countries.

- The Mission will focus on usage of technical textiles in various flagship missions, programmes of the country including strategic sectors.
- The Mission will move into sunset phase after four years period

24th Meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Eastern Zonal Council and about Zonal Council)+ GS II Centre-State relations

What's the NEWS

- The 24th meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council, comprising of the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal, is scheduled to be held on 28th February, 2020 at Bhubaneswar.
- The Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah will chair this meeting.
- Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Naveen Patnaik, is the Vice-Chairman and host. Chief Ministers of Bihar, West Bengal and Jharkhand respectively, will also participate.

Know! about Zonal Councils

- Five Zonal Councils were set up in the year 1957 under Section 15-22 of the States Reorganization Act, 1956.
- The Union Home Minister is the Chairman of each of these 5 Zonal Councils and Chief Minister of the host State, to be chosen by rotation every year, is the Vice-Chairman.
- Two more Ministers from each State are nominated as Members by the Governor. The Council takes up issues involving Centre and States, and among Member-States falling in the Zone and thus provide a forum for resolving disputes and irritants between them.
- The Zonal Councils discuss broad range of issues, which include boundary related disputes, security, infrastructure related matters like road, transport, industries, water and power etc., matters pertaining to forests & environment, housing, education, food security, tourism, transport, etc.

Tribal Affairs: Programme for Capacity Building of Scheduled Tribe Representatives in Local Self Governments 1000 Spring Initiatives

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of capacity building programme + about 1000 spring initiative) + Mains (GS II Welfare scheme for the vulnerable section of population)

What's the NEWS

- Union Tribal Affairs Minister Shri Arjun Munda launched the “Programme for Capacity Building of Scheduled Tribe Representatives in Local Self Governments” at a programme in Bhubhaneswar (Odisha)
- He also launched “1000 Spring Initiatives” and an online portal on GIS-based Spring Atlas with hydrological and chemical properties of the Springs on the occasion.

1000 Springs Initiative (objective and benefits)

- ‘1000 Springs Initiative’ aims at improving access to safe and adequate water for the tribal communities living in difficult and inaccessible part of rural areas in the country.
- It is an integrated solution around natural springs. It includes provision of infrastructure for piped water supply for drinking; provision of water for irrigation; community-led total sanitation initiatives;
- The online portal on GIS-based Spring Atlas has been developed to make these data easily accessible from an online platform.
- Springs are natural sources of groundwater discharge and have been used extensively in the mountainous regions but in the central and eastern Indian belt with more than 75% tribal population, it remains largely unrecognized and under-utilized.
- The initiative will help in harnessing the potential of perennial springs’ water to address natural scarcity of water in tribal areas.
- Young tribal youths from the rural belt have been trained as barefoot hydro geologists by combining traditional and scientific knowledge for identification and mapping of springs, and undertaking rejuvenation and protection measures in their habitations.

Capacity Building initiative (objective and benefits)

- A Capacity Building initiative is being launched for elected representatives to PRIs from among STs by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- This initiative is aimed at empowering tribal PRI representatives by enhancing their decision making capabilities at local government level.
- It also focusses on constitutional and legal provisions that protect and promote the rights and welfare of the tribal population.
- The programme will ensure greater participation of ST PRIs representatives in planning, execution and monitoring of government policies and programmes.
- Their better participation in the development process would ensure better prioritization of the tribal development agenda.

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GENERAL STUDIES III

**Science & Technology Economic
Developments, Biodiversity,
Environment, Internal Security and
Disaster management**

Space Awareness/Governance: Bhuvan Panchayat V 3.0

Web portal inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Bhuvan Panchayat + about SISDP Project + about Web geo portal) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space + GS II e governance)

Know! about Space-based Information Support for Decentralised Planning (SISDP)

- Indian space agency will share high resolution geospatial data it generates from its remote sensing satellites to help in planning across rural parts of the country ranging from e-government services to optimization of schools in the country.
- Indian Space Research Organisation and Ministry of Panchayati Raj have are working on creating an ecosystem for using high resolution thematic data for better planning.
- In the second phase of SISDP Project ISRO is generating geospatial products and services unlike in the first phase wherein ISRO created a database.
- These services can be directly assimilated into planning process at grassroot levels and some services related to e-governance.
- For the first time thematic database (on 1:10,000 scale) for the entire country is available with integrated high resolution satellite data for planning.

Bhuvan Panchayat V-3.0

- ISRO will use its geoportal - Bhuvan Panchayat V-3.0 - for database visualisation, data analytics, generation of automatic reports, model based products and services for the benefit of gram panchayat members and other stakeholders.
- These initiatives are part of the advanced Space-based Information Support for Decentralised Planning (SISDP) project. The first phase of SISDP was completed in 2016-17.

Know! about Web Geo portal

- The Web Geo portal is an easy to use Geo portal developed for database visualization, data analytics, generation of automatic reports, model based products and services for the benefit of Gram Panchayat members and other stake holders.
- The targeted audience for this portal are Public, PRIs and different stakeholders belonging to the gram panchayats.

Environment Conservation: Indian environmental economist Pavan Sukhdev wins 2020 Tyler Prize

Relevance IN – Prelims (about tyler prize and green economy + about WWF) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Renowned Indian environmental economist and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Goodwill Ambassador Pavan Sukhdev has won the 2020 Tyler Prize, regarded as the “Nobel Prize for the Environment” for his groundbreaking “green economy” work.

Know! more about it

- Sukhdev, has been acknowledged for his work on bringing the economic consequences of environmental degradation and loss to the attention of corporate and political decision-makers.
- Sukhdev was the Special Adviser and Head of UNEP's Green Economy Initiative, a major project launched by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to demonstrate that greening of economies is not a burden on growth but rather a new engine for growing wealth, increasing decent employment and reducing persistent poverty.
- Sukhdev was also appointed Study Leader (2008-2010) of the landmark initiative on 'The Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity' (TEEB), a global UNEP-hosted study.

- The TEEB report became a foundation for the Green Economy movement - an achievement for which Sukhdev is being awarded the 2020 Tyler Prize.
- The Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement is one of the oldest international environmental awards, recognizing individuals who have contributed in an outstanding manner to the scientific knowledge and public leadership to preserve and enhance the global environment.
- Often described as the “Nobel Prize for the Environment”, the Tyler Prize is administered by the University of Southern California.
- Sukhdev currently serves the World Wildlife Fund as President and Chairman of the Board as well as Board Member for TEEB Advisory Board

Know! about WWF

- The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961, working in the field of wilderness preservation, and the reduction of human impact on the environment.
- WWF aims to “stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
- The Living Planet Report has been published every two years by WWF since 1998

Economic Development: Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2019-20 (PART – I); Wealth Creation: The Invisible Hand Supported by the Hand of Trust

Survey posits that India’s aspiration to become a \$5 trillion economy depends critically on:

- Strengthening the invisible hand of the market.
- Supporting it with the hand of trust.

Strengthening the invisible hand by promoting pro-business policies to:

- Provide equal opportunities for new entrants.
- Enable fair competition and ease doing business.
- Eliminate policies unnecessarily undermining markets through government intervention.
- Enable trade for job creation.
- Efficiently scale up the banking sector.
- Introducing the idea of *trust as a public good*, which gets enhanced with greater use.
- Survey suggests that policies must empower transparency and effective enforcement using data and technology.

Know! about Invisible Hand

- The unobservable market force that helps the demand and supply of goods in a free market to reach equilibrium automatically is the invisible hand.
- The phrase invisible hand was introduced by Adam Smith in his book ‘The Wealth of Nations’.
- He assumed that an economy can work well in a free market scenario where everyone will work for his/her own interest.

Know! Adam Smith’s concept of invisible hand

- An economy will comparatively work and function well if the government will leave people alone to buy and sell freely among themselves.
- If people were allowed to trade freely, self interested traders present in the market would compete with each other, leading markets towards the positive output with the help of an invisible hand.
- In a free market scenario where there are no regulations or restrictions imposed by the government, if someone charges less, the customer will buy from him.
- Therefore, you have to lower your price or offer something better than your competitor.
- Whenever enough people demand something, it will be supplied by the market and everyone will be happy. The seller end up getting the price and the buyer will get better goods at the desired price.

Entrepreneurship and Wealth Creation at the Grassroots

- Entrepreneurship as a strategy to fuel productivity growth and wealth creation.
- India ranks third in number of new firms created, as per the World Bank.
- New firm creation in India increased dramatically since 2014:
- Survey examines the content and drivers of entrepreneurial activity at the bottom of the administrative pyramid – over 500 districts in India.
- New firm creation in services is significantly higher than that in manufacturing, infrastructure or agriculture.
- A 10 percent increase in registration of new firms in a district yields a 1.8 % increase in Gross Domestic District Product (GDDP).
- Entrepreneurship at district level has a significant impact on wealth creation at the grassroots.
- Birth of new firms in India is heterogeneous and dispersed across districts and sectors.
- Literacy and education in a district foster local entrepreneurship significantly:
 - Impact is most pronounced when literacy is above 70 per cent.
 - New firm formation is the lowest in eastern India with lowest literacy rate (59.6 % as per 2011 Census).
- Ease of Doing Business and flexible labour regulation enable new firm creation, especially in the manufacturing sector.
- Survey suggests enhancing ease of doing business and implementing flexible labour laws can create maximum jobs in districts and thereby in the states.

Pro-business versus Pro-markets

- *Survey says that India's aspiration of becoming a \$5 trillion economy depends critically on:*
 - Promoting 'pro-business' policy that unleashes the power of competitive markets to generate wealth.
 - Weaning away from 'pro-crony' policy that may favour specific private interests, especially powerful incumbents.
- *Viewed from the lens of the Stock market, creative destruction increased significantly post-liberalisation:*
 - Before liberalisation, a Sensex firm expected to stay in it for 60 years, which decreased to only 12 years after liberalisation.
 - Every five years, one-third of Sensex firms are churned out, reflecting the continuous influx of new firms, products and technologies into the economy.
- Despite impressive progress in enabling competitive markets, pro-crony policies destroyed value in the economy:
- Pro-crony policies such as discretionary allocation of natural resources till 2011 led to rent-seeking by beneficiaries while competitive allocation of the same post 2014 ended such rent extraction.
- Similarly crony lending that led to wilful default, wherein promoters collectively siphoned off wealth from banks, led to losses that dwarf subsidies for rural development.

Undermining Markets: When Government Intervention Hurts More Than It Helps

- Government intervention, though well intended, often ends up undermining the ability of the markets to support wealth creation and leads to outcomes opposite to those intended.
- Four examples of anachronistic government interventions:

1. Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955:

Frequent and unpredictable imposition of blanket stock limits on commodities under ECA distorts:

- The incentives for the creation of storage infrastructure by the private sector.
- Movement up the agricultural value chain.
- Development of national market for agricultural commodities.

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs must examine whether the ECA is relevant in today's India.

2. Drug Price Control under ECA:

- The regulation of prices of drugs, through the DPCO 2013, led to increase in the price of the regulated pharmaceutical drug vis-à-vis that of an unregulated but similar drug.
- The increase in prices is greater for more expensive formulations than for cheaper ones and for those sold in hospitals rather than retail shops.
- These findings reinforce that the outcome is opposite to what DPCO aims to do - making drugs affordable.
- Government, being a huge buyer of drugs, can intervene more effectively to provide affordable drugs by combining all its purchases and exercising its bargaining power.
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare must evolve non-distortionary mechanisms that utilise Government's bargaining power in a transparent manner.

3. Government intervention in Grain markets:

Policies in the food-grain markets led to:

- Emergence of Government as the largest procurer and hoarder of rice and wheat.
- Crowding out of private trade.
- Burgeoning food subsidy burden
- Inefficiencies in the markets, affecting the long run growth of agricultural sector.

The food-grains policy needs to be dynamic and allow switching from physical handling and distribution of food-grains to cash transfers/food coupons/smart cards.

4. Debt waivers:

Analysis of debt waivers given by States/Centre:

- Full waiver beneficiaries consume less, save less, invest less and are less productive after the waiver, compared to the partial beneficiaries.
- Debt waivers disrupt the credit culture.
- They reduce formal credit flow to the very same farmers, thereby defeating the purpose.

Survey suggests that:

- Government must systematically examine areas of needless intervention and undermining of markets; but it does not argue that there should be no Government intervention.
- Instead it suggests that the interventions that were apt in a different economic setting may have lost their relevance in a transformed economy.
- Eliminating such instances will enable competitive markets spurring investments and economic growth.

Creating Jobs and Growth by Specializing in Network Products

- Survey says India has unprecedented opportunity to chart a China-like, labour-intensive, export trajectory.
- By integrating "Assemble in India for the world" into Make in India, India can:
 - Raise its export market share to about 3.5 % by 2025 and 6 % by 2030.
 - Create 4 crore well-paid jobs by 2025 and 8 crore by 2030.
- Exports of network products can provide one-quarter of the increase in value added required for making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.
- Survey suggests a strategy similar to one used by China to grab this opportunity:
- Specialization at large scale in labour-intensive sectors, especially network products.
- Laser-like focus on enabling assembling operations at mammoth scale in network products.
- Export primarily to markets in rich countries.
- Trade policy must be an enabler.
- Survey analyses the impact of India's trade agreements on overall trade balance:
- India's exports increased by 13.4 % for manufactured products and 10.9 % for total merchandise
- Imports increased by 12.7 % for manufactured products and 8.6 per cent for total merchandise.
- India gained 0.7 % increase in trade surplus per year for manufactured products and 2.3 % per year for total merchandise.

Targeting Ease of Doing Business in India

- A jump of 79 positions to 63 in 2019 from 142 in 2014 in World Bank's Doing Business rankings.
- India still trails in parameters such as Ease of Starting Business, Registering Property, Paying Taxes and Enforcing Contracts.
- *Survey has numerous case studies:*
- For merchandise exports, the logistics process flow for imports is more efficient than that for exports.
- Electronics exports and imports through Bengaluru airport illustrate how Indian logistical processes can be world class.
- The turnaround time of ships in India has almost halved to 2.48 days in 2018-19 from 4.67 days in 2010-11.
- *Suggestions for further Ease of Doing Business:*
- Close coordination between the Logistics division of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Ministry of Shipping and the different port authorities.
- Individual sectors such as tourism or manufacturing require a more targeted approach that maps out the regulatory and process bottlenecks for each segment.

Golden jubilee of bank nationalisation: Taking stock

- Survey observes 2019 as the golden jubilee year of bank nationalization
- Accomplishments of lakhs of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) employees cherished and an objective assessment of PSBs suggested by the Survey.
- Since 1969, India's Banking sector has not developed proportionately to the growth in the size of the economy.
- India has only one bank in the global top 100 – same as countries that are a fraction of its size: Finland (about 1/11th), Denmark (1/8th), etc.
- A large economy needs an efficient banking sector to support its growth.

The onus of supporting the economy falls on the PSBs accounting for 70 % of the market share in Indian banking:

- PSBs are inefficient compared to their peer groups on every performance parameter.
- In 2019, investment for every rupee in PSBs, on average, led to the loss of 23 paise, while in NPBs it led to the gain of 9.6 paise.
- Credit growth in PSBs has been much lower than NPBs for the last several years.

Solutions to make PSBs more efficient:

- Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) for PSBs' employees
- Representation on boards proportionate to the blocks held by employees to incentivize employees and align their interests with that of all shareholders of banks.
- Creation of a GSTN type entity that will aggregate data from all PSBs and use technologies like big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning in credit decisions for ensuring better screening and monitoring of borrowers, especially the large ones.

Financial Fragility in the NBFC Sector

- Survey investigates the key drivers of Rollover Risk of the shadow banking system in India in light of the current liquidity crunch in the sector.
- *Key drivers of Rollover Risk:*
- Asset Liability Management (ALM) Risk.
- Interconnectedness Risk.
- Financial and Operating Resilience of an NBFC.
- Over-dependence on short-term wholesale funding.
- Survey computes a diagnostic (Health Score) by quantifying the Rollover risk for a sample of HFCs and Retail-NBFCs (which are representative of their respective sectors).

The analysis of the Health Score has the following findings:

- The HFC sector exhibited a declining trend post 2014 and overall health of the sector worsened considerably by the end of FY2019.
- The Score of the Retail-NBFC sector was consistently below par for the period 2014 -19.
- Larger Retail-NBFCs had higher Health Scores but among medium and small Retail- NBFCs, the medium size ones had a lower score for the entire period of 2014-19.
- Survey suggests that the Health Score provides an early warning signal of impending liquidity problems.
- Equity markets react favourably to increase in Health Score of individual HFCs and Retail-NBFCs.
- The Survey prescribes this analysis to efficiently allocate liquidity enhancements across firms (with different Health Scores) in the NBFC sector, thereby arresting financial fragility in a capital-efficient manner.

Privatization and Wealth Creation

- Survey examines the realized **efficiency gains from privatization** in the Indian context and bolsters the case for aggressive disinvestment of CPSEs.
- Strategic disinvestment of Government's shareholding of 53.29 per cent in HPCL led to an increase of around Rs. 33,000 crore in national wealth.

*Survey presents an **analysis of the before-after performance of 11 CPSEs** which underwent strategic disinvestment from 1999-2000 to 2003-04:*

- Financial indicators such as net worth, net profit, return on assets (ROA), return on equity (ROE) etc of the privatized CPSEs, on an average, have improved significantly.
- Privatized CPSEs have been able to generate more wealth from the same resources.

Survey suggests **aggressive disinvestment of CPSEs** to:

- Bring in higher profitability.
- Promote efficiency.
- Increase competitiveness.
- Promote professionalism.

Thalinomics: The Economics of a Plate of Food in India

- An attempt to quantify what a common person pays for a Thali across India.
- A shift in the dynamics of Thali prices since 2015-16.
- Absolute prices of a vegetarian Thali have decreased significantly since 2015-16 across India and the four regions; though the price has increased during 2019-20.
- Post 2015-16:
- Average household gained close to Rs. 11, 000 on average per year from the moderation in prices in the case of vegetarian Thali.
- Average household that consumes two non-vegetarian Thalīs gained close to Rs. 12, 000 on average per year during the same period.
- From 2006-07 to 2019-20:
- Affordability of vegetarian Thalīs improved 29 %.
- Affordability of non-vegetarian Thalīs improved by 18 %.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF UNION BUDGET 2020-21 (PART-I)

Three prominent themes of the Budget

- **Aspirational India** - better standards of living with access to health, education and better jobs for all sections of the society
- **Economic Development for all** - "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas".
- **Caring Society** - both humane and compassionate; Antyodaya as an article of faith.

Three broad themes are held together by:

- Corruption free, policy-driven *Good Governance*.
- Clean and sound *financial sector*.

Ease of Living underlined by the three themes of Union Budget 2020-21.

Three components of Aspirational India

- Agriculture, Irrigation, and Rural Development
- Wellness, Water, and Sanitation
- Education and Skills

Sixteen Action Points for Agriculture, Irrigation and Rural Development

⇒ Rs. 2.83 lakh crore to be allocated for the following 16 Action Points:

- Rs. 1.60 lakh crore for Agriculture, Irrigation & allied activities.
- Rs. 1.23 lakh crore for Rural development & Panchayati Raj.

⇒ Agriculture credit:

- Rs. 15 lakh crore target set for the year 2020-21.
- PM-KISAN beneficiaries to be covered under the KCC scheme.
- NABARD Re-finance Scheme to be further expanded.

⇒ Comprehensive measures for 100 water-stressed districts proposed.

⇒ ***Blue Economy***:

- Rs. 1 lakh crore fisheries' exports to be achieved by 2024-25.
- 200 lakh tonnes fish production targeted by 2022-23.
- 3477 *Sagar Mitras* and 500 Fish Farmer Producer Organisations to involve youth in fisheries extension.
- Growing of algae, sea-weed and cage culture to be promoted.
- Framework for development, management and conservation of marine fishery resources.

⇒ ***Kisan Rail*** to be setup by Indian Railways through PPP:

- To build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables (milk, meat, fish, etc.
- Express and Freight trains to have refrigerated coaches.

⇒ ***Krishi Udaan*** to be launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation:

- Both international and national routes to be covered.
- North-East and tribal districts to realize Improved value of agri-products.

⇒ ***One-Product One-District*** for better marketing and export in the Horticulture sector.

⇒ Measures for organic, natural, and integrated farming:

- ***Jaivik Kheti*** Portal – online national organic products market to be strengthened.
- ***Zero-Budget Natural Farming*** (mentioned in July 2019 Budget) to be included.
- *Integrated Farming Systems* in rain-fed areas to be expanded.
- Multi-tier cropping, bee-keeping, solar pumps, solar energy production in non-cropping season to be added.

⇒ ***PM-KUSUM*** to be expanded:

- 20 lakh farmers to be provided for setting up stand-alone solar pumps.
- Another 15 lakh farmers to be helped to solarise their grid-connected pump sets.
- Scheme to enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their fallow/barren lands and to sell it to the grid.

⇒ ***Village Storage Scheme***:

- To be run by the SHGs to provide farmers a good holding capacity and reduce their logistics cost.
- Women, SHGs to regain their position as ***Dhaanya Lakshmi***.

⇒ NABARD to map and geo-tag agri-warehouses, cold storages, reefer van facilities, etc.

- ⇒ Warehousing in line with Warehouse Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) norms:
 - Viability Gap Funding for setting up such efficient warehouses at the block/taluk level.
 - Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) to undertake such warehouse building.
- ⇒ Financing on Negotiable Warehousing Receipts (e-NWR) to be integrated with e-NAM.
- ⇒ State governments who undertake implementation of model laws (issued by the Central government) to be encouraged.
- ⇒ Livestock:
 - Doubling of milk processing capacity to 108 million MT from 53.5 million MT by 2025.
 - Artificial insemination to be increased to 70% from the present 30%.
 - MNREGS to be dovetailed to develop fodder farms.
 - Foot and Mouth Disease, Brucellosis in cattle and Pest Des Petits ruminants (PPR) in sheep and goat to be eliminated by 2025.
- ⇒ **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana** – 0.5 crore households mobilized with 58 lakh SHGs for poverty alleviation.

Wellness, Water and Sanitation

- Rs. 69,000 crore allocated for overall Healthcare sector.
 - ⇒ Rs. 6400 crore (out of Rs. 69,000 crore) for **PM Jan Arogya Yojana** (PMJAY):
- More than 20,000 hospitals already empanelled under PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).
- Viability Gap Funding window proposed for setting up hospitals in the PPP mode.
- Aspirational Districts with no Ayushman empanelled hospitals to be covered in the first phase.
- Targeting diseases with an appropriately designed preventive regime using Machine Learning and AI.
 - ⇒ **Jan Aushadhi Kendra Scheme** to offer 2000 medicines and 300 surgicals in all districts by 2024.
 - ⇒ **TB Harega Desh Jeetega** campaign launched - commitment to end Tuberculosis by 2025.
 - ⇒ Rs. 3.60 lakh crore approved for **Jal Jeevan Mission**:
- Rs. 11,500 crore for the year 2020-21.
- Augmenting local water sources, recharging existing sources, and promoting water harvesting and de-salination.
- Cities with million-plus population to be encouraged to achieve the objective during the current year itself.
 - ⇒ Rs. 12,300 crore allocation for **Swachh Bharat Mission** in 2020-21:
- Commitment to **ODF-Plus** in order to sustain ODF behaviour.
 - ⇒ Emphasis on liquid and grey water management.
- Focus also on Solid-waste collection, source segregation, and processing.

Education and Skills

- Rs. 99,300 crore for education sector and Rs. 3000 crore for skill development in 2020-21.
- New Education Policy to be announced soon.
- **National Police University** and **National Forensic Science University** proposed for policing science, forensic science, and cyber-forensics.
- Degree level full-fledged online education program by Top-100 institutions in the National Institutional Ranking Framework.
- Up to 1-year internship to fresh engineers to be provided by Urban Local Bodies.
- Budget proposes to attach a medical college to an existing district hospital in PPP mode.
 - ⇒ Special bridge courses to be designed by the Ministries of Health, and Skill Development:
- To fulfill the demand for teachers, nurses, para-medical staff and care-givers abroad.
- To bring in equivalence in the skill sets of the workforce and employers' standards.
 - ⇒ 150 higher educational institutions to start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March 2021.
 - ⇒ External Commercial Borrowings and FDI to be enabled for education sector.
 - ⇒ Ind-SAT proposed for Asian and African countries as a part of **Study in India** program.

Economic Development

Industry, Commerce and Investment

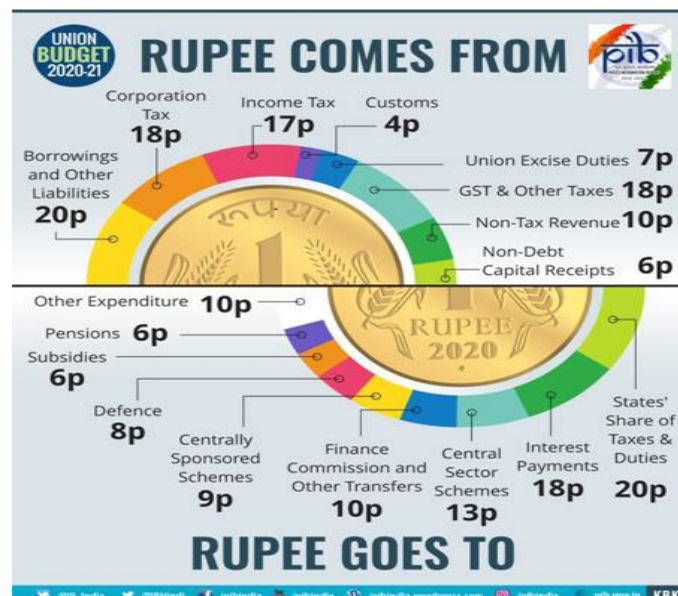
- Rs. 27,300 crore allocated for 2020-21 for development and promotion of Industry and Commerce.
- Investment Clearance Cell** proposed to be set up:
 - To provide “end to end” facilitation and support.
 - To work through a portal.
- Five new smart cities proposed to be developed.
- Scheme to encourage manufacture of mobile phones, electronic equipment and semi-conductor packaging proposed.
- National Technical Textiles Mission** to be set up:
 - With four-year implementation period from 2020-21 to 2023-24.
 - At an estimated outlay of Rs 1480 crore.
 - To position India as a global leader in Technical Textiles.
- New scheme **NIRVIK** to be launched to achieve higher export credit disbursement, which provides for:
 - Higher insurance coverage
 - Reduction in premium for small exporters
 - Simplified procedure for claim settlements.
- Turnover of Government e-Marketplace (GeM) proposed to be taken to Rs 3 lakh crore.
- Scheme for Revision of duties and taxes on exported products to be launched.
 - Exporters to be digitally refunded duties and taxes levied at the Central, State and local levels, which are otherwise not exempted or refunded.
- All Ministries to issue quality standard orders as per PM’s vision of “**Zero Defect-Zero Effect**” manufacturing.

Economic Development: Key Highlights of Economic Survey 2019-20 and Budget 2020-21(PART – II)

The government aims to

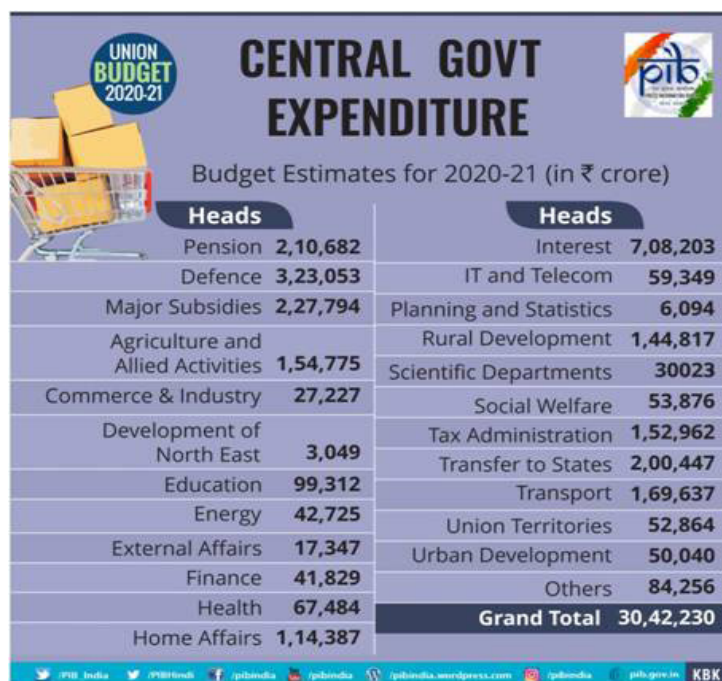
- Achieve seamless delivery of services through **Digital governance**
- Improve physical quality of life through **National Infrastructure Pipeline**
- Mitigate Risks through **Disaster Resilience**
- Boost Social security through **Pension and Insurance penetration**.

Budget and Economic Survey (Important Takeaways)



Centre government Expenditure

- A good part of the borrowings for the financial year 2020-21 to go towards Capital expenditure that has been scaled up by more than 21%.



CENTRAL GOVT EXPENDITURE
Budget Estimates for 2020-21 (in ₹ crore)

Heads	Heads
Pension 2,10,682	Interest 7,08,203
Defence 3,23,053	IT and Telecom 59,349
Major Subsidies 2,27,794	Planning and Statistics 6,094
Agriculture and Allied Activities 1,54,775	Rural Development 1,44,817
Commerce & Industry 27,227	Scientific Departments 30023
Development of North East 3,049	Social Welfare 53,876
Education 99,312	Tax Administration 1,52,962
Energy 42,725	Transfer to States 2,00,447
External Affairs 17,347	Transport 1,69,637
Finance 41,829	Union Territories 52,864
Health 67,484	Urban Development 50,040
Home Affairs 1,14,387	Others 84,256
	Grand Total 30,42,230

New and simplified personal income tax regime proposed:

Taxable Income Slab (Rs.)	Existing tax rates	New tax rates
0-2.5 Lakh	Exempt	Exempt
2.5-5 Lakh	5%	5%
5-7.5 Lakh	20%	10%
7.5-10 Lakh	20%	15%
10-12.5 Lakh	30%	20%
12.5-15 Lakh	30%	25%
Above 15 Lakh	30%	30%

Around 70 of the existing exemptions and deductions (more than 100) to be removed in the new simplified regime.

- Remaining exemptions and deductions to be reviewed and rationalised in coming years.
- New tax regime to be optional - an individual may continue to pay tax as per the old regime and avail deductions and exemptions.
- Measures to pre-fill the income tax return initiated so that an individual who opts for the new regime gets pre-filled income tax returns and would need no assistance from an expert to pay income tax.
- New regime to entail estimated revenue forgone of Rs. 40,000 crore per year.

Corporate Tax:

- Tax rate of 15% extended to new electricity generation companies.
- Indian corporate tax rates now amongst the lowest in the world.

Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT):

- **DDT removed making India a more attractive investment destination.**

Start-ups:

- Start-ups with turnover up to Rs. 100 crore to enjoy 100% deduction for 3 consecutive assessment years out of 10 years.
- Tax payment on ESOPs deferred.

MSMEs to boost less-cash economy:

- Turnover threshold for audit increased to Rs. 5 crore from Rs. 1 crore for businesses carrying out less than 5% business transactions in cash.

Cooperatives:

- Parity brought between cooperatives and corporate sector.
- Option to cooperative societies to be taxed at 22% + 10% surcharge and 4% cess with no exemption/deductions.
- Cooperative societies exempted from Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT) just like Companies are exempted from the Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).

Tax concession for foreign investments:

- 100% tax exemption to the interest, dividend and capital gains income on investment made in infrastructure and priority sectors before 31st March, 2024 with a minimum lock-in period of 3 years by the Sovereign Wealth Fund of foreign governments.

Affordable housing:

- Additional deduction up to Rs. 1.5 lakhs for interest paid on loans taken for an affordable house extended till 31st March, 2021.
- Date of approval of affordable housing projects for availing tax holiday on profits earned by developers extended till 31st March, 2021.

Tax Facilitation Measures

- Instant PAN to be allotted online through Aadhaar.
- **‘Vivad Se Vishwas’** scheme, with a deadline of 30th June, 2020, to reduce litigations in direct taxes:
 - Waiver of interest and penalty - only disputed taxes to be paid for payments till 31st March, 2020.
 - Additional amount to be paid if availed after 31st March, 2020.
 - Benefits to taxpayers in whose cases appeals are pending at any level.
- **Faceless appeals** to be enabled by amending the Income Tax Act.
- **For charity institutions:**
 - Pre-filing in return through information of donations furnished by the donee.
 - Process of registration to be made completely electronic.
 - Unique registration number (URN) to be issued to all new and existing charity institutions.
 - Provisional registration to be allowed for new charity institutions for three years.
 - CBDT to adopt a Taxpayers’ Charter.

Losses of merged banks:

- Amendments proposed to the Income-tax Act to ensure that entities benefit from unabsorbed losses and depreciation of the amalgamating entities.

Indirect Tax

GST:

- Cash reward system envisaged to incentivise customers to seek invoice.

Simplified return with features like SMS based filing for nil return and improved input tax credit flow to be implemented from 1st April, 2020 as a pilot run.

- Dynamic QR-code capturing GST parameters proposed for consumer invoices.

- Electronic invoice to capture critical information in a centralized system to be implemented in a phased manner.
- Aadhaar based verification of taxpayers being introduced to weed out dummy or non-existent units.
- GST rate structure being deliberated to address inverted duty structure.

Customs Duties:

- Customs duty raised on footwear to 35% from 25% and on furniture goods to 25% from 20%.
- Basic customs duty on imports of news print and light-weight coated paper reduced from 10% to 5%.
- Customs duty rates revised on electric vehicles and parts of mobiles.
- 5% health cess to be imposed on the imports of medical devices, except those exempt from BCD.
- Lower customs duty on certain inputs and raw materials like fuse, chemicals, and plastics.
- Higher customs duty on certain goods like auto-parts, chemicals, etc. which are also being made domestically.

Trade Policy Measures

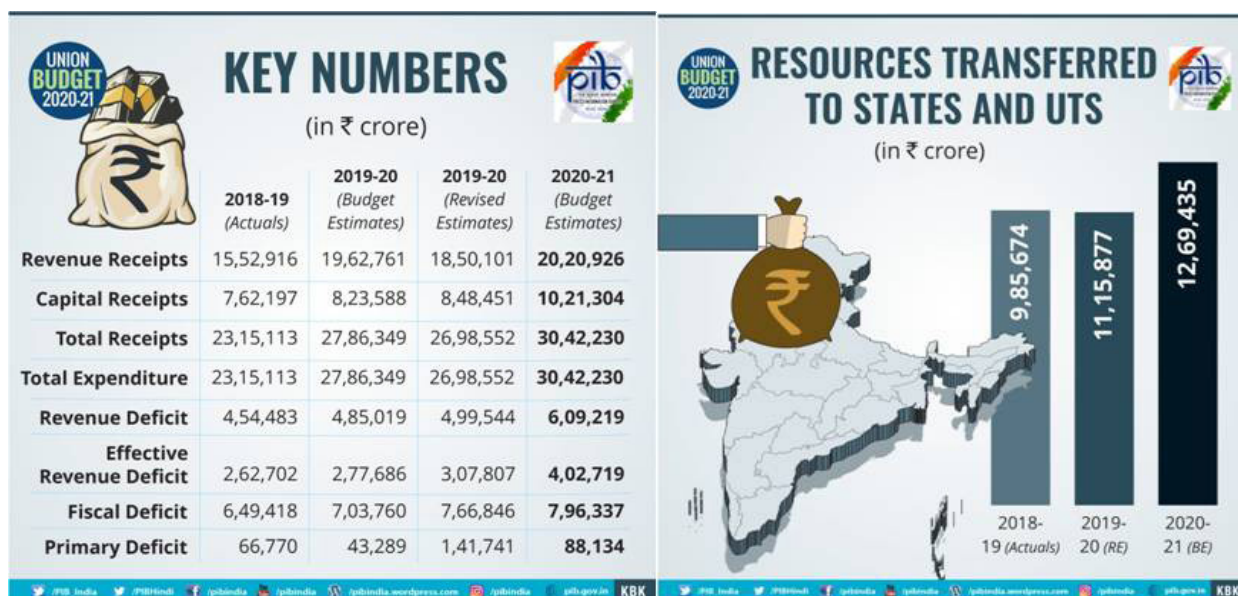
- Customs Act being amended to enable proper checks of imports under FTAs.
- Rules of Origin requirements to be reviewed for certain sensitive items.
- Provisions relating to safeguard duties to be strengthened to enable regulating such surge in imports in a systematic way.
- Provisions for checking dumping of goods and imports of subsidized goods being strengthened.
- Suggestions for reviews of exemptions from customs duty to be crowd-sourced.
- **Excise duty proposed to be raised on Cigarettes and other tobacco products**, no change made in the duty rates of *bidis*.
- Anti-dumping duty on PTA abolished to benefit the textile sector

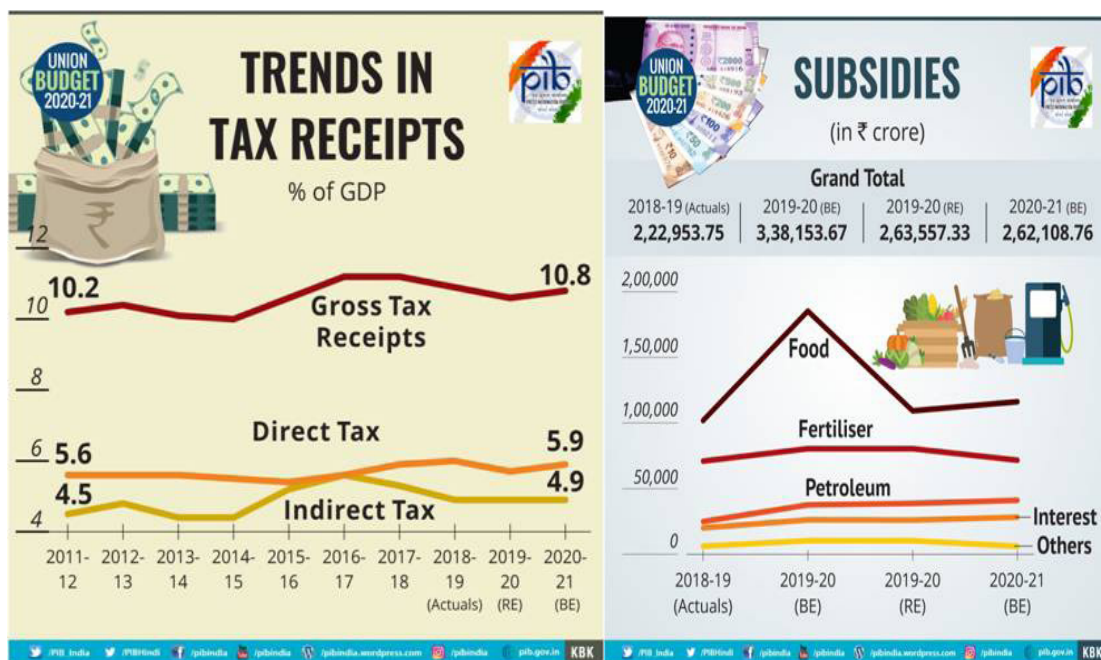
Unprecedented Milestones and Achievements of Indian Economy

- India now the fifth largest economy of the world.
- 7.4% average growth clocked during 2014-19 with inflation averaging around 4.5%.
- 271 million people raised out of poverty during 2006-16.
- India's Foreign Direct Investment elevated to US\$ 284 billion during 2014-19 from US\$ 190 billion during 2009-14.
- Central Government debt reduced to 48.7% of GDP (March 2019) from 52.2% (March 2014).

Two cross-cutting developments:

- Proliferation of technologies (Analytics, Machine Learning, robotics, Bio-informatics and Artificial Intelligence).
- Highest ever number of people in the productive age group (15-65 years) in India.





16 Action points to Focus on Farmer's Income, Storage, Blue Economy and Animal Husbandry

Highlights

- PM-KUSUM to be expanded to 20 lakh Farmers
- Rs 15 Lakh Crore Agriculture Credit Target for Year 2020-21
- “KISAN RAIL” AND “KRISHI UDAAN” to be launched
- Warehouse Creation Through Viability Gap Funding on a PPP Mode at Block Level
- WOMEN and SHG'S role as “DHAANYA LAKSHMI” in Food Storage at Village Level to be Promoted
- 3477 Sagar Mitras to be set up to involve youth in Fisheries Sector

Doubling Farmers Income

- To expand PM-KUSUM to 20 lakh farmers for setting up stand alone solar pumps and help another 15 lakh farmers solarise their grid connected pump sets.
- To operationalize scheme to enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their fallow/barren lands and to sell it to grid.
- To encourage balanced use of all kinds of fertilizers and Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF).
- Integration of negotiable warehousing receipts (e-NWR) and National Agricultural Market (e-NAM).
- Integrated farming systems for rainfed areas shall be expanded.
- Multi-tier cropping, bee keeping, solar pumps, solar energy production in non cropping season will be added.
- The portal on “Jaivik kheti” – online national organic products market will also be strengthened

Storage and Logistics

- Creation of warehouses through viability gap funding on a PPP mode at block level.



- Warehouse building by Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) on their land
- As a backward linkage, village storage scheme to be run by Self Help Groups (SHG). “Women, SHG’s shall regain their position as **Dhaanya Lakshmi**”
- To build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables, inclusive of milk, meat, Indian Railways will set up **Kisan Rail**-through PPP arrangements.
- There shall be refrigerated coaches in express and freight trains as well
- To help improve value realization especially in North-East and tribal districts **Krishi Udaan** will be launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation

Animal Husbandry

- To eliminate Foot and Mouth disease, brucellosis in cattle and peste des petits ruminants (PPR) in sheep and goat by 2025 and to increase coverage of artificial insemination from 30 percent to 70 percent.
- Facilitate doubling of milk processing capacity from 53.5 million MT to 108 million MT by 2025.

Agriculture credit

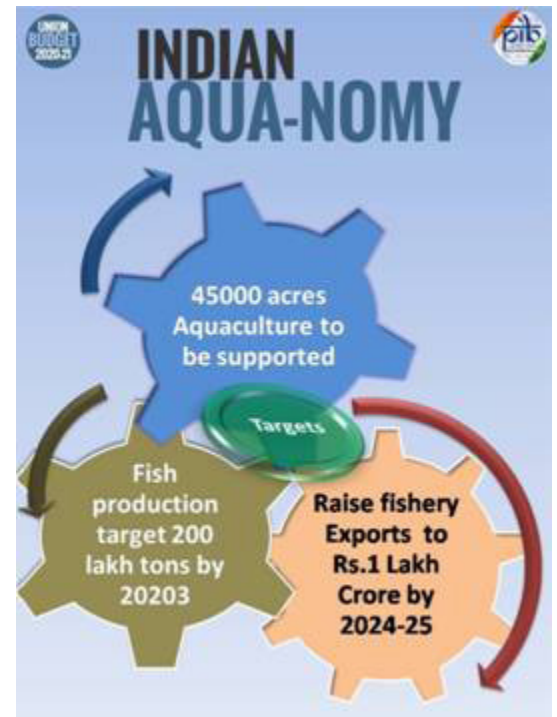
- All eligible beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) will be covered under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme.

Horticulture

- For better marketing and export, the budget propose supporting states which, adopting a cluster basis will focus on **one product one district**”

Blue Economy

- A framework for development, management and conservation of marine fishery resources and promotion of algae, sea weed and cage culture that will assist in raising fish production to 200 lakh tonnes by 2022-23.
- Government will involve youth in fishery extension through 3477 **sagar mitras** and 500 fish farmer producer organizations.



Union Budget 2020-21 allocates Rs.99,300 crore for Education, Rs. 3,000 crore for Skill Development

Highlights

- 150 Higher Educational Institutions to start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March, 2021
- Degree level online education programmes for students of deprived sections of the society
- External Commercial Borrowings and FDI to be encouraged for financing education infrastructure
- Ind-SAT to be conducted in Asia and Africa under Study in India programme
- Special bridge courses for nurses, para medical staff and care givers to enhance their employability abroad
- National Police University and National Forensic Science University to be set up

Education and Skill (know! the detail)

- A total **outlay of Rs.99,300 crore has been earmarked for the education sector in 2020-21 and Rs.3000 crore for Skill Development.**
- By 2030, India is set to have the largest working age population in the world. Not only do they need literacy but they need both job and life skills
- About **150 Higher Educational Institutions will start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March 2020-21.**

- This will help to improve the employability of students in the general stream (vis-a-vis services or technology stream).
- The government will also start a program whereby urban local bodies across the country would provide internship opportunities to fresh engineers for a period of up to one year.
- National Skill Development Agency will give special thrust to infrastructure-focused skill development opportunities, the Minister explained.
- The New Education Policy will be announced soon.
- Steps will be taken to enable sourcing External Commercial Borrowings and FDI to ensure greater inflow of finance to attract talented teachers, innovate and build better labs.
- **Degree level full-fledged online education programme will be started** to provide quality education to students of deprived sections of the society as well as those who do not have access to higher education.
- These shall be offered only by institutions who are ranked within top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking Framework.
- India should be a preferred destination for higher education. Therefore, under its **“Study in India” programme, an Ind-SAT is proposed to be held in Asian and African countries** for benchmarking foreign candidates who receive scholarships for studying in Indian higher education centres.
- In order to meet the requirement of qualified medical doctors, **it is proposed to attach a medical college to an existing district hospital in PPP mode.**
- Viability gap funding will be made available to the States that fully allow the facilities of the hospital to the medical college and provide land at a concession.
- A huge demand exists for teachers/nurses/para medical staff and care givers abroad. Therefore special bridge courses may be designed jointly by the Ministries of Health and Skill Development along with professional bodies to match the employer’s standards as well as meet the language requirements of various countries.
- **A National Police University and a National Forensic Science University have also been proposed** in the domain of policing science, forensic science, cyber-forensics etc. in the Budget.



Insurance cover for bank depositors raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh

- Currently, in the (unlikely) event of a bank going bust in India, a depositor has claim to a maximum of Rs 1 lakh per account as insurance cover — even if the deposit in their account far exceeds Rs 1 lakh. Depositors holding more than Rs 1 lakh in their account have no legal remedy in case of the collapse of the bank.

Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)

- This amount is termed ‘deposit insurance’. The cover of Rs 1 lakh per depositor is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a fully owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India.
- The Rs 1 lakh-cover is for deposits in commercial banks, regional rural banks (RRBs), local area banks (LABs), and cooperative banks.
- DICGC last revised the deposit insurance cover to Rs 1 lakh on May 1, 1993 — raising it from Rs 30,000, which had been the cover from 1980 onward.

Government To Sell Stake In Life Insurance Corporation Via IPO

- The government will sell a part of its holding in Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) through an initial public offering (IPO).
- The government owns 100 per cent of LIC.
- That LIC has been identified as a candidate for a potential public listing by the government,

- LIC is India's largest financial institution, and if LIC shares are listed on stock exchanges, it could easily emerge as the country's top listed company in terms of market valuation, overtaking current leaders Reliance Industries Ltd and Tata Consultancy Services.
- In the budget of July 2019, the government had announced a proposal to make minimum public holding of 35 per cent for listed companies.
- The government had listed the shares of General Insurance Corporation and New India Assurance through IPOs three years ago.
- Public listing of LIC will lead to more disclosures of investment and loan portfolios and better governance, with greater transparency and accountability.
- The government will have to amend the LIC Act first before taking the Corporation public.
- LIC is currently under the supervisory oversight of the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India (IRDAI), but it is governed by The LIC Act of 1956 which enables the state-owned insurer to obtain a special dispensation in several areas including higher stakes in companies beyond the limit set by the IRDAI.

The five 'iconic' archaeological sites mentioned in the Budget

- The government proposes to set up an Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation under the Ministry of Culture, and develop five archaeological sites as "iconic sites" with onsite museums in Rakhigarhi (Haryana), Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh), Sivasagar (Assam), Dholavira (Gujarat) and Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu).

Rakhigarhi

- Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hissar district is one of the most prominent and largest sites of the Harappan civilisation.
- It is one among the five known townships of the Harappan civilisation in the Indian subcontinent.
- Between 2013 and 2016, excavations the skeletal remains of a couple were discovered. Interestingly, of the 62 graves discovered in Rakhigarhi, only this particular grave consisted of more than one skeletal remains and of individuals of the opposite sex together.

Hastinapur

- Hastinapur (in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh) finds mention in the Mahabharata and the Puranas.
- One of the most significant discoveries made at this site was of the "new ceramic industry", which was named the Painted Grey Ware, which as per the report represented the relics of the early Indo-Aryans.

Sivasagar

- In Sivasagar, excavations at the Karenghar (Talatalghar) complex between 2000 and 2003 led to the discovery of buried structures in the north-western and north-eastern side of the complex.
- Among the structural remains found at the site were ceramic assemblages including vases, vessels, dishes, and bowls, etc

Dholavira

- Dholavira in Gujarat is located in the Khadir island of the Rann of Kutch, and like Rakhigarhi is one of the sites where the remains of the Harappan civilisation have been found.
- Dholavira is unique because remains of a complete water system have been found here.

Adichnallur

- Adichnallur lies in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. The urn-burial site was first brought to light during a "haphazard excavation" by a German archaeologist in 1876.

What was the problem slowing down the economy?

There are four engines of GDP (gross domestic product) growth.

- Consumption of the private individuals (C)
- Demand for goods from the government (G)
- investments from the businesses (I)
- net demand from exports and imports (NX).

$$\text{GDP} = C + G + I + NX$$

- Indian economy has been losing its engines.
- Corporate investments (I) engine has been slowing down since 2013 (reasons - domestic bottlenecks and a sombre global demand)
- Net exports (NX) too were not improving.
- That left only C and G – that is private consumption and government expenditure.

Private consumption

- For the past two years, even private consumption started faltering and this has aggravated in the past one year, as witnessed in the slump in sales across the board (eg automobile sector)

Government expenditure

- Government demand carried the day for the longest time but with a sharp fall in revenues, there is no way the government can spend without gravely flouting the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act targets.

Government strategy

- Leaving people with more money will help boost their consumption levels, which are at present quite subdued, as witnessed in the slump in sales of goods and services across the board.
- Higher consumption will bring down the inventories in the economy and incentivise businesses to invest again.
- To make investments attractive for businesses the government has already cut the corporate tax rate last year.

NIRVIK scheme to provide high insurance cover for exporters

- Nirvik (Niryat Rin Vikas Yojana) scheme to provide enhanced insurance cover and reduce premium for small exporters.
- The scheme is being prepared by the commerce ministry.
- Under the scheme, also called the Export Credit Insurance Scheme (ECIS), the insurance guaranteed could cover up to 90 per cent of the principal and interest.
- The ministry has also proposed to subsidise the premium under the scheme that has to be paid by exporters of certain key sectors.
- The Export Credit Guarantee Corporation currently provides credit guarantee of up to 60 per cent loss.
- The country's exports contracted for a fifth month in a row by 1.8 per cent in December 2019 to USD 27.36 billion.
- During April-December 2019-20, exports slipped 1.96 per cent to USD 239.29 billion, imports declined 8.9 per cent to USD 357.39 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 118.10 billion.

Task force to be set up for recommending marriageable age for women

- A task force will be set up to recommend marriageable age for women.
- The government proposes to set up a tribal museum in Ranchi, Jharkhand, while five archaeological sites in Haryana, UP, Assam, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu will be developed with on-site museums.
- The government has allocated Rs 3,150 crore for Ministry of Culture, and Rs 2,500 crore for Ministry of Tourism.

100 more airports to be developed by 2025 to support UDAN scheme

- 100 more airports will be developed by 2025 to support the UDAN scheme.
- 1,150 trains will run under the public private partnership (PPP) mode, also four stations will be redeveloped with the help of the private sector.
- More Tejas type trains to connect tourist destinations.
- Proposal for setting up large solar power capacity alongside rail track is under consideration.

New scheme to boost domestic manufacturing of mobile phones, electronic equipment

- The government said it will introduce a new scheme to encourage domestic manufacturing of mobile phones, electronic equipment and semiconductor packaging in order to make India a part of the global manufacturing chain and boost employment opportunities.

Govt to bring new education policy

- Rs 99,300 crore has been allocated for the education sector and Rs 3,000 crore for skill development for the next fiscal.
- Steps will be taken to attract external commercial borrowing and FDI in the education sector
- To improve skills and provide employment government local bodies across the country will provide internships to fresh engineers up to one year
- Further, 115 higher education institutions will also start apprenticeship from March 2021.
- National Police University and National Forensic University are being proposed, while planning to allow degree level full-fledged online education programme by institutions ranked in top 100 to students who do not have access to higher education.
- The HRD's online teaching platform, SWAYAM has already announced to start providing full-fledged degrees along with the certificate programmes.
- An Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation will also be set up.
- The government is working in collaboration with the education ministries across the world and the "New Education Policy (NEP) will be released soon" to improve the quality of higher education in India.
- The Ministry of skill development to create special bridge course to address the issue of the shortage of paramedical, caregivers, nurses, teachers and doctors.
- Attaching medical colleges with district hospitals on public-private partnership model (like in case of IIITs) to deal with the shortage of doctors.

Budget 2020 announces the largest ever science mission

- The government in its budget 2020 has announced a National Mission on Quantum Technologies & Applications (NM-QTA) with a total budget outlay of Rs 8000 Crore for a period of five years to be implemented by the Department of Science & Technology (DST).
- The new economy is based on innovations that disrupt established business models. Artificial intelligence, Internet-of-Things (IoT), 3D printing, drones, DNA data storage, quantum computing, etc., are re-writing the world economic order.
- Quantum technology is opening up new frontiers in computing, communications, cyber security with wide-spread applications.
- It is expected that lots of commercial applications would emerge from theoretical constructs which are developing in this area. It is proposed to provide an outlay of ` 8000 crore over a period five years for the National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications
- Their applications which will receive boost include those in aero-space engineering, numerical weather prediction, simulations, securing the communications & financial transactions, cyber security, advanced manufacturing, health, agriculture, education and other important sectors with focus on creation of high skilled jobs, human resources development, start-ups & entrepreneurship leading to technology lead economic growth.

What is quantum supremacy?

- It describes the point where quantum computers can do things that classical computers cannot.
- Our traditional computers work on the basis of the laws of classical physics, specifically by utilising the flow of electricity.
- A quantum computer, on the other hand, seeks to exploit the laws that govern the behaviour of atoms and subatomic particles. At that tiny scale, many laws of classical physics cease to apply, and the unique laws of quantum physics come into play.

Classical computer

- Bits of information are stored as either 0 or 1. Every string of such digits (bitstrings) represents a unique character or instruction; for example, 01100001 represents the lowercase "a".

Quantum computer

- In a quantum computer, information is stored in quantum bits, or qubits. And a qubit can be both 0 and 1 at the same time.

- Unlike classical physics, in which an object can exist in one place at one time, quantum physics looks at the probabilities of an object being at different points.
- Existence in multiple states is called superposition, and the relationships among these states is called entanglement.
- The higher the number of qubits, the higher the amount of information stored in them. Compared to the information stored in the same number of bits, the information in qubits rises exponentially.

National Logistics Policy will be Released Soon

- A National Logistics Policy will be released soon and it will clarify the roles of the Union Government, State Governments and key regulators
- The policy will create a single window e-logistics market and focus on generation of employment, skills and make MSMEs competitive.
- India's logistics sector is highly defragmented and the aim is to reduce the logistics cost from the present 14% of GDP to less than 10% by 2022.
- The National Logistics Policy formulated by the Commerce and Industry Ministry will improve India's trade competitiveness, create more jobs, improve India's performance in global rankings and pave the way for India to become a logistics hub.

The following announcements in Finance Minister's Budget Speech will make the National Logistics Policy more robust:

- Introduction of GST has brought in efficiency in logistics and transportation sector. It has reduced turnaround time of trucks by over 20%.
- Geo-tagging of all warehousing.
- Warehousing shall be promoted to comply with WDRA norms.
- VGF shall be provided for setting up of warehousing at the block / taluk levels on PPP mode. Food Corporation of India, Central Warehousing Corporation shall also offer their land for this purpose.
- Village Storage Scheme through Women Self-help groups shall provide backward linkages for seeds thereby reducing logistics costs. Financial assistance under MUDRA loans and NABARD shall be provided for this purpose.
- Cold chains for fish and perishables shall be promoted.
- Refrigerated vans shall be attached to passenger trains to promote movement of perishables quickly.
- Krishi trains shall also be run on PPP mode.
- Krishi Udan scheme shall be promoted / launched whereby horticulture and perishable commodities shall be transported through the air-route that will especially benefit the North-East region and tribal area. It will definitely help movement of perishables and foodstuff to produce-areas to consumption-areas.
- Cluster approach shall be adopted for promoting horticulture. One Product One District shall be encouraged.
- National Organic e-Market will be developed for organic products.
- Financing of negotiable warehousing receipts would be encouraged and also its integration with e-NAM.
- Rs.100 lakh crore National Infrastructure pipeline has been launched which includes over 6500 infrastructure projects. National infrastructure pipeline has projects worth Rs.19.6 lakh crore for roads, Rs.13.69 lakh crore for railways, Rs.1.43 lakh crore for airports and Rs.1.01 lakh crore for ports.
- Accelerated development of highways will be undertaken. 2500 kms. of access controlled highways, 9000 kms. of economic corridors, 2000 kms. of coastal and land-port roads and 2000 kms. of strategic highways.
- Delhi – Mumbai and Chennai – Bengaluru express highways to be made operational by 2023.
- 12 lots of highway building consisting of over 6000 kms. shall be offered for monetisation by 2024.
- Governance structure for corporatisation of one major port shall be introduced.
- Inland Waterways especially Jal Vikas Marg (NW1) will be made operational.
- Inland Waterways from Dhubri to Sadia in Assam shall be promoted by 2022.
- Inland Waterways shall be promoted under the Programme called Arth-Ganga i.e., promoting economic activities along with banks of the river.

- 100 more airports shall be established under the UDAN scheme.
- 1200 airplanes shall be added from the present 600.
- Rs.1.7 lakh crore have been allocated for the transportation sector in 2020-21.

Environment Conservation: Indian gaur spotted in Konkan sanctuary for the first time in recorded history



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Indian gaur and location of Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS))

What's the NEWS

- Wildlife researchers recently documented the presence of an Indian gaur in the Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS) in Roha and Murud talukas of Raigad district (Maharashtra)
- This is the first time a sighting of this species of bison has been reported or documented at the sanctuary.

Know! more about Indian Gaur

- The Indian Gaur is listed as Schedule I species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and is tagged as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List.
- Gaurs are the world's largest and tallest wild bovines, with 85% of their current population found in India.
- Male gaurs weigh 1,000-1,500kg, while females weigh 700-1,000kg. Their height ranges from 165-220cm (5 to 7ft).
- The animal spread across a variety of habitats, including tropical forests, grasslands, etc., across the hilly ranges of the Western Ghats, the northern limit of this animal along the west coast was known to be up to Mahabaleshwar

Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS)

- With tropical deciduous forests, PWS was established in 1986 and is spread across 52.6 square kilometres. It is just 13km away from Kashid beach in Raigad district.

Economic Survey 2019-20 :The Health Score Index

- The Economic Survey 2019-20 has proposed that regulators and other stakeholders begin using an index to determine the health of non-bank lenders and housing financiers

Know! more about the Health Score Index

- The Health Score Index, according to the survey, can be used to identify and monitor the financial and operational resilience of non-bank lender depending on their "rollover risk"—or the risk an NBFC faces from frequent repricing or rolling over of their short-term debts that could raise costs, leading to credit rationing.
- The 'health score' can predict the constraints on external financing (or refinancing risk) faced by NBFC firms.
- It ranges from -100 to +100, with higher scores indicating higher financial stability of the firm/sector.
- The regulators can use the index to detect early warning signals of impending rollover-risk problems among non-bank lenders and housing financiers as a downtrend in the health score of a company can be used to trigger

enhanced monitoring.

- It can also be used to set prudential thresholds on the extent of wholesale funding that can be permitted for firms in the shadow banking system.

Economic Survey 2019-20 :Singapore's Temasek model

Temasek-Like Structure Proposed To Speed Up Disinvestment

- The Economic Survey, released by the Chief Economic Adviser's office a day ahead of the Union Budget, has proposed a new structure of disinvestment to maximise returns from public sector enterprises.
- The survey suggests that the government take a leaf out of Singapore's Temasek model and transfer its holdings in central public sector enterprises to a separate corporate entity, which would be managed by an independent board.
- This entity can then continue to divest individual units at appropriate points in time. The government can transfer its stake in the listed CPSEs to a separate corporate entity.
- This entity would be managed by an independent board and would be mandated to divest the government stake in these CPSEs over a period of time.
- This will lend professionalism and autonomy to the disinvestment programme which, in turn, would improve the economic performance of the CPSEs.

Budget 2020-21: Tourism and Culture

Rs 2,500 crores in 2020-21 for the tourism sector.

Rs 3,150 crore for Ministry of Culture

Highlights

- **Proposal to establish first Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation** with the status of a deemed university to operate under the Ministry of Culture.
- India had moved up from rank 65 in 2014 to 34 in 2019 in the Travel & Tourism Competitive Index (World Economic Forum)
- **8 new museums**, which includes building infrastructure around **5 Iconic Sites**, besides proposing **renovation of 5 major museums** across the length and breadth of India.

The Union Finance Minister proposed the following:

5 Archeological sites to be **set-up/developed as Iconic Sites** with **on-site Museums** at the following locations:

- Rakhigarhi (Haryana)
- Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shivsagar (Assam)
- Dholavira (Gujarat)
- Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu)
- **Maritime Museum to highlight Harappan Age at Lothal, Ahmedabad**, by Ministry of Shipping

KOLKATA:

- **Indian Museum:** Re-curation of the oldest museum in India as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2020.
- **Numismatics and Trade Museum** to be located in the historic Old Mint Building
- Support for **setting up Tribal Museum in Ranchi (Jharkhand)**
- **Renovation and re-curation of 4 more museums** across India
- Four more museums are to be renovated. At the historic Old Mint building in Kolkata, a museum on numismatics and trade is to be located
- A tribal Museum at Ranchi, Jharkhand is to be set up.
- A Maritime museum to be set up in Lothal, a maritime site of Harappan age. This is to be set up by the Ministry of Shipping.
- India has move up to rank 65 in 2014 to rank 34 in 2019 in the travel and tourism competitive index. The index is prepared by the World Economic Forum.

Science and Technology: DST launches SATHI Initiative for building shared, professionally managed strong S&T infrastructure

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SATHI Initiative) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of science and technology)

What's the NEWS

- To address the need for building shared, professionally managed and strong Science and Technology infrastructure in the country which is readily accessible to academia, start-ups, manufacturing, industry and R&D labs, the Department of Science & Technology has launched a unique scheme called “*Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes*(SATHI)”.

Know! more about it

- These Centres are expected to house major analytical instruments to provide common services of high-end analytical testing, thus avoiding duplication and reduced dependency on foreign sources. These would be operated with a transparent, open access policy.
- DST has already set up three such centres in the country, one each at IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi and BHU at a total cost of Rs 375 Crores.
- It is planned to set up five SATHI Centres every year for the next four years.
- SATHI will address the problems of accessibility, maintenance, redundancy and duplication of expensive equipment in our Institutions, while reaching out to the less endowed organizations in need, e.g., industry, MSMEs, startups and State Universities.
- This will also foster a strong culture of collaboration between institutions and across disciplines to take advantage of developments, innovations and expertise in diverse areas.

Science and Technology: DBT-backed global coalition funding coronavirus vaccine attempts

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CEPI)

What's the NEWS

- Worldwide, the race is going on to develop and evaluate vaccines, driven by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), a global partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil society organisations.
- The Indian government's Department of Biotechnology is a founding member of CEPI and several Indian scientists and scientists of Indian origin working overseas play a major role in CEPI.
- CEPI is currently backing four vaccine development efforts with funding: one university (Queensland) Australia and three companies CureVac, Inovio and Moderna (the latter with the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases).

Know! about CEPI

- The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, is a “public-private coalition that aims to derail epidemics by speeding up the development of vaccines” Its headquarters is in Norway.
- CEPI's aim is to develop early phases of vaccines without knowing the details for the form in which the infection will appear, cutting down the time for initial development and deployment, while allowing the vaccine to be progressively tailored to improve its effectiveness for the particular epidemic

GSK to collaborate with CEPI in effort to develop coronavirus vaccine

- British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline Plc is collaborating with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to contribute towards the effort of developing a vaccine for the coronavirus outbreak,
- GSK will make its “adjuvant platform technology” available for developing a vaccine against the 2019-nCoV virus
- The use of adjuvant allows for production of more vaccine doses and hence would increase availability to more people.

Defence: DRDO Signs Technology Development Contract with Rosoboronexport Russia

Relevance IN – Prelims (about HEMRL and about the contract) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- During DefExpo 2020, HEMRL, Pune signed technology development contract with Rosoboronexport, Russia for development of Advanced Pyrotechnic Ignition

Know! more about it

- High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) is the DRDO laboratory working in the development of spectrum of high energy materials required for missiles, rockets and guns.
- This will enable advancement in the field of energetic materials and pyrotechnic technology leading to the development of advanced ignition systems.
- This will meet futuristic requirements of high-performance propulsion systems.
- The propulsion systems are the power behind the rockets and missiles. This technology development will facilitate design and development of state of art solid rocket motors for upcoming products.

Economic Development: RBI's sixth bi-monthly monetary policy review meeting

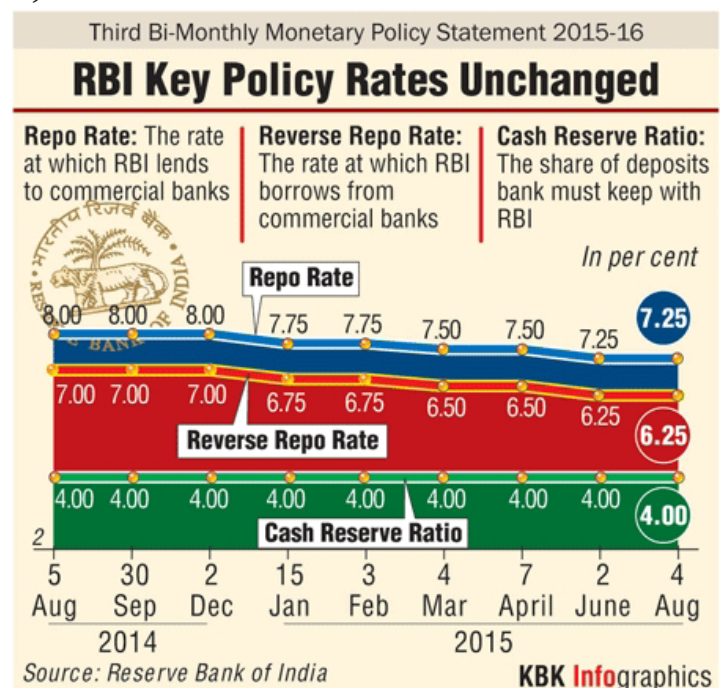
Relevance IN – Prelims (about MPC and about takeaways of the recent bi-monthly review meeting) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The monetary policy committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.15 per cent — a 10-year low in its last policy review of the financial year 2019-20 (FY20).
- Consequently, the reverse repo rate stands unchanged at 4.90 per cent.

Know! the takeouts

- Further, the bank said it will maintain 'accommodative' policy stance as long as it is necessary to revive growth, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target.
- The committee voted 6-0 in favour of the status quo of the interest rates.
- GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2020-21 (FY21) is projected at 6 per cent and in the range of 5.5-6.0 per cent in the first half of the next fiscal
- GDP growth forecast for FY20 was slashed to 5 per cent from 6.1 per cent.



Inflation rate breaching the upper band

- The CPI inflation projection has been revised upwards to 6.5 per cent for Q4:2019-20; 5.4-5.0 per cent for H1:2020-21; and 3.2 per cent for Q3:2020-21,
- The MPC noted that inflation surged above the upper tolerance band around the target in December 2019, primarily on the back of the unusual spike in onion prices.

Know! about MPC

- Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a 6 member committee formed after the amendment in the RBI Act, 1934 through the Finance Act, 2016.

- The basic objective of MPC is to maintain price stability and accelerate the growth rate of the economy.

Know! the Various Monetary Policy Stances

Calibrated Tightening

- MPC is not bound to increase rate at every meeting means there are only two actions, either MPC may increase the rate or keep them steady.

Neutral Policy Stance

- Neither expansionary nor contractionary and keeps the economy operating on an even keel.
- It is effective and appropriate if the economy is at full employment with low inflation and steady sustainable growth.

Accommodative Policy Stance

- Accommodative monetary policy occurs when a central bank attempts to expand the overall money supply to boost the economy when growth is slowing (as measured by GDP).

Miscellaneous Articles: Coal India Subsidiary NCL (Northern Coalfields Limited) sets up 'SARAS' to promote innovation & R&D

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SARAS) + Mains (GS III Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.)

What's the NEWS

- Coal India's flagship subsidiary Northern Coalfields limited(NCL) has set up a centre named "Science and Applied Research Alliance and Support"(SARAS) to promote Innovation, Research & Development and skill development along with improving company's operational efficiency and utilize resources at optimum level.

Know! more about SARAS

- SARAS will help and enable the company in Integration of Innovation and Research for enhancing coal production, productivity, and safety in mines.
- The company has set up a dedicated R&D Centre in collaboration with IIT (BHU) and have already commenced 6 varied domain projects worth 60 Million to facilitate this move
- The SARAS would also help establish centres of excellence to ensure technical support to R&D along with thrust on quality skill development and employment to local youths in and around company's operational area.
- NCL accounts for 15 per cent of India's coal production and 10 per cent of thermal power generation of the country is met by the coal produced by this Miniratna Company of Govt. of India. The company produces more than 100 million tonnes of coal every year. It has planned to produce 107 million tonnes of coal in the current fiscal.

Defence: Bandhan, DefExpo 2020



Relevance IN – Prelims(about DefExpo and the important takeaways) + Mains (GS III Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

What's the NEWS

- Over 200 partnerships involving Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), Transfer of Technology (ToTs), Product launches were concluded on the third day of DefExpo 2020, at ceremony titled “Bandhan”
- In DEFEXPO 2020 during the MoU signing ceremony titled ‘Bandhan’, DRDO handed over 15 licenses for ToT (LATOT) to 17 industries on DRDO developed technologies.
- The 11th edition of DefExpo 2020 being held at Lucknow is the largest of all the defence exhibition held so far.
- So far, the DefExpo has launched 13 products, 71 MoUs and 18 transfer of technologies. More than 200 agreements have been signed.

Know! some of the important takeaways

Light Utility Helicopter (LUH)

- During the course of the ceremony, a major announcement in the form of issuing the Initial Operational Clearance (IOC) certificate of Light Utility Helicopter (LUH) was issued to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- LUH is designed and developed as a replacement for Cheetah & Chetak helicopters which are currently being operated by Indian Armed forces.
- LUH is a new generation helicopter in the 3-Ton class incorporating the state-of-the-art technology features which will meet the emerging needs in this class of helicopters in the coming decades.

Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) launched Sharang and Alpha Guns

- OFB launched “Sharang” the 155mm artillery gun with 36 km range and handed over a model to Chief of Army Staff Gen M M Naravane.
- The Sharang artillery guns have been upgraded from 130 mm to 155 mm
- Upgraded 155 mm artillery gun Sharang was successfully test-fired at the Long Proof Range (LPR) of Ordnance Factory Khamaria in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh .
- The gun, ingeniously upgraded from 130mm to 155mm/45 calibre, has a striking range of 39 kilometers. Sharang Artillery is a heavy Range weapons to launch munitions
- These Artillery guns currently produced by kanpur based state-owned OFB (Ordnance Factory Board).
- OFB also launched JVPC Alpha gun with 100 mt range, Light Machine Gun of 800 mt range and UBGL – Under barrel Grenade launcher.

Know! about artillery guns in the Army

- The Army inducted its first modern artillery guns system in November 2018 after a gap of almost three decades
- These include M-777 **Ultra Light Howitzers (ULH)** from the U.S. and K9 Vajra-T self-propelled artillery guns from South Korea.
- The Army has the older, battle-proven Bofors 155mm guns in service.
- The 155mm Dhanush towed gun system, developed based on the Bofors guns by OFB, is under induction.
- In addition, the Advanced Towed **Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)**, a 155mm, 52 calibre gun, being jointly developed by the DRDO in partnership with Bharat Forge of Kalyani Group and Tata Power SED, is in advanced stages of testing.
- In October last year, the Army procured and inducted 155mm Excalibur precision guided ammunition from the U.S. which gives its 155mm artillery guns extended range and also the ability to hit targets with very high accuracy.

Know! about Ordnance Factory Board

- The Indian Ordnance Factories organisation - a family of 41 Ordnance Factories under the aegis of its corporate headquarters **Ordnance Factory Board, Kolkata** - possesses the unique distinction of over 200 years experience in defence production.
- Indian Ordnance Factories is the oldest and largest industrial setup which functions under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence.

Amogha-3 and Varunastra

- Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), launched Amogha-3 the anti-Tank Guided Missile. It is a man portable fire and forget missile.
- BDL also launched Varunastra – the anti-submarine torpedo, manufactured under the technological guidance of DRDO.

Know! about BDL

- Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), a Government of India Enterprise under the Ministry of Defence was established in Hyderabad in the year 1970 to be a manufacturing base for guided missiles and allied defence equipment.

Environment Conservation: Tamil Nadu govt decides to declare Cauvery Delta Region as protected special agricultural zone



Relevance IN – Prelims (about PSAZ) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Cauvery Delta Region in the Tamil Nadu state will be declared a protected special agricultural zone (PSAZ)

Know! more about the Protected special agricultural zone(PSAZ)

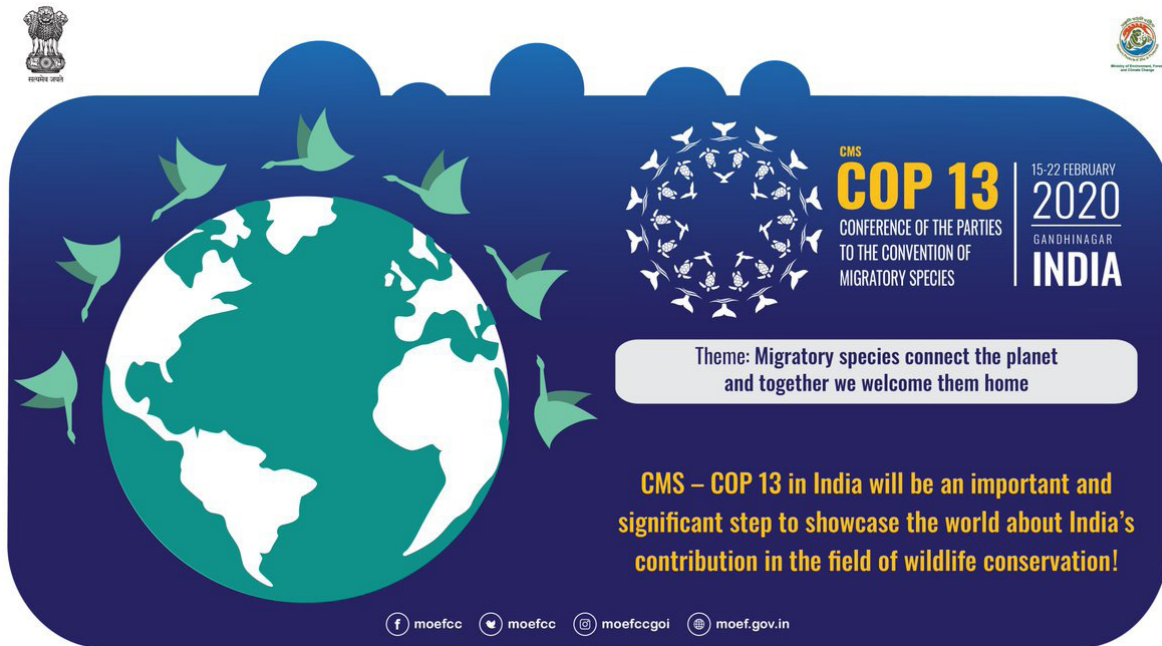
- To ensure that agriculture is not affected, the Cauvery delta regions in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Pudukottai, Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Karur and Tiruchirappalli will be converted into a Protected Special Agriculture Zone
- Only agricultural and allied industries should be allowed in delta region and it cannot be used for any other non-agricultural activities.

Know! why this declaration has been taken by the State government

- This announcement comes weeks after the CM wrote to PM Modi requesting him to revoke the amendment in the Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2006.
- The Environment Impact Assessment has recently amended by the central government to give permission for ONGC and other private firms
- The Central Government in 2019 awarded the oil and gas exploration projects in the Cauvery basin.
- This invoked large protests amid water crisis in the state as the hydrocarbon exploration in the delta region requires excess amount of fresh water.
- The Cauvery delta region is an important agriculture region in Tamil Nadu and farmers continue to do agriculture, despite climate challenges.

- Projects like hydrocarbon exploration have raised concerns among farmers and other agriculture-based labourers.
- Since the delta region is close to the sea, there is a need to safeguard the region.

Environment Conservation: India to host 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (CMS)



Relevance IN – Prelims (about COP 13 and factual information related to COP 13) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals (CMS), an environmental treaty under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme, is going to be hosted by India during 15th to 22nd February, 2020 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.
- As the host, India shall be designated the President for the next three years.
- The theme of CMS COP13 in India is 'Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home'.
- The CMS COP 13 logo is inspired by 'Kolam', a traditional art form from southern India.
- In the logo of CMS COP-13, Kolam art form is used to depict key migratory species in India like Amur falcon, humpback whale and marine turtles.
- The mascot for CMS COP13 is 'Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard'. It is a critically endangered species which has been accorded the highest protection status under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

Know! more about CMS COP

- Representatives from 129 Parties and eminent conservationists and international NGOs working in the field of wildlife conservation are expected to attend the COP.
- India has been a Party to the CMS since 1983. The Conference of Parties (COP) is the decision-making organ of this convention.

Know! about Migratory species

- Migratory species are those animals that move from one habitat to another during different times of the year, due to various factors such as food, sunlight, temperature, climate, etc.
- The movement between habitats, can sometimes exceed thousands of miles/kilometres for some migratory birds and mammals.

- A migratory route can involve nesting and also requires the availability of habitats before and after each migration.
- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force, under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme.
- Also referred to as the Bonn Convention, it provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats and brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- Under this convention, migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I and Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them.
- Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention.
- India has also signed non legally binding MOU with CMS on the conservation and management of Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016).
- India is temporary home to several migratory animals and birds.
- The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar headed Gheese, Black necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales, etc.
- The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans, and covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory water bird species, including 29 globally threatened species.
- India has also launched the National Action Plan for conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway.

Economic Development: 15th Finance Commission submits its report for 2020-21 to President

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the 15 Finance Commission and its recommendations) + Mains (GS III Economic development + GS II Centre-State relation)

What's the NEWS

- The Finance Commission submitted its report for the financial year 2020-21 to President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday.
- The Commission headed by N K Singh apprised the President of the recommendations contained therein

Know! about Finance Commission

- Article 280 – President of India forms a Finance Commission (a quasi judicial body) every 5th Year or earlier, with 1 chairman and four member. Eligible for re-appointment. Recommendations are not binding to the government but usually they are not rejected
- 14th FC – YV Reddy (Recommendation Period – 1st April 2015 – to 31st March 2020)
- 15th FC – NK Singh (Recommendation Period – 6 years)

Interim Report for the period of 1 year (2020-21) tabled recently in the Parliament

15th Finance Commission (Factual info.)

- 15th Finance Commission was appointed on November 27, 2017.
- Originally, it was to submit report by October 30, 2019 for five years i.e., for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- Now, Finance Commission is submitting two reports. Interim Report for 2020-21 and the Main Report covering the period of five years beginning April 1, 2021 and ending March 31, 2026.

15th Finance Commission (key aspects)

- The 15th Finance Commission has recommended maintaining States' share in the divisible pool of tax collections at the same level of 42% for 2020-21.

- To factor in the changed status of the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir, the rate at which funds may be shared with the States has been reset at 41%.
- This is after adjusting 1 percentage point for the needs, including special ones of the two new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.
- The actual pool of funds available to States will be equivalent to what they were receiving from the 42% share granted by the 14th Finance Commission, as the number of States are now 28 instead of 29.

About the distribution of Money

1. Vertical Devolution (41%)

- It recommends the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes of the Union between Union and the States.

2. Horizontal Devolution (how to distribute the 41% among the states)

- It allocates among the States the proceeds of the Vertical Devolution.

Changes in the Horizontal Devolution Methodology in 15th FC

- In addition to income distance, population, area and forest cover, it has used two additional factors, demographic performance and tax effort.
- It assigned 15% weight to the 2011 population.
- It reduced the weight of income distance to 45%, it increased the weight to forest cover and ecology to 10%.
- Demographic performance is given 12.5% and tax effort is given 2.5%.

Differences in the methodologies followed by 14th and 15th Finance Commissions.

Horizontal Devolution Methodology of 14th FC

1. Income Distance -50%
2. Population -27.5% (17.5 % acc. to 1971 population and 10 % acc. to 2011 population)
3. Area -15%
4. Forest and Ecology – 7.5 %

Horizontal Devolution Methodology of 15th FC

1. Income Distance -45%
2. Population – 15% (2011)
3. Demographic Performance (newly added) -12.5%
4. Tax effort (newly added) – 2.5%
5. Area -15%
6. Forest and Ecology – 10%

In the relative shares in tax devolution, among the major States, the **biggest loser is Karnataka**. The other States which lost heavily include Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

Economic Development: RBI planning umbrella entities for retail payment systems

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the proposed umbrella entity and its objective) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India is proposing to set up an alternative digital retail payments organisation as it aims to prevent a monopoly in a system that's currently dominated by National Payments Corporation of India Ltd.
- Prior to 2008, the RBI managed, developed and operated various payment systems. In the early 2000s, it set up the National Electronic Funds Transfer System and Electronic Clearing Service, which it operates to date.
- As retail electronic transactions gained traction, the RBI set up NPCI to develop and operate various retail payment systems.
- The RBI suggested that NPCI has become 'too big to fail' and threw up the idea of an alternative umbrella organisation for retail payments.

Know! the draft guidelines for the New Umbrella Entity (NUE)

- The new umbrella entity will set up, manage and operate new payment systems, especially in the retail space
- This organisation will operate clearing and settlement systems. It will also identify and manage relevant risks such as settlement, credit and liquidity,

Eligibility Criteria for opening a NUE

- The umbrella entity could be a for-profit or not-for-profit entity
- owned and controlled by Indian residents.
- Proposed umbrella entity can be 'for profit' and registered as a company under PSS Act 2007.
- Entities eligible to apply as promoter / promoter group shall be 'owned and controlled by residents with 3 years' experience in the payments ecosystem as Payment System Operator (PSO) or Payment Service Provider (PSP) or Technology Service Provider (TSP).
- Minimum paid up capital should be Rs 500 crore and a minimum net-worth of Rs 300 crore shall be maintained at all times.
- Promoters shall upfront demonstrate capital contribution of not less than 10 percent, that is, Rs 50 crore.
- No single promoter can hold more than 40 percent.
- Promoter shareholding to be diluted to a minimum of 25 percent after five years.
- NUE will have a board to ensure compliance with corporate governance principles.
- The RBI will retain the right to appoint directors on the board and may nominate a member

Know! more about NUE

- The new umbrella entity shall set-up, manage and operate new payment systems, especially in the retail space comprising but not limited to automated teller machines, white-label point of sale terminals, Aadhaar-based payments and remittance services.
- The entity shall also develop new payment methods, standards and technologies, monitor-related issues in the country and internationally, take care of developmental objectives like enhancement of awareness about the payment systems

Environment Conservation: World Pangolin Day: Madhya Pradesh radio-tags first-ever Indian Pangolin



Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Pangolin Day + about Pangolin) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Madhya Pradesh forest department has radio-tagged an Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) for the first time in order to know its ecology and develop an effective conservation plan for it.

- The radio-tagging is part of a joint project by the department and non-profit, the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) that also involves the species' monitoring apart from other activities.
- The team has successfully rehabilitated two Indian pangolins in the wild. This is the first-ever case of successful rehabilitation effort of the species where the released individuals are monitored in the wild using telemetry in the state's Satpura Tiger Reserve, where the tagging was done

World Pangolin Day

- The measure comes on the backdrop of the ninth 'World Pangolin Day' on February 15, 2020.
- It is an international attempt to raise awareness about pangolins and bring together various stakeholders to help protect them from extinction.
- Pangolins are currently the most trafficked wildlife species in the world.
- Commonly known as 'scaly anteaters', the toothless animals are unique, a result of millions of years of evolution.
- Pangolins evolved scales as a means of protection. When threatened by big carnivores like lions or tigers they usually curl into a ball. The scales defend them against dental attacks from the predators.
- This unique protection mechanism has now become the main cause of the pangolin's disappearance.
- The scales are in high demand in China, where they are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Pangolin meat is also in high demand in China and southeast Asia.
- Pangolins have seen a rapid reduction in population globally. The projected population declines range from 50 per cent to 80 per cent across the genus.
- India is home to two species of pangolin. While the Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) is found in northeastern India, the Indian Pangolin is distributed in other parts of the country as well as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Both these species are protected and are listed under the Schedule I Part I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and under Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

Environment: India and Norway to work jointly towards mitigating marine plastic litter and microplastics



Relevance IN – Prelims (about 13th COP of CMS and the important takeaways of the conference) + Mains (GS III Environment Conservation)

What's the NEWS

- India marks the beginning of super year of Biodiversity with the hosting of the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), an environmental treaty under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme, from 17th to 22nd February 2020 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

Agreement between India and Norway

- On the side-lines of the COP, India and Norway agreed to jointly tackle concerns related to oceans, environment and climate matters.
- India and Norway declared the 2020-30 decade as the “Decade of rapid action on Climate Change and Environment

Highlights

- India shall be designated as the Presidency during the intersessional period following the meeting.
- The COP Presidency is tasked to provide political leadership and facilitate positive outcomes that further advance the objectives of the Convention, including steering efforts towards implementing the Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the Conference of Parties.
- The 13th conference of Migratory Species is the first meet on bio diversity
- Theme: Migratory Species connect the planet and together we welcome them home

Migratory species

- Migratory species of wild animals move from one habitat to another during different times of the year, due to various factors such as food, sunlight, temperature, climate, etc.
- The movement between habitats, can sometimes exceed thousands of kilometers/miles for some migratory birds and mammals.
- A migratory route will typically have nesting sites, breeding sites, availability of preferred food and requires the availability of suitable habitat before and after each migration.
- India is home to several migratory species of wildlife including snow leopard, Amur falcons, bar headed Geese, black necked cranes, marine turtles, dugongs, humpbacked whales, etc.
- India has four biodiversity hotspots – Eastern Himalayas, Western Ghats, Indo Myanmar landscape and Andaman and Nicobar Islands and home to as many as 500 species of migratory birds from across the globe”, said the Prime Minister.

India set to host UN’s first biodiversity summit



Know! the agenda of the Conference

- India is set to host the UN biodiversity summit that will bring together more than 1,200 delegates from over 110 countries to deliberate on the alarming decline of migratory species.

Impacts of infrastructure on migratory species

- The Conference will consider the need for implementation of guidance tools that will mitigate the impacts of infrastructure on migratory species.
- The CMS Guidelines currently deals only with the underwater noises. It does not include threats related to infrastructural development.
- The agenda of the talks include new proposals to mitigate effects of infrastructure on migratory mammals and joining the Gobi bear, the only bear living in the desert, the Persian leopard and the urial, a wild sheep, in the Central Asian mammal species for their protection.
- Besides, Indian species like the Asian elephant, the great Indian bustard and the Ganges river dolphin are likely to get more priority in biodiversity conservation.
- CMS is the only United Nations treaty that addresses migratory species and their habitats.

Gobi Bear, Persian Leopard and Wild Sheep Set for Greater Protection



- The Gobi Bear – the only bear living in the desert of Mongolia., There were only 30 adult Gobi Bears in the desert counted in 2009. The IUCN Red List categorizes Gobi Bear under Critically Endangered.

The Persian Leopard

- The Persian Leopards are found in Iran, Afghanistan and central Asia.
- The IUCN Red List categorizes them as Endangered.

The Urial, a wild sheep

- They are found in western and Central Asia, that is, in Kazakhstan, Pakistan and India.
- The IUCN Red List categorizes them as Vulnerable .

Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)

- These species are going to be included under the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI) and are set to join other Central Asian mammal species already benefiting from international cooperation under the CMS.
- The Urial is being proposed for listing on Appendix II at CMS COP13, while Range States are seeking to include it as well as the Gobi Bear and Persian Leopard under the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI).
- CAMI currently covers 15 species including the Saiga Antelope, the Snow Leopard and the Cheetah. The initiative spans 14 countries from the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan in the west to China in the east.
- Central Asia boasts the world's largest intact grasslands, but the scale of this habitat is being threatened by the rapid construction of roads and railways.

- Many migratory mammals rely on these large steppe ecosystems and on the region's deserts and mountains for their survival. Linear barriers to migration, coupled with illegal hunting are putting their survival at risk.
- Targeting threats from the construction of linear infrastructure is part of a comprehensive package of conservation measures that CAMI Range States are expected to adopt at COP13 for the period 2021 – 2026 .
- The countries concerned will enhance transboundary cooperation, and enforce national legislation to prevent poaching, possession, and trade.
- CAMI coordinates conservation activities, cross-border cooperation and efforts to address major threats to species such as the Saiga Antelope, the Snow Leopard, and the Wild Camel and their habitats.
- The infrastructural threats to large mammals was governed by the Central Asian Mammals Initiative.

Massive Insect Decline Poses a New Threat to Migratory Species

- For the first time, insect decline and its cascading effects on migratory species feeding on them will be on the agenda of a CMS COP.
- About half of all insect species are rapidly declining.
- The main drivers causing insect decline are habitat change and loss, pollution through synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, invasive species and pathogens, as well as climate change.
- Insect biodiversity plays a vital role for functioning ecosystems, especially for insectivorous migratory species such as birds and bats.
- To combat the drivers of insect decline, the draft resolution recommends a series of actions.
- Increased scientific research is needed to better understand the impact of insect decline on migratory insectivorous animals.
- An important prerequisite to achieving the goal is raising awareness among farmers regarding the drivers of insect decline.
- Parties to EUROBATS, the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats, have already adopted resolutions discussing insect decline as a threat, highlighting the need for guidelines for urgent actions.

New Migratory Species Champions to be Named on Eve of CMS COP13

- Seven new Migratory Species Champions will be named
- The Migratory Species Champion Programme aims to promote initiatives developed under the CMS Family and encourage their sustainable support.
- India will join the ranks of CMS Champions at the event for the first time.
- **The Indian Government**, which is hosting CMS COP13, will be recognized with Champion Plus status for its commitments towards the Small Grant Programme 2020-2023 and for supporting the Energy Task Force in promoting wildlife-friendly energy over the same period.
- The Conference kicks off “Super Year for Environment”, which will include a UN Summit in September and culminate in the UN Biodiversity Conference at the end of 2020, when a new global biodiversity strategy for the next decade will be adopted - the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
- This is a “super year” for the environment—a make or break year in which key international meetings will set the tone and agenda for environmental action in the decade ahead.

Economic Development: RBI to sync its accounting year with govt's fiscal year from 2020-21

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the synchronisation of accounting year and its benefits) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will align its financial accounting year with that of the central government with effect from 2020-21 — a move that may put an end to the practice of the exchequer getting interim dividend from the central bank.

RBI'S FIN YEAR TO ALIGN WITH GOVT'S

➤ The **Bimal Jalan**-led expert committee was guided by principle that alignment of objectives of govt and RBI is important

➤ Credibility of RBI is as important, if not more, to the govt as it is to the central bank

➤ While there may occasionally arise a difference of views, there always needs to be harmony in the objectives of the govt and the RBI

➤ RBI's financial resilience needs to be maintained above level of peer central banks, as would



be expected of the central bank of one of the fastest growing economies of the world

➤ Panel recommended alignment of RBI's financial year with govt's fiscal year for greater cohesiveness

➤ In coming years, interim dividend to govt may be paid only under exceptional circumstances

➤ The framework may be periodically reviewed every 5 years. An intermediate review may be considered if there is significant change in RBI's risks and operating environment

- The decision was taken at a meeting of the RBI's central board held in the national capital.

Know! more about it

- The board recommended aligning the financial year of the RBI, currently July-June, with the government's fiscal year (April-March) from the year 2020-21 and approved forwarding a proposal to the government for its consideration
- With this move, the central bank will do away with nearly eight decades of practice.

Know! why the move has been taken and its benefits

- The RBI, which was established in April 1935, used to follow January-December as its accounting year before it was changed to July-June in March 1940.
- Taking advantage of the RBI's different accounting year, the Centre had started demanding an interim dividend till the time the latter's final balance sheet is prepared (usually in August).
- To address this anomaly, an expert committee led by former RBI governor Bimal Jalan had recommended aligning the RBI's financial year with that of the government.
- An RBI executive explained that for 2020-21, the central bank would prepare a truncated balance sheet for a period of nine months (from July 2020 to March 2021). Following next year, the full fiscal year of the RBI will start from April 1, 2021.

Implementation of Jalan committee report

- The Jalan committee in its report had said the alignment of the fiscal years of the RBI and the government would ensure that the central bank was "able to provide better estimates of the projected surplus transfers to the government for the financial year for budgeting purposes
- This will reduce the interim dividend that the RBI has to pay to the Government. However, the interim dividend will be restricted to extraordinary circumstances. It will also bring in cohesiveness with the reports and policy projections made by the RBI.

Miscellaneous: Government unveils plan for research on 'indigenous' cows; Scientific research will be carried out on milk and milk products derived from Indian indigenous cows. File

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SUTRA PIC and about SVAROP)

What's the NEWS

- The government has unveiled a programme to research on 'indigenous' cows.

- To be funded by multiple scientific ministries, the initiative, SUTRA PIC, is led by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- It has the Department of Biotechnology, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Ministry for AYUSH (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy) among others and the Indian Council of Medical Research as partners.
- The Science for Equity, Empowerment and Development (SEED), is the department in charge of the programme.

Know! more about SUTRA PIC

SUTRA PIC or Scientific Utilisation Through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows, has five themes:

1. Uniqueness of Indigenous Cows
2. Prime-products from Indigenous Cows for Medicine and Health
3. Prime-products from Indigenous Cows for Agricultural Applications
4. Prime-products from Indigenous Cows for Food and Nutrition
5. Prime-products from indigenous cows-based utility items

Objectives of the programme.

- scientific research on complete characterisation of milk and milk products derived from Indian indigenous cows
- scientific research on nutritional and therapeutic properties of curd and ghee prepared from indigenous breeds of cows by traditional methods
- development of standards for traditionally processed dairy products of Indian-origin cow

Earlier Researches

- In 2017, SEED constituted a National Steering Committee (NSC) for ‘Scientific Validation and Research on Panchgavya (SVAROP)’.
- Panchagavya is an Ayurvedic panacea and is a mixture of five (pancha) products of the cow (gavya) — milk, curd, ghee, dung and urine. Its proponents believe it can cure, or treat a wide range of ailments.

Science and Technology: 17th Edition of BioAsia 2020



Relevance IN – Prelims (about BioAsia 2020 and its objective) + Mains (GS III Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology)

What's the NEWS

- Telangana is all set to host the three-day Bio Asia 2020, Asia's largest Biotechnology and Life Sciences Forum with the theme of 'Today for Tomorrow' from February 17 in Hyderabad.

Know! more about BioAsia 2020

- About 2,000 delegates from 37 countries will be attending the annual flagship event of Government of Telangana
- BioAsia has been playing a key role in bringing together the global industry leaders, researchers, policymakers, innovators, and investors together on one platform discussing the new opportunities and developing strategies to succeed.
- Genome Valley, India's first and only systematically developed R&D and clean manufacturing ecosystem, has become the largest innovation and life sciences cluster in Asia.
- Switzerland will be the partner Country this year as part of the annual tradition.
- BioAsia 2020 is being organized in partnership with Government of India, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of MSME, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Pharmaceuticals and it has state partners include Assam, Kerala, Odisha and Gujarat.

Genome Valley Excellence Award 2020

- Genome Valley Excellence Award was constituted in 2004 to recognize and honour eminent individuals and organizations for their exceptional contribution to the Life Sciences research and public health.
- The Government of Telangana presents this special award to eminent leaders every year after a careful examination and technical consideration by the reputed jury committee appointed by it.

Environment: Animal Culture Linked to Conservation for the first time at UN Wildlife Conference in India.

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the evolving concept of Animal culture)

What's the NEWS

- Animal culture, the learning of non-human species through socially transmitted behaviours, is being linked to conservation action for the first time .
- There is evidence that whales, dolphins, elephants and primates acquire some of their knowledge and skills through social learning.
- In addition to individual learning, some animals may learn socially from adults or peers about various behaviours, including optimal migration routes.

Know! about Animal Culture (taking the reference of Eastern Tropical Pacific Sperm Whale and the nut-cracking Chimpanzee)

- To consider conservation measures for the Eastern Tropical Pacific Sperm Whale and the nut-cracking Chimpanzee two such proposals will be presented to delegates at the ongoing 13th Conference of Parties meeting to the Convention of Migratory Species at Gandhinagar(CMS COP 13).
- Understanding how Sperm Whales pass on valuable information to their offspring or why some groups of Chimpanzees have a culture of cracking nutritious nuts with stone tools while others do not, can be key to evaluating conservation challenges for such species.
- The Convention on the Conservation on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) has been spearheading efforts to use scientific knowledge on animal culture, to better protect endangered wildlife.
- Scientific research has made significant progress in animal culture. However, it is necessary to develop findings and recommendations that show how this complex issue can be further considered in conservation efforts under CMS.

Infrastructure Development: World Bank offers funds for last stretch of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor

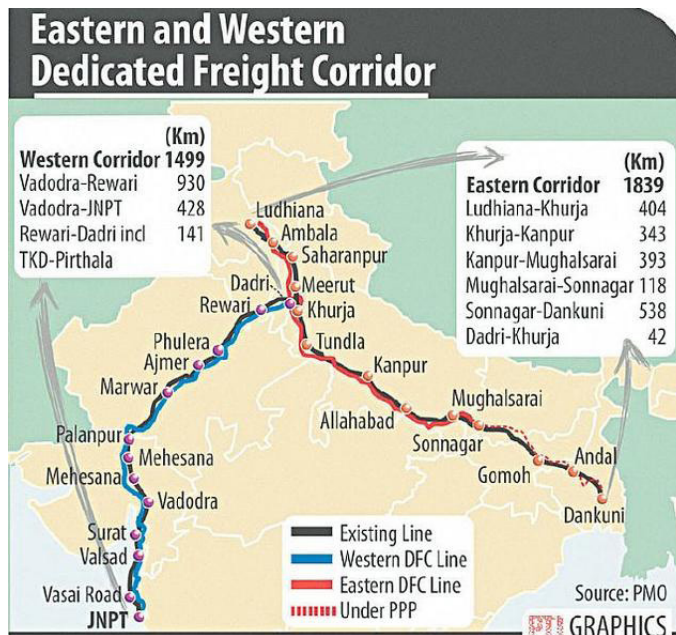
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) and DFC in general) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- World Bank has offered to give financial assistance to the last remaining portion of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) between Sonnagar and Dankuni, which India is originally slated to construct in the private public-private partnership (PPP) mode.

Know! more about it

- World Bank's interest in funding the corridor's 528-km stretch between Bihar's Sonnagar and West Bengal's Dankuni has now presented Indian Railways with the option to either do course correction and go for the financial assistance in the form of a viability gap funding, or carry on as planned and invite players to bring in the capital.
- The entire EDFC is being built with loan from World Bank, except for the last portion between Bihar and West Bengal.



Environment: International protection for Great Indian Bustard, Bengal Florican and Asian Elephant

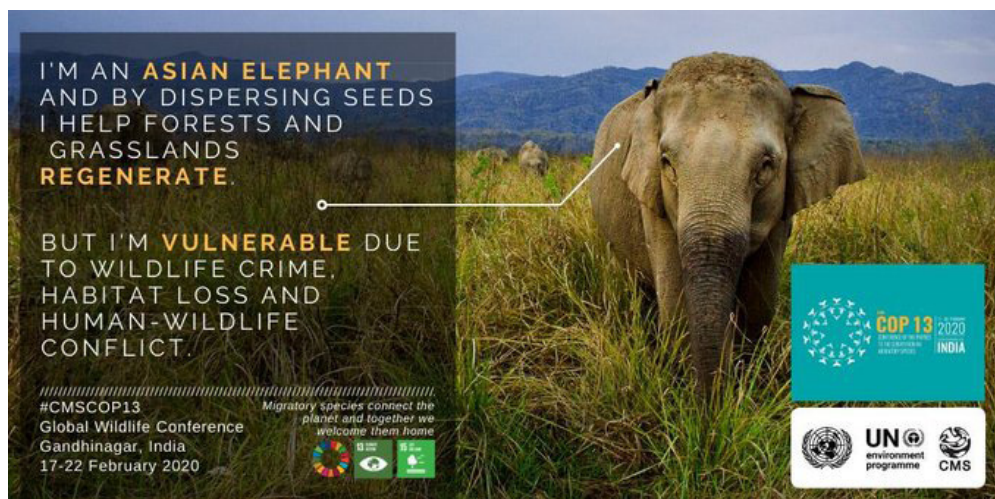
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Great Indian Bustard, Asian Elephant and Bengal Florican) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- India's proposal to include Great Indian Bustard, Asian Elephant and Bengal Florican in Appendix I of UN Convention on migratory species was unanimously accepted at the ongoing thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in Gandhinagar.

Asian Elephant

- The Government of India has declared Indian elephant as National Heritage Animal.
- Indian elephant is also provided highest degree of legal protection by listing it in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- India's proposal to include mainland Asian elephant in Appendix I of the Bonn Convention accepted unanimously.
- This Move will promote conservation of Asian Elephant in its natural habitat as well as to reduce human elephant conflict in range countries.



Great Indian Bustard

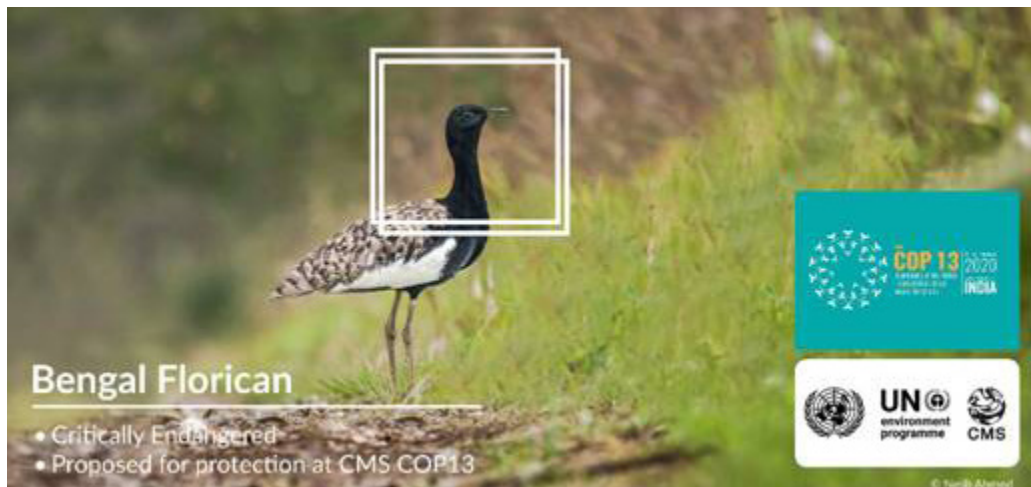
- The Great Indian Bustard, an iconic, critically endangered and conservation dependent species, exhibits transboundary movements, and its migration exposes it to threats such as hunting in boundary area of Pakistan-India and power-line collisions in India.
- Inclusion of the species in Appendix I of CMS will aid in transboundary conservation efforts facilitated by International conservation bodies and existing international laws and agreement.



- The Great Indian Bustard is a Critically Endangered species with a small population of about 100–150 individuals that is largely restricted to Thar desert in Rajasthan, India.
- The species has disappeared from 90% of this range; their population has reduced by 90% within 50 years (six generations); and their threats are expected to increase in future.

Bengal Florican

- The Bengal Florican an iconic, critically endangered species of topmost conservation priority, exhibits transboundary movements, and its migration exposes it to threats such as land use changes, collision with power transmission line at boundary area of India-Nepal and probable power-line collisions.
- Inclusion of the species in Appendix I of CMS will aid in transboundary conservation efforts facilitated by International conservation bodies and existing international laws and agreement.



- The CMS Conference underway in Gujarat has kicked off the Super Year for Environment, which will include a UN Summit in September and culminate in the UN Biodiversity Conference at the end of 2020, when a new global biodiversity strategy for the next decade will be adopted - the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Disaster Management: 1st 'National Conference on Coastal Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (CDRR&R) – 2020'



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of CDRR&R + about Sendai framework) + Mains (GS III disaster management -steps taken by India)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai presided over the valedictory session of the 1st 'National Conference on Coastal Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience (CDRR&R) – 2020', organised by the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)

Know! more about the conference (objective)

- To enhance human capacity in terms of better understanding about coastal disaster risks and effective collaborative actions, by implementing Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, for reducing the risk and enhancing the resilience amongst the affected stakeholders.
- The aim of the conference was to explore and debate the most recent advances in the discipline, to enhance the understanding of the issues and solutions on various facets for coastal disaster risk reduction and resilience.
- It also emphasised on dissemination of information related to national and local strategies for coastal disaster risk reduction and resilience
- More than 175 participants from various central and state organisation/departments attended the conference.

Know! about Sendai Framework

- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) is an international document which was adopted by UN member states at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in June 2015.
- It is the successor agreement to the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005–2015), which had been the most encompassing international accord to date on disaster risk reduction.

Environment: Biodiversity management committees (BMC) and People's biodiversity registers (PBR)

Relevance IN – Prelims (BMC and PBR + about Biodiversity act 2002) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) is set to tell the National Green Tribunal that it created 243,499 biodiversity management committees (BMC) and 95,525 people's biodiversity registers (PBR) as of January 2020.

- The green bench is hearing a case on the full implementation of the Biodiversity Act, 2002.

Know! about BMC and PBR

- BMCs are created for “promoting conservation, sustainable use and documentation of biological diversity” by local bodies across the country
- BMCs consist of a chair person and not more than six persons nominated by the local body, of whom not less than one third should be women and not less than 18% should belong to the Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes
- The Chairperson of the Biodiversity Management Committee shall be elected from amongst the members of the committee in a meeting to be chaired by the Chairperson of the local body
- The main function of the BMC is to prepare People’s Biodiversity Register in consultation with the local people.
- PBRs contain “comprehensive information on availability and knowledge of local biological resources” but creating complete PBRs would take a year time as PBRs need to have information from all four seasons; one has to wait at least for a year
- The constitution of BMCs and PBRs in every state is in accordance with the provisions of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and Biological Diversity Rules, 2004.
- A new framework to convert PBRs in electronic form — ePBRs — was also in progress.
- They will have more utility than physical notebooks. All new data will now be geo-tagged

Know! the genesis of Biological Diversity Act and its present status

- On June 5, 1992, India signed the Convention on Biological Diversity at Rio de Janeiro which provides a framework for the sustainable management and conservation of our country’s natural resources.
- Ten years later, the Biological Diversity Act was enacted in 2002 in order to conserve biodiversity, manage its sustainable use and enable fair and equitable sharing benefits arising out of the use of biological resources with the local communities and to regulate the access to genetic resources and protection of biodiversity.
- This act provides for establishment of statutory bodies such as National Biodiversity Authority, State Biodiversity Boards, National and State Biodiversity Funds, Biodiversity Management Committee
- Though 17 years have passed since the enactment of the Act, most of the local bodies of 23 states have not prepared the People’s Biodiversity Registers (PBRs), which are considered to be the basic records of a region’s biological resources such as plants, animals and the traditional knowledge of the local people.
- In the absence of the PBRs, when the Act is not implemented, whatever environmental clearances are given for various projects without recording the real state of biodiversity, results in the environment impact assessment reports becoming illogical and invalid.
- Under the Act, the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) has been formed and is headquartered at Chennai.
- State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) also have been formed in all Indian states.
- But the constitution of the Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at local levels — in panchayats, municipalities and corporations in many states — is pending, causing delay in the preparation of PBRs of bio-resources (both wild and cultivated).
- Kerala was the first state to form BMCs and the preparation of PBRs have also been completed.
- Every year, the ‘International Day of Biodiversity’ is observed on May 22 and the year 2010 was observed as the ‘International year of Biodiversity’

Science and Technology: Public-private fund to boost R&D; Public sector institutions form the lion’s share of India’s investment in R&D.

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the public-private fund of R&D) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of Science and Technology)

What’s the NEWS

- In an effort to stimulate investment in research and development (R&D), the Department of Science and Technology is mooted a fund that will match the contributions made by private companies in R&D.

Research bill

In 2017, the global R&D spend was estimated to be \$1.7 trillion in PPP terms, with the United States, China and Japan being the top spenders. India's share was around 2.8%

India's top three R&D spenders in 2017-18

1. Department of Atomic Energy

2. Department of Space

3. Department of Science and Technology



Top three Indian companies who have contributed to R&D spend in 2017

1. SAP Labs India Private Limited

2. Mphasis Limited

3. Olympia Tech Park Private Limited

Source: R&D Expenditure Ecosystem, EAC-PM

Know! more about the scheme

- The discussions were on with certain “large, private sector” companies and currently, a 40 crore target was on the anvil.
- The idea is to pool funds from a group of companies willing to invest in fundamental research, such as quantum computers or artificial intelligence, and whatever is invested government will match that
- The scheme will be coordinated through the department's Science and Engineering Research Board, which funds a variety of basic science projects in several universities.

Know! the statics of India's expenditure on R&D

- India is among the top five countries in terms of its output of scientific publications, it doesn't match up in investments.
- The total expenditure on R&D has tripled in the last decade in nominal however as a fraction of GDP, public expenditures on R&D has been stagnant — between 0.6-0.7% of GDP — over the past two decades.
- It is well below that in major nations such as the U.S. (2.8), China (2.1), Israel (4.3) and Korea (4.2)
- Public sector institutions form the lion's share of India's investment in R&D.
- In 2004-2005, private sector accounted for 28% of India's research spend and in 2016-17 this increased to 40%.
- In most advanced economies, private R&D accounts for the bulk of investment in R&D.
- The government is the major source of funds for R&D, it's also the major user — in terms of money consumed by public sector enterprises or Central institutions.

Environment: M.M. Wildlife Sanctuary to be tiger reserve soon

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Malai Mahadeshwara Hill Tiger Reserve (MMH TR))

What's the NEWS

- A presentation of the final proposal was made before the NTCA and the final notification will be made by the State government once the NTCA gives its formal approval.
- The approval from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is expected any time now.
- Once notified, Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka will have the rare distinction in the country of harbouring three tiger reserves.

Karnataka will have six tiger reserves, It already has

1. Bandipur

2. Biligiri Ranganatha Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve
3. Nagarahole
4. Bhadra
5. Anshi-Dandeli

Know! more about MMH TR

- The sanctuary will be renamed as Malai Mahadeshwara Hill Tiger Reserve (MMH TR) with a core area of 670.95 sq km spread across Malai Mahadeshwara Reserve Forest, Hanur Reserve Forest and Yediyarahalli Reserve Forest.
- The State Board for Wildlife had given its concurrence to declare M.M. Hills sanctuary as a tiger reserve in January 2019.
- This is a unique geographical zone that acts as a bridge between the Western and Eastern Ghats.
- Being part of Mysore Elephant Reserve, these forests also support nearly 300 elephants.
- There are about 285 bird species documented in this landscape as per a 2014 survey.
- The forests are important not only for tiger, elephants and leopards but also chitals, honey badgers, smooth-coated otter, striped hyena, wild dogs, sloth bear, grizzled giant squirrels, Mahseer fish, etc.

Environment: NCOIS launches three new advance warning systems

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SVAS, SSFS and ABIS + about NCOIS)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has launched three new products for the benefit of fishermen, people living in coastal areas of South India
 1. The Small Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS)
 2. Swell Surge Forecast System (SSFS) and
 3. Algal Bloom Information Service (ABIS)
- All three products are available for free and will help in significantly reducing damage and losses for the users concerned and for authorities to make contingency plans for reducing damage

The Small Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS)

- 'SVAS' is for small vessels operating in Indian coastal waters warning about potential sites where vessel overturning can take place, 10 days in advance.
- Small vessels of beam width up to seven metres covering the entire range of beam widths of the fishing vessels used in all the nine coastal States and Union Territories can benefit from it.
- The warning system is based on 'Boat Safety Index' (BSI) derived from wave model forecast outputs like wave height, steepness, directional spread and rapid development of wind at sea which is boat-specific.

Swell Surge Forecast System (SSFS)

- The 'SSFS' has been designed for forecasting swell surges occurring in the west coast two-three days in advance as they generally catch the local people by surprise.
- Such events are intermittent throughout the year.
- 'Kallakkadal' is a colloquial term used by Kerala fishermen to refer to the freaky flooding episodes
- During 'Kallakkadals', the sea surges into the land and inundates vast areas.
- It is different from Tsunamis as two different kind of waves are involved.

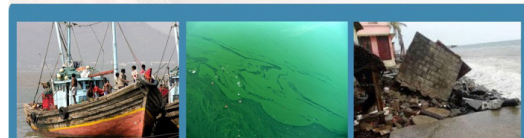
Algal Bloom Information Service (ABIS)

- The 'ABIS' is to help fishermen, fishery resource managers and ecologists get realtime information about the spread of phytoplankton blooms with details of species and size in North Eastern Arabian Sea, coastal waters off Kerala, Gulf of Mannar and coastal waters of Gopalpur.

JUST LAUNCHED : NEW SERVICES/PRODUCTS FROM INCOIS



- ALGAL BLOOM INFORMATION SERVICE (ABIS)
- SMALL VESSEL ADVISORY AND FORECAST SERVICES SYSTEM (SVAS)
- SWELL SURGE FORECAST SYSTEM



- Harmful algal blooms are not only detrimental to coastal fisheries but tend to induce respiratory problems within the coastal population

Know! about ESSO-INCOIS

- ESSO-INCOIS was established as an autonomous body in 1999 under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and is a unit of the Earth System Science Organization (ESSO).
- ESSO- INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvement through systematic and focussed research

Objective

- Provides round-the-clock monitoring and warning services for the coastal population on tsunamis, storm surges, high waves, etc. through the in-house Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC).
- The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO designated ITEWC as a Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP) to provide tsunami warnings to countries on the Indian Ocean Rim.
- Provides daily advisories to fisher folk to help them easily locate areas of abundant fish in the ocean while saving on both fuel and time used to search for the same.

Infrastructure Development: NABARD sanctions over Rs 400 cr to boost infrastructure in J&K

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NABARD + about RIDF) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned an amount of 400.64 crore rupees to UT of J&K during the current financial year for giving boost to the infrastructure in the rural areas.
- The funding is a part of the NABARD's 'Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) - Trench XXV' which aims at augmenting rural infrastructure.
- The Bank has sanctioned 209.87 crore rupees for construction of 82 rural roads and 03 bridges earlier this year.

Rural Infrastructure Development Fund

- The RIDF was set up by the Government in 1995-96 for financing ongoing rural Infrastructure projects.
- The Fund is maintained by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- Domestic commercial banks contribute to the Fund to the extent of their shortfall in stipulated priority sector lending to agriculture.
- The main objective of the Fund is to provide loans to State Governments and State-owned corporations to enable them to complete ongoing rural infrastructure projects.
- Subsequently, RIDF was made available for new rural infrastructure projects and its ambit was broadened to cover almost all important aspects of rural infrastructure.

At present, there are 37 eligible activities under RIDF as approved by GoI. The eligible activities are classified under three broad categories i.e.

- Agriculture and related sector
- Social sector
- Rural connectivity

Know! about NABARD

- NABARD was established on the recommendations of B.Sivaramman Committee, (by Act 61, 1981 of Parliament) on 12 July 1982 to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act 1981.
- It replaced the Agricultural Credit Department (ACD) and Rural Planning and Credit Cell (RPCC) of Reserve Bank of India, and Agricultural Refinance and Development Corporation (ARDC).
- It is one of the premier agencies providing developmental credit in rural areas. NABARD is India's specialised bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in India.

- The Bank has been entrusted with “matters concerning Policy Planning and Operations in the field of credit for Agriculture and other Economic activities in Rural areas in India

Science and Technology: Govt to host Artificial Intelligence-focused RAISE 2020 summit in April

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RAISE 2020 + about Start-up Pitch fest) + Mains (GS III Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

What's the NEWS

- The Indian government announced it will hold RAISE 2020- 'Responsible AI for Social Empowerment 2020' summit in New Delhi between April 11 and April 12.
- The RAISE 2020 summit will also host a “Startup Pitchfest.”

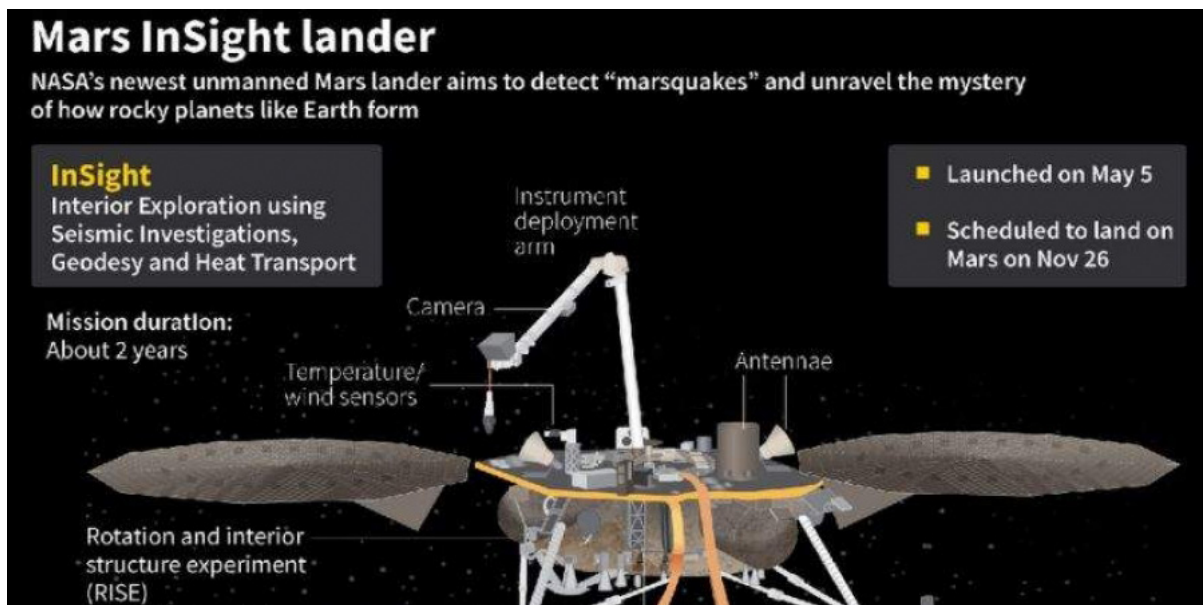
Know! more about the summit

- The summit will be aimed at bringing together people to exchange ideas on the use of Artificial Intelligence for “social empowerment, inclusion and transformation” in industries such as education, smart mobility, agriculture, and healthcare among others.
- A data-rich environment like India has the potential to be the world's leading AI laboratory which can eventually transform lives globally.
- AI technology is a powerful tool that can be used to create a positive impact in the Indian context, further becoming the AI destination for the world

Startup Pitchfest

- During the summit, startups will have the opportunity to showcase their AI solutions aimed at the social transformation, inclusion and empowerment.
- Interested startups around the world can participate in the Pitchfest. The finalists will showcase their solutions at the summit and even get live feedback.

Science and Technology: What InSight has told us about Mars so far



Relevance IN – Prelims (about InSight mission and its findings) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- This week, NASA published a set of six papers - five in the journal Nature, one in Nature Geoscience - to reveal “a planet alive with quakes, dust devils and strange magnetic pulses”.

- It's now more than a year since NASA's InSight lander mission touched down on Mars on November 26, 2018.

Know! about InSight

- InSight is the first mission dedicated to looking deep beneath the Martian surface.
- Among its science tools are a seismometer for detecting quakes, sensors for gauging wind and air pressure, a magnetometer, and a heat flow probe designed to take the planet's temperature.
- The InSight mission is part of NASA's Discovery Program.
- It is being supported by a number of European partners, which include France's Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES), the German Aerospace Center (DLR) and the United Kingdom Space Agency (UKSA).

Know! about the findings

- Mars trembles more often than expected, but also more mildly.
- This emerged from readings of the ultra-sensitive seismometer, called the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS).
- The instrument enables scientists to "hear" multiple trembling events from hundreds to thousands of miles away.
- Mars doesn't have tectonic plates like Earth, but it does have volcanically active regions that can cause rumbles.
- Seismic waves help scientists study the composition of the planet's inner structure and can also help to understand how all rocky planets — including Earth — first formed.
- Billions of years ago, Mars had a magnetic field. Although it is no longer present, it left behind what NASA describes as "ghosts" – magnetised rocks that are now between 61 m to several km below ground.
- InSight is equipped with a magnetometer, which has detected magnetic signals.
- At a Martian site called Homestead hollow, the magnetic signals are 10 times stronger than what was predicted earlier

Dust devils

- Weather sensors have detected thousands of passing whirlwinds, which are called dust devils when they pick up grit and become visible.
- InSight's cameras have yet to see dust devils. But SEIS can feel these whirlwinds pulling on the surface.

The core

- InSight has two radios. One is for regularly sending and receiving data. The other radio, which is more powerful, is designed to measure the "wobble" of Mars as it spins.
- This X-band radio, also known as the Rotation and Interior Structure Experiment (RISE), can eventually reveal whether the planet's core is solid or liquid.
- A solid core would cause Mars to wobble less than a liquid one would.

Way forward

- This first year of data is just a start. When it is two years on Earth, Mars will have completed one year.
- A full Martian year will give scientists a much better idea of the size and speed of the planet's wobble

Disaster Management: Ensemble Methods in Modelling and Data Assimilation (EMMDA)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EMMDA) + Mains (GS III disaster management)

What's the NEWS

- In order to quantify the forecast uncertainty, leading Weather forecasting centres of the world including India have developed 'Ensemble Prediction System' (EPS) which provides probabilistic forecasting of weather.

Know! more about Ensemble Prediction System' (EPS)

- In an EPS, a number of similar models, called the ensemble members, are run from slightly different initial conditions.
- It requires high computational resources and in turn provides the flow dependent forecast uncertainty in terms of probability.

- The probabilistic forecasts help the end users in making decisions and plan their actions suitably.
- The forecasts from high resolution global and regional EPS provide more accurate probabilistic forecasts of extreme weather events and help the planners and administrators in taking timely actions.
- India has recently operationally implemented two global EPS which have highest resolution in the world and also a regional EPS of horizontal resolution 4km which covers the Indian region.
- A well-coordinated collaborative research and development work between national and international centres are further required for progressively improving the skill of EPS.
- In order to provide a platform for discussions and deliberations on the present status, future prospects and optimum use of EPS, a three-day international conference on “Ensemble Methods in Modelling and Data Assimilation (EMMDA)” is being organised by NCMRWF, MoES

The major themes of the conference are:

- Ensemble methods in Global Weather Prediction
- Ensemble methods in Data Assimilation
- Ensemble methods in Monthly and Seasonal Forecasting
- Convection Permitting Ensemble Prediction Systems
- Verification of Ensemble weather forecasts
- Applications of Ensemble weather forecasts

NITI Aayog: Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog join hands with NASSCOM to roll out Artificial Intelligence Modules in Indian schools

Relevance IN – Prelims (v about the objective of AI based module + AIM + ATL) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of science and technology)

What’s the NEWS

- NITI Aayog, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in collaboration with the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) launched an AI based Module rolled out for students in Indian schools to empower the youngest minds of the country with the latest technologies

Know! more about the AI-based module

- The AI-Base Module has been introduced with an objective for students to leverage the full potential of AIM’s Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) and further empowers them to innovate and create valuable solutions benefiting societies at large.
- The AI-Base Module will be implemented across 5,000 Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL), empowering 2.5 million students and an AI Step-up Module is under development which will be the next step, that builds on the base module.
- The module contains activities, videos and experiments that enable students to work through and learn the various concepts of AI.
- The module will be a catalyst for the youth to explore, ideate and learn the latest technologies and build a generation of innovators at the grassroot level.
- Atal Innovation Mission housed at NITI Aayog is the Government of India’s flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.
- At the school level, AIM is establishing ATLs in all districts across India.

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

- The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is a flagship initiative set up by the NITI Aayog to promote innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country.
- AIM’s objectives are to create and promote an ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country at school, university, research institutions, MSME and industry levels.

The Atal Innovation Mission has following two core functions:

- Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs.

- Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated.

AIM has multiple programs to encourage and support innovation in the country.

Atal Tinkering Labs

- To promote creative, innovative mind set in schools. At the school level, AIM is setting up state of the art Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) in schools across all districts across the country.
- These ATLs are dedicated innovation workspaces of 1200-1500 square feet where do-it-yourself (DIY) kits on latest technologies like 3D Printers, Robotics, Internet of Things (IOT), Miniaturized electronics are installed using a grant of Rs 20 Lakhs from the government so that students from Grade VI to Grade XII can tinker with these technologies and learn to create innovative solutions using these technologies.
- This will enable create a problem solving, innovative mind set within millions of students across the country.
- The vision is to have every school have access to at least one or more Atal Tinkering Labs in each district of the country, as well as to scale the same up with the help of state education ministries across the length and breadth of the country.

Atal Incubators

- Promoting entrepreneurship in universities and industry.
- At the university, NGO, SME and Corporate industry levels
- AIM is setting up world-class Atal Incubators (AICs) that would trigger and enable successful growth of sustainable startups in every sector /state of the country, thereby promoting entrepreneurs and job creators in the country addressing both commercial and social entrepreneurship opportunities in India and applicable globally.

Know! about NASSCOM

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.
- Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.
- NASSCOM initiated a program called '10000 Startups' in 2013. The purpose of 10000 Startup is to support and impact 10,000 startups in India by 2023.

Food Processing Industries: 32 projects sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)



Relevance IN – Prelims (about PMKSY) + Mains (GS III food processing)

What's the NEWS

- Total of 32 projects were sanctioned under the 'Unit' scheme of PMKSY of Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The projects are spread across almost 17 States, leveraging an investment worth 406 Crore rupees.

Know! about PMKSY

- MoFPI is implementing PMKSY and the period of implementation is 2016-20 with a total outlay of Rs 6,000 crore.

The PMKSY has seven component schemes viz;

1. Mega Food Parks
 2. Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure
 3. Infrastructure for Agro-Processing Clusters
 4. Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages
 5. Creation/Expansion of Food Processing
 6. Preservation Capacities, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure
 7. Human Resources and Institutions.
- The main objective of this Scheme is creation of processing and preservation capacities and modernisation/expansion of existing food processing units with a view to increasing the level of processing, value addition leading to reduction of wastage.
 - The processing activities undertaken by the individual units covers a wide range of post-harvest processes resulting in value addition and/or enhancing shelf life with specialized facilities required for preservation of perishables.

Know! the benefits of food processing industries and steps taken by the government

- The creation of direct and indirect employment for approximately fifteen thousand persons along with employment opportunities in rural areas
- The introduction of modern processing techniques for food results in improved shelf-life of the agricultural produce and ensure steady revenue to farmers.
- Food processing has an important role to play in linking Indian farmers to consumers in the domestic and international markets.
- The Food processing industry can work as link between Farmers, Government and unemployed youth for better contribution towards economy.
- The Government of India through the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) is making all efforts to encourage investments in the business.
- It has approved proposals for joint ventures (JV), foreign collaborations, industrial licenses, and 100 per cent export oriented units.

Economic Development: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to launch EASE 3.0

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EASE -3.0) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Ease (Enhanced Access and Service Excellence) 3.0 reform agenda. EASE 3.0 agenda aims at providing smart, tech-enabled public sector banking for aspiring India.
- EASE is a set of banking reforms to incorporate technological aids for ensuring better banking experience, wider financial inclusion and easier credit distribution.

Know! more about it

- The government in its annual report, "Reforms Agenda FY21 and EASE 3.0" listed out major changes ahead that will reform the existence of Public Sector Banks.

New features that customers of public sector banks may experience under EASE 3.0 reforms agenda include facilities like

1. Palm Banking for "End-to-end digital delivery of financial service".
2. "Banking on Go" via EASE banking outlets at frequently visited spots like malls, stations, complexes, and campuses.
3. Digitalising the experience at public sector bank branches is also on the cards under EASE 3.0.



- The Ministry has the idea of establishing paperless and digitally-enabled banking at places where people visit the most.
- The government aims to focus on digitalization in the Public Sector Banks (PSBs) among themes that include responsible banking, PSBs as Udyami Mitra, customer responsiveness, credit take-off, and deep financial inclusions.
- The government is trying to overhaul the customer experience with the introduction of features like Dial-a-loan, credit at a click, alternate-data-based lending or other analytics-based credit offers.

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