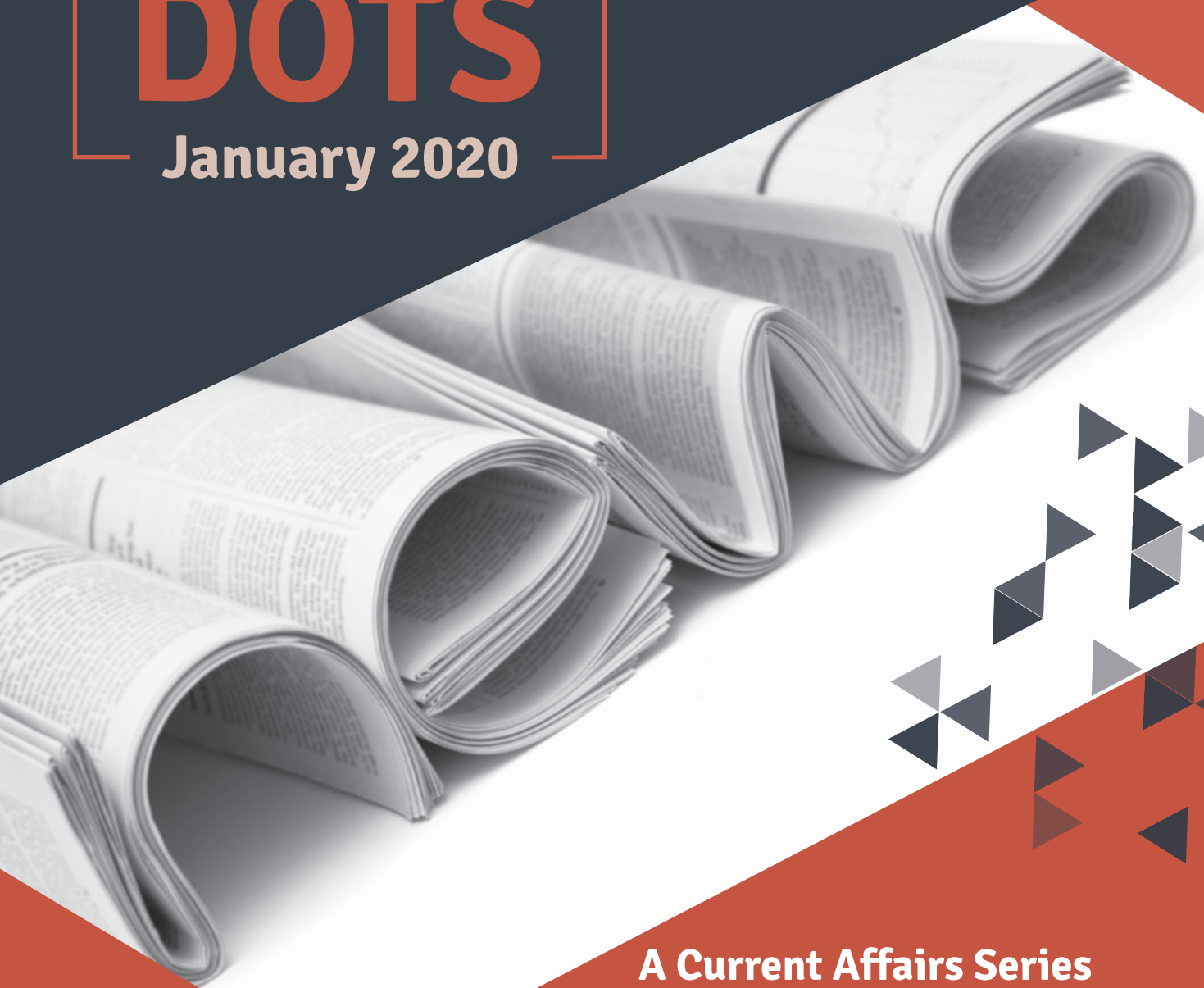


JOIN THE DOTS

January 2020



A Current Affairs Series for UPSC Examination

- Ritualistic Festival 'Lai Haraoba' Begins in Tripura
- Strait of Hormuz and Operation Sankalp
- India Slips Two Places on Global Corruption Perception Index
- WHO Endorses Indigenous Molecular Diagnostic Tool for Tuberculosis Diagnosis
- Signing the Historic Comprehensive Bodo Settlement Agreement to End the Over 50-Year-Old Bodo Crisis

JOIN THE DOTS!

Compendium – January 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! JANUARY 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! JANUARY 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

The locust attack in Gujarat's farms



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Locusts and about Locust Warning Organisation LWO)

What's the NEWS

- Gigantic swarms of locusts have descended on parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan, destroying crops and triggering panic.

Know! the steps taken by the government

- The government has formed 27 locust control teams that has been engaged in spraying insecticides in the affected regions, especially in the Banaskantha district of North Gujarat.
- With the help of the locust control teams, some 96% of the total affected area had been sprayed with the **pesticide malathion**.

Know! about swarms of locusts

- A small swarm of the desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*), a polyphagous feeder (eating a large variety of plants), eats on average “as much food in one day as about 10 elephants, 25 camels or 2500 people”.
- Locusts devour leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, bark and growing points, and also destroy plants by their sheer weight as they descend on them in massive numbers
- The locust menace is a natural occurrence which varies in intensity every year. The locusts remain inactive during evening and morning.
- Most swarms enter Gujarat through Rajasthan and Pakistan, riding on the wind to travel across large distances.
- India is most at risk of a swarm invasion just before the onset of the monsoon. The swarms usually originate in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

Locust Warning Organisation LWO

- The Locust Warning Organisation LWO (comprising of all field units), a central government body responsible for issuing warnings and monitoring and controlling locust attacks, undertakes regular surveys in the scheduled desert area of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana, which are prone to swarms, to monitor the presence of desert

locusts and ecological conditions.

- The assessment is to determine if the locust numbers have crossed the economic threshold level (ETL) which is 10,000 adults/ha. and 5-6 hoppers/bush that may require control.
- These surveys are done regularly during the entire year, but most importantly from May to November when desert locust activity is considered at its peak due to congenial breeding conditions.

Web portal launched for Delhi-NCR residents to track or block their lost/stolen phones

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) system)

What's the NEWS

- The government has launched a portal that will enable blocking and tracing of stolen or lost mobile phones.
- The initiative was launched in Mumbai in September this year, and has been rolled out for Delhi-NCR now.
- It will be extended to other parts of the country in 2020.

Know! more about the portal

- The launch of the portal, www.ceir.gov.in, for Delhi-NCR subscribers will facilitate requests for blocking of stolen or lost mobile phones by customers, blocking of such mobile phones across various mobile networks, allowing services to other existing customers having mobile phones with the same International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number, sharing of traceability data with police authorities, as well as unblocking of recovered phones.
- The project is backed by the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) system, which was undertaken by the telecom department for addressing security, theft and other concerns including reprogramming of mobile handsets.

Know! the working of CEIR

- The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) is the unique identity of a mobile phone devices.
- IMEI number is programmable and miscreants and criminals reprogramme the 15-digit unique number, which results in cloning of IMEI.
- The result is multiple phone devices, at times even hundreds of numbers, with same IMEI number.
- If such IMEI is blocked, a large number of mobile phones stand the risk of being blocked (as they are handsets with the same IMEI number) causing inconvenience to genuine customers.
- The software that has been developed now allows an individual phone to be blocked even if it is on a cloned IMEI number.

Railways renames RPF as Indian Railway Protection Force Service

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RPF and about GRP)

What's the NEWS

- The Railways has renamed its security force RPF (Railway Protection Force) as Indian Railway Protection Force Service.
- The ministry has accorded organised Group A status to RPF and renamed it.
- Consequent upon grant of organized group A status (OGAS) to RPF in the light of Cabinet decision arising from honourable court's orders, it is hereby informed that RPF will be known as Indian Railway Protection Force Service," the order stated.

Know! about RPF

- The RPF was formed under the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957.
- Under the act, the RPF personnel have powers to search, arrest, investigate and prosecution
- However, the ultimate power lies in the hands of Government Railway Police. RPF works under the control of Ministry of Railways.

Know! about Government Railway Police (GRP)

- These Police forces are different from that of the RPF.
- The GRP was established under Railway's Act, 1989.
- The duties of GPF is same as that of District Police such as patrolling.
- But they hold their jurisdiction only on railway property.
- They observe law and order within the railway stations in the country.
- Also, the GRP examine empty train carriages, prevent overcrowding and control vehicle traffic inside the station premises

KVIC opened first silk processing plant in Gujarat to boost production of signature Patola Saree

Relevance IN – Prelims (about KVIC and about Patola Saree)

What's the NEWS

- In a historic initiative taken by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), a first Silk Processing Plant was inaugurated today at Surendranagar in Gujarat which would help cut down the cost of production of silk yarn drastically and increase the sale and availability of raw material for Gujarati Patola Sarees locally.



Know! about Patola

- Patola, the trademark Saree of Gujarat, is considered to be very costly and worn only by the Royals or the Aristocrat.
- Reason being the raw material silk yarn is purchased from Karnataka or West Bengal, where silk processing units are situated, thus increasing the cost of the fabric manifolds.
- cocoons will be brought from Karnataka and West Bengal and Silk yarn will be processed in house, thus reducing the cost of production and giving a major boost to the sale of famous Gujarati Patola Sarees.

Know! about KVIC

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament
- In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.
- It is an apex organisation under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to - “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary

ECI launches PPRTMS to track party registration applications

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PPRTMS)

What's the NEWS

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) launched the Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS) to help the applicants keep a track of their applications for the party registration from this year onwards.

Know! the salient feature of PPRTMS

- The applicant, who is applying for party registration from January 1, 2020, will be able to track the progress of his or her application and will get the status update through SMS and e-mail
- The Commission has amended the guidelines regarding registration of political party
- The new guidelines are effective from January 1, 2020

- The registration of political parties is governed by the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- An association seeking registration under the said Section has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation, as per the guidelines prescribed by the Commission in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

First Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Shri Prakash Javadekar will confer the first 'Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman'

Know! more about it

- Acknowledging the positive role & responsibility of media in disseminating the outreach of Yoga in India and abroad, the Ministry of I&B had instituted the first Antarashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman (AYDMS) in June, 2019 to mark the contribution of media in spreading the message of Yoga.
- The Samman will comprise of a special medal/plaque/trophy and a citation.
- The contribution of Media in popularizing of Yoga and the entries was assessed by a Jury comprising of 6 members and was headed by Justice C. K. Prasad, Chairman, Press Council of India.

International Day of Yoga

- The **International Day of Yoga** has been celebrated annually on 21 June since 2015.
- The idea of International Day of Yoga was first proposed by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, during his address at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), on 27 September 2014.
- On 11 December 2014, India's Permanent Representative introduced the draft resolution in the United Nations General Assembly.
- The draft text received broad support from 177 Member States who sponsored the text, which was adopted without a vote.
- This initiative found support from most global leaders. A total of 177 nations co-sponsored the resolution, which is the highest number of co-sponsors ever for any UNGA resolution of such nature.

Women Science Congress (WSC)

- The 9th Women Science Congress (WSC) organised as part of the Indian Science Congress (ISC) at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore showcased the achievements of women scientists and motivated young women to actively participate in science to identify and find simple solutions to a range of problems through Science and Technology.

Department of Science and Technology (DST) schemes especially for women.

- KIRAN (Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing) is the women-exclusive scheme of DST with the mandate to bring gender parity in S&T through gender mainstreaming.
- Different programs and components of KIRAN like Women Scientist Scheme-A (WOS-A), Women Scientist Scheme-B (WOS-B) deal with various crucial issues (break in career primarily due to family responsibilities, self employment, part time career, relocation and so on) faced by women scientists in their career path.

Children's Science Congress

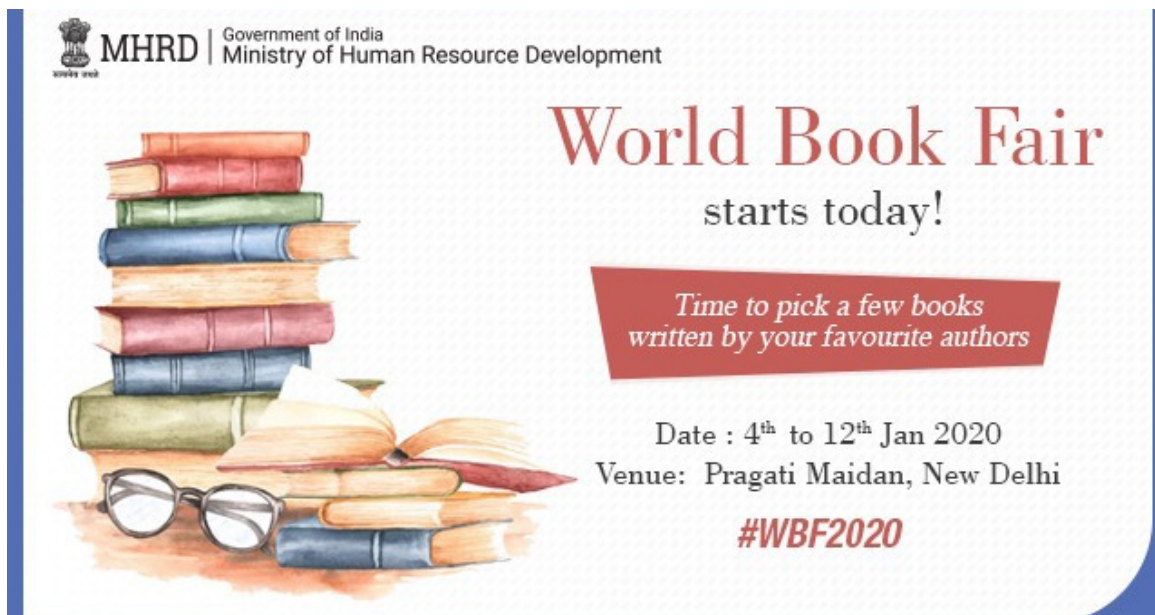
- The Rashtriya Kishore Vaigyanik Sammelan (Children's Science Congress) was organised as a part of the ongoing 107th Indian Science Congress
- The Rashtriya Kishore Vaigyanik Sammelan (Children's Science Congress) prominent event of the Indian Science Congress
- Children Science Congress is financially supported by NCSTC, DST. The main objective is to provide a unique opportunity to children of the age group of 10-17 years to use their scientific temperament and knowledge and to quench their thirst for creativity by conducting scientific experiments to solve problems identified by them.

The students also get an opportunity to interact with scientists and subject experts.

- During the event, **Infosys ISCA Travel Award 2020** was also given to top 10 students for their best write ups for innovations in the field of Science & Technology.

Union HRD Minister inaugurates the 28th edition of New Delhi World Book Fair 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about World book fair)



What's the NEWS

- Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nisank' inaugurated the 28th edition of New Delhi World Book Fair 2020 (NDWBF) at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi

Know! more about it

- This year, the theme of the New Delhi World Book Fair 2020 is 'Gandhi: The Writers' Writer' to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi.
- Mahatma Gandhi was a prolific writer, editor, publisher, Printer and Institution Builder. He wrote extensively in Gujarati, Hindi and English languages.
- His writings not only reflected his philosophy of non-violence and peace but also gave an insight into the socio-economic and political scenario of the country.
- National Book Trust, India in collaboration with the All India Confederation of Blind (AICB) has jointly published a set of books in Braille for visually impaired readers.
- Over 15 countries including Abu Dhabi, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Iran, Nepal, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Sharjah, Spain, Sri Lanka, UK, USA, are participating in the Foreign Pavilion at the Fair.

Additional info

- Recently, India was the Guest of Honour country at Abu Dhabi International Book Fair held in April 2019, and at Guadalajara International Book Fair, Mexico in November 2019. India will also be Guest of Honour country at forthcoming Paris Book Fair in March 2020.

14 scientists awarded Swarna Jayanti Fellowships for 2018-19

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Swaraj Jayanti fellowship)

What's the NEWS

- Swarna Jayanti Fellowships have been awarded to 14 Scientists associated with projects containing innovative research idea and with potential of making impact on R&D in the respective disciplines.

Know! more about the award

- The scientists, selected for the award through a rigorous three-tier process, will be allowed to pursue unfettered research with freedom and flexibility.
- The Swarna Jayanti Fellowships scheme was instituted by Government of India to commemorate India's fiftieth year of independence. Under this scheme, a selected number of young scientists, with proven track record, are provided special assistance and support to enable them to pursue basic research in frontier areas of science and technology.
- The awardees are supported by Department of Science & Technology, for fellowship and research.
- This will cover all the requirements for performing the research and include a fellowship of Rs 25,000/- per month as well as a research grant of 5 lakh Rupees for 5 years in addition to their salary.
- Out of the 443 applicants, 14 scientists have been finally selected this time for this scientist specific fellowship.

Ritualistic festival 'Lai Haraoba' begins in Tripura



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Lai Haraoba Festival)

What's the NEWS

- In Tripura, Lai Haraoba, a ritualistic festival observed by Manipuri meitei communities since ancient times, began in Agartala

Know! more about Lai Haraoba Festival

- The five day long festival is jointly organised by Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of Tripura, Puthiba Lai Haraoba Committee and Puthiba Welfare & Cultural Society, Agartala.
- The festival aims to uphold tradition and cultural values of Meitei community. Lai Haraoba is celebrated through oral literature, music, dance and rituals. A cultural troupe from Manipur has also come to take part in festival.
- They will be performing various cultural and traditional musical skits including Manipuri martial arts, folk music and folk dances during the festival.

Operation Sankalp

Know! about Operation Sankalp

- In the backdrop of the deteriorating security situation in the Gulf region, post attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman in Jun 19, Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations, code named Op SANKALP, in the Gulf Region on 19 Jun 19 to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

- Indian Navy warships and aircraft were deployed to establish presence, provide a sense of reassurance to the Indian merchantmen, monitor the ongoing situation and respond to any emergent crises. One war ship is presently deployed for Operation SANKALP.
- The operation is being progressed in close coordination with all stakeholders including Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and DG, Shipping. Regular Inter-Ministerial meetings have been held to review the evolving Maritime Security Situation in the Gulf region.
- Indian Navy continues to monitor the situation in the Gulf region and is maintaining presence in the region to ensure security of our sea borne trade and the safety of Indian Flag Merchant Vessels transiting through the region.

Know! about the Strait of Hormuz



- The Strait of Hormuz is a strait between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.
- It provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean and is one of the world's most strategically important choke points.
- On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south coast the United Arab Emirates and Musandam, an exclave of Oman.
- The strait is about 90 nautical miles (167 km) long, with a width varying from about 52 nautical miles (96 km) to 21 nautical miles (39 km).
- A third of the world's liquefied natural gas and almost 25% of total global oil consumption passes through the strait, making it a highly important strategic location for international trade.

Eight North-Eastern states to participate in the Madhavpur Mela of Gujarat in April

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Madhavpur Mela)

What's the NEWS

- The eight States of the Northern Eastern Region will participate in a big way during the Madhavpur Mela of Gujarat due to be held in the first week of April this year.
- The annual fair is held at Madhavpur Ghed in Porbandar district and the Mela this year will commence on 2nd April, a day after the Ram Navami festival.

Know! about Madhavpur Mela

- The Madhavpur Mela of Gujarat shares its connect to the Mishmi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Mishmi Tribe traces its ancestry to the legendary King Bhishmak and through him to his daughter Rukmini and Lord Krishna.

- The festival celebrates the immortal journey which Rukmini undertook from Arunachal Pradesh to Gujarat with Lord Krishna.
- The week-long 'Utsav' will see a vibrant cultural trail of art, dance, music, poetry, story-telling and folk drama from Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and other North-Eastern States with the aim to integrate the rich cultures of the two regions.
- Madhavpur Ghed, a small but culturally significant village, is the place where, according to folklore, Lord Krishna married Rukmini, the daughter of King Bhishmaka.

Cabinet approves ratification of Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement between India and France

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Mobility Partnership agreement)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet, has given its approval for the ratification of Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement between India and France.

Know! more about it

- The Agreement represents a major milestone in enhancing people-to-people contacts, fostering mobility of students, academics, researchers and skilled professionals and strengthening cooperation on issues related to irregular migration and human trafficking between the two sides.
- The Agreement is a testimony to India's rapidly expanding multi-faceted relationship with France and symbolizes the increasing trust and confidence between the two sides.
- The Agreement is initially valid for a period of seven years, incorporates provision for automatic renewal and a monitoring mechanism through a Joint Working Group.

Exercise "Naseem-Al-Bahr"



Relevance IN – Prelims (facts about India – Oman bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- Two ships of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) arrived in Goa to participate in the 12th edition of the Indo-Oman bilateral naval exercise "Naseem-Al-Bahr"

Know! more about the exercise

- “Naseem-Al-Bahr” (or sea breeze) is a naval exercise between the Indian Navy and the RNO, being conducted since 1993.
- Indian Navy ships Beas and Subhadra are participating in it, with harbour phase in Goa followed by sea phase off the Goa coast.

Know! about India- Oman bilateral Relation

- India recently signed a pact with the country in 2018 to access the Duqm port of Oman
- India has supplied rifles to Oman
- India is also going to set up a defence production unit in Oman

Other regular biennial exercises between India- Oman

- Al Najah – Army Exercise
- Ex Eastern Bridge – Air Force Exercise

Kutpui (festival): Mizoram govt to organise Zo fest in 10 states, US, Bangladesh

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Kutpui festival + about Mizo tribes)

What's the NEWS

- The Mizoram government will be organising Zo Kutpui (festival) in at least 10 states across India and countries such as US, Myanmar and Bangladesh

Know! more about the fest

- The first edition of the festival will start on January 9 in Vanghmun in Tripura and will be held over three days, an official of the state tourism department said.
- The festival will then move to other states which have significant Mizo population
- The move is an attempt to unify and strengthen the brotherhood among various Mizo tribes living in different parts of the world
- The event will witness various cultural programmes by different Mizo tribes, besides performance by various artistes belonging to Zo ethnic tribes of Mizoram and the Northeast,

Know! more about Mizo tribes

- The history of Mizoram basically encompasses the history of Mizoram which lies in the remotest part of northeast India. It is a conglomerate history of several ethnic groups of Chin people who migrated from Chin State of Burma.
- The Mizo population is found in Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram.
- They are spread between Myanmar in the east to Bangladesh in the west.
- The Mizo people were governed by the Assamese Government after the independence
- In 1952, a subsidiary government was created under Assam called Lushai hills, the now Mizoram.
- The Mizo National Front (MNF) was created in 1961 to achieve independence of Mizoram.
- In 1966, the MNF created its armed wing and declared independence under Operation Jericho. The area was then declared disturbed and in 1967, GoI enforced AFSPA.
- In 1987, the Rajiv Gandhi Government signed the Mizoram Peace Accord establishing peace in the region after several negotiations of peace

Japan Has World's Strongest Passport, India Slips to 84th Spot

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the passport Index findings)

What's the NEWS

- Japan continues to be the world's most powerful passport for a third straight year, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to a whopping 191 countries, according to Passport Index 2020 released by global citizenship and residence advisory firm Henley and Partners.

- The same index places India at the 84th spot with its passport providing visa-free/visa-on-arrival entry to 58 destinations worldwide.

Know! more about it

- The Henley Passport Index ranks passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
- The ranking is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), which maintains the world's largest database of travel information.
- The survey covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations. It is updated in real time throughout the year, as and when visa policy changes come into effect.
- Singapore slipped to the second spot on the Henley Passport Index (with visa-free access to 190 countries) in 2020 as Japan received visa-on-arrival access to Saudi Arabia which Singapore did not.
- South Korea and Germany were tied for the third place (with a score of 189).
- India's passport ranking has also dropped by two positions compared with last year and it now shares its spot with countries like Mauritania and Tajikistan.
- Indian passport holders can travel visa-free to 58 destinations like Indonesia, Macao, Maldives, Mauritius, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Kenya, Seychelles, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Iran and Qatar.
- At the other end of the list, Afghanistan has been ranked as the worst passport with visa-free/visa-on-arrival access to just 26 destinations. Iraq came second with a score of 28, Syria was the third worst with a score of 29, while Pakistan and Somalia shared the fourth place with a score of just 32.

Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PBD)

Know! all about PBD

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9th January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India and to increase the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and also focus on reconnecting them with their roots
- It was on 9th January in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa and eventually led India's freedom struggle.
- *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas or Non-Resident Indian Day was first celebrated on 9 January, 2003* and was observed annually till 2015
- In 2016, the Ministry of External Affairs decided to make the event biennial and since then it is celebrated every second year. In 2019, Pravasi Bhartiya Divas was held on 21-23 January in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- The theme of PBD Convention 2019 was "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India"
- These conventions provide a platform to the overseas Indian community to engage with the government for mutually beneficial activities.
- These conventions provide networking opportunities to the Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA)

- PBSA is conferred on overseas Indians. PBSA is conferred by the President of India as a part of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Conventions organised since 2003 on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin or an organisation or institution established and run by the Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who has made significant contribution.

23rd National Youth Festival-2020



Relevance IN – Prelims (about National youth festival)

What's the NEWS

- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and State Government of Uttar Pradesh are jointly organizing 23rd National Youth Festival (NYF) 2020 at Indira Pratishthan, Lucknow from 12th to 16th January, 2020.

Know! about NYF

- The Government has been organizing National Youth Festival (NYF) since 1995.
- The objective of NYF is to provide a platform to bring the youth of the country together in an attempt to provide them opportunity to showcase their talents in various activities.
- It also provides an arena, by creating a mini-India, where youth interact in formal and informal settings and exchange their social and cultural uniqueness.
- This blend of diverse socio-cultural milieu proves the Hon'ble Prime Minister's commitment and belief in '**Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat**'.
- The theme of the 23rd National Youth Festival 2020 is '**FIT YOUTH FIT INDIA**'
- The National Youth Festival is like a mega National Integration Camp. NYF 2020 would have around 6000 participants (volunteers from NYKS, NSS and local youth) from each State of the country.

AP CM launches Rs 6,318 cr 'Amma Vodi' scheme for indigent

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Amma Vodi Scheme)

What's the NEWS

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched his government's flagship programme 'Amma Vodi' scheme meant to support lakhs of poor and needy mothers to educate their children.

Know! more about the scheme

- The Amma Vodi scheme is a first of its kind in the country to bring about historical changes in the education system of the state of AP
- Under the Rs 6318 crore scheme, the state will provide direct financial assistance worth Rs 15000 annually to poor and financially weak mothers or guardians, to support them in educating their children.
- The monetary assistance worth Rs 15000 each will be credited by the state government directly into the accounts of the beneficiary mothers/ guardians in January every year.
- The assistance will be transferred into the beneficiary accounts every year until the children pass out of school.
- All below poverty line mothers/ guardians in the state with school-going children, studying in class 1-12 in either private, government, aided or unaided schools will be eligible for the financial assistance.

- The Chief Minister also declared free reimbursement to all SC, ST, BC, EBC, Kapu, Differently Abled, Minority and economically poor students pursuing degree, post graduation, polytechnic and engineering courses in the state.

Sufal Bangla Scheme



Relevance IN – Prelims 9 about Sufal Bangla scheme) + Mains (GS III steps taken by the state for farmer welfare)

What's the NEWS

- It is an effective scheme run by the West Bengal government has meant that many consumers, especially those belonging to the lower-income group, in Kolkata and some nearby cities have been shielded from the spike in food inflation.

Know! more about the scheme

- The Sufal Bangla scheme, which involves fair-price stalls and counters across the city, allows people to procure vegetables at affordable prices.
- Every time there is a crisis because of skyrocketing prices of vegetables and fruits, Sufal Bangla stalls help out the common people.
- The project was initiated in 2014 — with 14 mobile shops — to directly procure fruits and vegetables from farmers and sell them to consumers.
- The state government was committed to fair play in agricultural marketing practices in order to safeguard the interests of both the growers and the consumers, thus paving the way for Sufal Bangla
- With Sufal Bangla, the government aimed to aid to target groups: farmers (at the back end) and customers (at the front end).

How Sufal Bangla contains inflation

- The higher prices of food articles paid by the poor urban consumers never reach the poor rural farmers.
- High food inflation not only hits the pockets of consumers, it also rarely benefits the farmers as the benefits are cornered by the middlemen.
- With the Sufal Bangla scheme, the state government plays the role of a benevolent middleman.
- It directly procures vegetables from farmers, paying them a higher price than what they would have received while selling the same at less than the prevailing market prices in urban markets.

Bushfire crisis: Australia may list koalas as 'endangered' species

Relevance IN – Prelims (about KOALAS)

What's the NEWS

- The Australian government has said it could declare Koalas as an “endangered” species after their population suffered “extraordinary hit” in the bushfire crisis, which destroyed 30 per cent of their habitat across the country.

Know! about the bush fire and how it is affecting the wild animals

- Since September last year, the raging Australian bushfires, one of the worst in its history, have killed at least 26 people, burned over 10 million hectares of land, destroyed over 2,000 homes and pushed many species towards extinction.
- Over 1.25 billion animals are believed to be dead in the wake of bushfires and experts believe that hundreds of billions of insects may have been wiped out, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) reported.
- The government has established a 50-million Australian dollar emergency fund to address the devastating loss of wildlife.
- The Threatened Species Scientific Committee will need to assess whether koalas have moved from a “vulnerable” listing to being “endangered” in some parts of the country.
- Koala populations across the country are not all impacted by the fires.
- Koalas are listed as vulnerable in northern New South Wales (NSW) and south-east Queensland, and the fires have likely put them under more pressure there.
- With 30 per cent of their habitat already been destroyed in the devastating bushfires, koalas -- the herbivorous marsupial animal native to Australia -- have become a big focus for the Australian government.
- They are found in coastal areas of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia. The IUCN red list currently puts Australian Koala under vulnerable Category.



Saksham

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Saksham initiative and about PCRA) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Saksham, an annual one-month long, people-centric fuel conservation mega campaign of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas is going to be launched on 16th January.

Know! more about it

- PCRA and Oil & Gas companies shall carry out various interactive programs during this month-long campaign.
- PCRA has been creating awareness amongst the general public about the need for fuel conservation and adopting tips for saving the fuel.
- PCRA has prepared a comic book jointly with NCERT on the theme 'Fuel Conservation' aimed at younger generation especially the school children and is available on E-Pathshala on NCERT website.



Know! about PCRA(conservation and awareness activities)

- Petroleum Conservation and Research Association (PCRA) in association with Institute of Petroleum-Dehradun has developed high energy efficient PNG burner/Gas stove for household where piped gas is supplied which will save gas as compared to modified LPG stove for PNG.
- On mass awareness about fuel conservation, PCRA has developed attractive messages and recently developed an animated documentary ‘Pollution Ka Solution’ which is available on PCRA website and YouTube.
- The annual Saksham National Competition which generally is launched in the month of July, involving schools and students in Essay, Painting and Quiz competition is a big hit now.
- ‘Saksham’ is strengthening its foot print as a flagship Fuel Conservation mega campaign program of the country.

Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)

- Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) is a registered society set up under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India.
- As a non-profit organization, PCRA is a national government agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of economy.
- It helps the government in proposing policies and strategies for petroleum conservation, aimed at reducing excessive dependence of the country on oil requirement.
- Over the years, PCRA has enlarged its role in improving productivity in use of various sources of energy.
- PCRA undertake studies to identify the potential and to make recommendations for achieving conservation of petroleum products in various sectors of the economy.
- It sponsors R&D activities for the development of fuel-efficient equipment / devices and organizes multi-media campaigns for creating mass awareness for the conservation of petroleum products.

Other Schemes with Similar Name

Saksham Scheme for economically weaker differently abled students

- Saksham is a Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) Scheme being implemented by All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE) aimed at providing encouragement and support to specially abled children to pursue Technical Education.
- This is an attempt to give every young student, who is otherwise specially abled, the opportunity to study further and prepare for a successful future.

Tech Saksham

- The Union Minister for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched a project named ‘Tech Saksham’ to accelerate MSME growth through technology enablement.
- It is a Ministry of MSME and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) partnered project which brings together technology majors Dell Technologies India, HP India, etc to address technological gaps faced by MSMEs in their growth.

Saksham

- Under the aegis of Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Saksham is a new scheme proposed for holistic development of Adolescent Boys, on the pattern of SABLA.
- The proposed scheme Saksham, would aim at the all-round development of Adolescent Boys to make them self-reliant, gender-sensitive and aware citizens, when they grow up.
- The scheme will primarily focus on all out-of-school Adolescent Boys (10 to 18 years). The platform for the scheme to be provided by the local Panchayat

Strait of Hormuz and Operation Sankalp

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Strait of Hormuz and about Maritime choke points)

What’s the NEWS

- In the backdrop of the deteriorating security situation in the Gulf region, post attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman in Jun 19, Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations, code named Op SANKALP, in the Gulf Region on 19 Jun 19 to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz.

- Indian Navy warships and aircraft were deployed to establish presence, provide a sense of reassurance to the Indian merchantmen, monitor the ongoing situation and respond to any emergent crises. One war ship is presently deployed for Operation SANKALP.

About the Strait of Hormuz

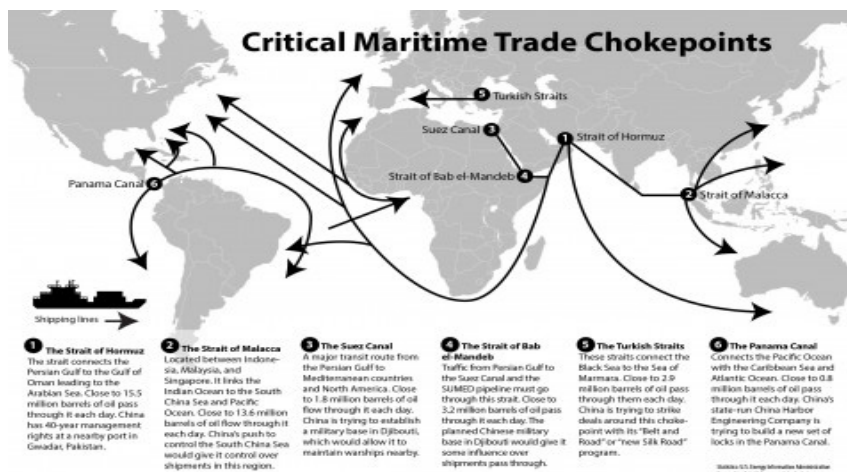


- The Strait of Hormuz is a strait between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.
- It provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean and is one of the world's most strategically important choke points.
- It separates Iran and Oman. It links the Gulf countries to the Gulf of Oman and to the Arabian Sea.
- On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south coast the United Arab Emirates and Musandam, an exclave of Oman.
- The strait is about 90 nautical miles (167 km) long, with a width varying from about 52 nautical miles (96 km) to 21 nautical miles (39 km).

Hormuz Peace Initiative

- India recently attended the Hormuz Peace Initiative that was held in Tehran.
- The Peace Initiative was started by Iran with Oman, China, India and Afghanistan being the key attendees.
- The countries that attended the initiative reviewed the "Hormuz Peace Endeavor" (HOPE) that was proposed by Tehran. It was proposed by Iran at the UN
- The talks were important for India because 2/3 of the oil supply to India and half of the natural gas supply to India is done through this route called the Hormuz strait.

Maritime Choke Points



- **Maritime choke points** are naturally narrow channels of **shipping** having high traffic because of their strategic locations.
- Maritime chokepoints, or oil chokepoints, are congestive pathways in some of the world's famous shipping routes.
- There are many such choke points around the world, however, a few of them are extremely famous for ships and thus face high international security conflicts and cross-border terrorism threats.

Some of the famous maritime chokepoints around the world are:

- The Malaccan strait in the Indian Ocean
- The Gulf of Hormuz in the Middle-east
- The Suez Canal linking the Mediterranean and the Red Sea
- The Panama Canal linking the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean
- The Strait of Bosphorus (Turkish Strait) linking the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea
- The three Danish Straits linking the Baltic Sea with the North Sea
- The Strait of Bab el-Mandeb forming a gateway for vessels to pass through the Suez Canal, through the east coast of Africa

Rojgaar Sangi app.

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Rojgaar Sagi app)

What's the NEWS

- Chhattisgarh State Skill Development Authority (CSSDA) is introducing a mobile phone app. The soft launch of 'Rojgaar Sangi' was conducted by Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel

Know! more about the app

- The app was developed with the help of National Informatics Centre to help skilled and trained candidates find jobs.
- The app will benefit 7 lakh students who were trained under the 705 courses offered by CSSDA.
- The app can also be used to register online for the unemployment index. Under any employment generation scheme, the users will be notified
- The app makes it easier for start-up companies to hire office staff.
- The app currently has no way to regulate the earning. "In the app, the customer can put the salary they can pay and registered workers can then show interest accordingly.

ELECRAMA 2020

- The Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises has inaugurated ELECRAMA 2020
- ELECRAMA is the flagship showcase of the Indian electrical industry and a platform to connect the world with Indian industry in respect of technology, new trends and innovation for future energy transition.

A rare migratory eagle sighted near Vijayawada

Relevance IN – Prelims (about steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) + about Asian waterbird census + International Waterbird Census +flyway)

What's the NEWS

- A lone endangered steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) has been sighted by a group of birdwatchers in a paddy field at Velagaluru near Vijayawada.
- The bird watchers recorded the steppe eagle during the 'Asian Waterbird Census', a citizen science programme
- This is the second time to sight steppe eagle in Andhra Pradesh in the past two decades."

Know! about Steppe eagle

- Steppe eagle is believed to be the second-largest migratory eagle species to India which has undergone extremely rapid population declines within all its range.
- Conversion of open habitats to aquaculture, pesticides, habitat loss/degradation, electrocution on/ collision with energy infrastructure and various effluents are a few threats to the species.
- In winter, steppe eagle breeds in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia.
- The bird has moved from 'Least Concern' to 'Endangered' under IUCN Red List.



Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)

- Every January, thousands of volunteers across Asia and Australasia visit wetlands in their country and count waterbirds.
- This event is called the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), which is part of a global waterbird monitoring programme, the International Waterbird Census (IWC) coordinated by Wetlands International.
- The AWC was initiated in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent and has grown rapidly to cover the region of Asia, from Afghanistan eastwards to Japan, Southeast Asia and Australasia.
- It therefore includes the entire East Asian-Australasian Flyway and a large part of the Central Asian Flyway.

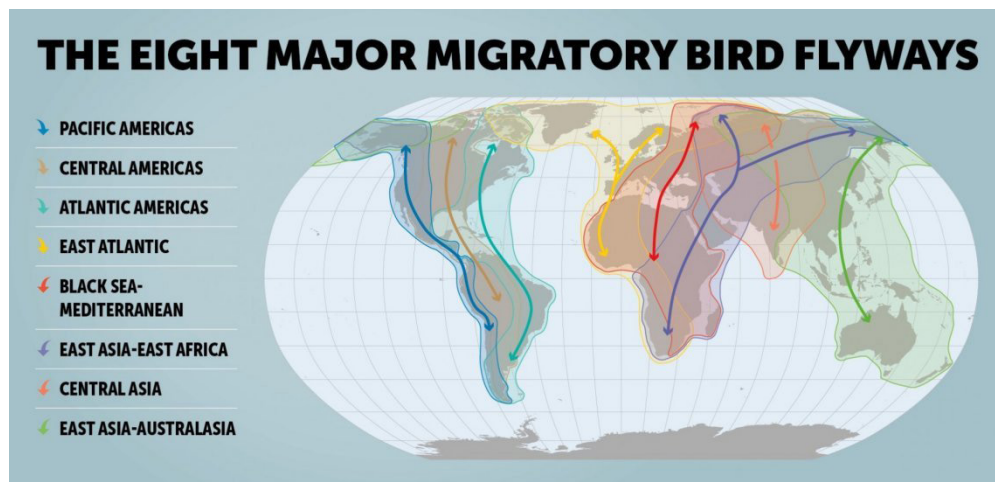
The census has three major objectives:

- to obtain information on an annual basis of waterbird populations at wetlands in the region during the non-breeding period
- to monitor on an annual basis the status and condition of wetlands
- to encourage greater interest in waterbirds and wetlands amongst people, and thereby promote the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds in the region.

International Waterbird Census

- The International Waterbird Census (IWC) has run since 1967 and today covers over 25,000 sites in more than 100 countries.
- In each country national coordinators work with a network of professional and amateur counters to provide waterbird counts to the IWC.
- This programme supports conservation and management of wetlands and waterbirds in all the world's flyways.
- There are four separate regional schemes of the IWC that represent the major flyways of the world: Africa-Eurasia, Asia-Pacific, Caribbean and Neotropics.

Flyway



- A flyway is a flight path used by large numbers of birds while migrating between their breeding grounds and their overwintering quarters. Flyways generally span continents and often pass over oceans.

Andhra Pradesh three-capital plan

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the three capital plan)

What's the NEWS

- The Andhra Pradesh assembly passed the Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Bill 2020 and the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of all Regions Bill 2020 to decentralise the state's capital between Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool.

Know! more about it

- Last year in December, the state-government appointed an Expert committee which recommended that Visakhapatnam be made the executive capital, Kurnool in the Rayalaseema region the legal capital with the high court located there, and suggested that Amaravati could house the governor's office and the state assembly, becoming the legislative capital.
- The Andhra Pradesh state assembly passed the bill proposing creation of **three state capitals in Amravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool** on January 20, 2020. The bill was passed without any amendments.
- The **three-capital proposal** has been pushed forward to enable decentralisation and inclusive development of all regions, thereby ensuring "**balanced and inclusive growth**" of Andhra Pradesh.
- The new draft bill proposes setting up of a **legislative capital** in Amaravati, **executive capital** in Visakhapatnam and **judicial capital** in Kurnool.
- The new draft bill also proposes the division of the state into various zones and the establishment of zonal planning and development boards.

12th National Tribal Youth Exchange Programme inaugurated in Puducherry



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the National Tribal Youth Exchange Programme)

What's the NEWS

- Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Dr Kiran Bedi inaugurated the 12th National Tribal Youth Exchange Programme in Puducherry.
- Two hundred youths from Naxal-affected districts of Chattisgarh are taking part in this week-long programme. The programme has been jointly organized by the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and Puducherry Government with a view to ensure development and empowerment of the tribal youths.
- They will be visiting many places to know about the language, customs, culture, arts, dressing patterns, food pattern and other aspects of Puducherry.

Know! about Nehru Yuva Kendras

- Nehru Yuva Kendras were established in the year 1972.
- Later in year 1987 under Rajiv Gandhi Government it became Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, within the Government of India.
- It is largest and unique grassroot level youth organisation in the world, which integrates power of the youth based on the principle of voluntarism, self-help and community participation.

There are two main objectives of NYKS

- provide rural youth avenues toward nation building
- provide opportunities to develop their personality and skills.

SERVICE -a scheme of SAIL to promote Voluntary Philanthropist Activities by its employees launched

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SERVICE)

What's the NEWS

- Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas & Steel Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launched a scheme of SAIL to promote Voluntary Philanthropist Activities (VPA) by its employees.

Know! more about the scheme

- The scheme called “*SAIL Employee Rendering Voluntarism and Initiatives for Community Engagement (SERVICE)*” will promote and facilitate philanthropist activities by the employees in a structured manner.
- The dedicated interactive “SAIL SERVICE” portal for implementation of this Scheme shall act as a platform for enabling faster interaction and communication amongst the various stakeholders.
- It shall eventually be developed as a repository of knowledge management in this regard.
- Through SERVICE, employees of SAIL will come forward to perform their social duties voluntarily and contribute towards social welfare and nation building.



EIU's Global Democracy Index: India slips 10 spots to 51st rank, Norway tops the list

Relevance IN – Prelims (about global democracy index and its findings)

What's the NEWS

- India slipped 10 places to 51st position in the 2019 Democracy Index's global ranking, according to The Economist Intelligence Unit, which cited “erosion of civil liberties” in the country as the primary cause for the downtrend.

Know! about the report findings

- India's overall score fell from 7.23 in 2018 to 6.90 in the Index that provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 165 independent states and two territories.

The index is based on five categories –

1. electoral process and pluralism
2. the functioning of government

Top 5

Rank	Country	Score
1	Norway	9.87
2	Iceland	9.58
3	Sweden	9.39
4	New Zealand	9.26
5	Finland	9.25

51	India	6.90
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Bottom 5

Rank	Country	Score
163	Chad	1.61
164	Syria	1.43
165	Central African Republic	1.32
166	Dem Republic of Congo	1.13
167	North Korea	1.08

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit

3. political participation
4. political culture
5. civil liberties.

Based on their total score, the countries are classified as one of four types of regime:

1. full democracy(scores greater than 8)
2. flawed democracy — scores greater than 6 and less than or equal to 8
3. hybrid regime — scores greater than 4 and less than or equal to 6
4. authoritarian regime — scores less than or equal to 4”.

Know! other findings of the report

- India was included in the “flawed democracy” category.
- China’s score fell to 2.26 in the 2019 index, and the country is now ranked 153rd, close to the bottom of the global rankings.
- Pakistan was ranked 108th on the overall list with a score of 4.25, while Sri Lanka was at 69th place with a score of 6.27, Bangladesh (at 80th with 5.88 score).
- The overall list was topped by Norway, followed by Iceland and Sweden. Other countries in the top 10 include New Zealand at the fourth place, Finland (5th), Ireland (6th), Denmark (7th), Canada (8th), Australia (9th) and Switzerland (10th).
- North Korea was at the bottom of the global ranking at 167th place.

Know! about EIU

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is a British business within the Economist Group providing forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis, such as monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports.

India joins WEF reskilling initiative as founding member

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WEF reskilling initiative)

What’s the NEWS

- India joined as a founding government member the World Economic Forum’s Reskilling Revolution, an initiative to provide one billion people with better education, skills and jobs by 2030.

Know! more about it

- The scheme aims to future-proof workers from technological change and help economies by providing new skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the WEF said.

Founding governments include Brazil, France, India, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, UAE and the US.

- Business partners include PwC, Salesforce, ManpowerGroup, InfosysNSE 1.32 %, LinkedIn, Coursera Inc. and The Adecco Group.
- The best way to foster a more cohesive and inclusive society is to provide everybody with a decent job and income. Keeping that in mind the forum is creating a public-private platform to give one billion people the skills they need in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- The scale and urgency of this transformation calls for nothing short of a reskilling revolution.



India slips two places on global corruption perception index

Relevance IN – Prelims (about global corruption perception Index and its findings)

What's the NEWS

- India's ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI-2019) has slipped from 78 to 80 compared to the previous year. Its score of 41 out of 100 remains the same.
- Transparency International released the report of this index during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Denmark and New Zealand topped the index as they are the most honest countries.

Know! about the report findings

- India is in the 80th position while this rank is also shared by Benin, China, Morocco, and Ghana.
- India's neighboring country Pakistan ranked 120 on the list. It shows more corruption in Pakistan.
- A total of 180 countries have been placed in public sector corruption cases in this index.
- The index uses a scale from 0 to 100, where score 0 indicates a highly corrupted country whereas number 100 indicates corruption-free country.
- In democracies like India and Australia, unfair and opaque political financing, undue influence in decision-making and lobbying by powerful corporate interest groups, has resulted in stagnation or decline in the control of corruption
- The shows corruption is more pervasive in countries where big money can flow freely into electoral campaigns and where governments listen only to the voices of wealthy or well-connected individuals
- The 2019 CPI draws on 13 surveys and expert assessments to measure public sector corruption in 180 countries and territories, giving each a score from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
- In the Asia Pacific region, the average score is 45, after many consecutive years of an average score of 44, which "illustrates general stagnation" across the region.
- China has improved its position from 87 to 80 with a score of 41 out of 100, a two-point jump.
- Despite the presence of high performers like New Zealand (87), Singapore (85), Australia (77), Hong Kong (76) and Japan (73), the Asia Pacific region hasn't witnessed substantial progress in anti-corruption efforts or results.
- In addition, low performers like Afghanistan (16), North Korea (17) and Cambodia (20) continue to highlight serious challenges in the region
- The top ranked countries are New Zealand and Denmark, with scores of 87 each, followed by Finland (86), Singapore (85), Sweden (85) and Switzerland (85).
- The countries ranked at the bottom of the list are Somalia, South Sudan and Syria with scores of 9, 12 and 13. These countries are closely followed by Yemen (15), Venezuela (16), Sudan (16), Equatorial Guinea (16) and Afghanistan (16).
- In the last eight years, only 22 countries significantly improved their CPI scores, including Greece, Guyana and Estonia.
- In the same period, among the 21 countries that saw a significantly fall in their scores are Canada, Australia and Nicaragua.

Status check

The Corruption Perceptions Index uses a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). The global average for 2019 is 43

Country	Score in 2019	Rank in 2019	Change in rank from '18
Denmark	87	1	0
New Zealand	87	1	1
U.K.	77	12	-1
U.S.	69	23	-1
India	41	80	-2
China	41	80	7
Brazil	35	106	-1
Pakistan	32	120	-3
Russia	28	137	1
Bangladesh	26	146	3
Somalia	9	180	0

Know! about Transparency International

- It is an international non-governmental organization which is based in Berlin, Germany, and was founded in 1993.
- Its non profit purpose is to take action to combat global corruption with civil societal anti-corruption measures and to prevent criminal activities arising from corruption.
- It publishes for example the Global Corruption Barometer and the Corruption Perceptions Index.

Bharat Parv 2020 inaugurated

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Event Venue: **Red Fort Lawns, Delhi**
Event Date & Timings: **26th Jan, 2020 - 5 pm to 10 pm (Inauguration at 5 pm)**
27th Jan-31st Jan, 2020 - 12 noon to 10 pm

Event Highlights: Republic Day Parade Tableaux | Crafts Bazaar
| Multi-cuisine Food Court and Live Cookery Demos | Cultural Performances by States and NZCC | Theme Pavilions by States | Armed Forces Bands | Exhibition by M/o Culture | Yoga Demonstration by AYUSH

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INDEPENDENCE
THE BHARATIA

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Bharat Parv)

What's the NEWS

- To celebrate the spirit of India, the annual event Bharat Parv has been organised in Delhi.

Know! about Bharat Parv

- Bharat Parv, 2020 is being celebrated from 26th to 31st January, 2020 in front of Red Fort at Gyan Path and Red Fort grounds.
- The objective of Bharat Parv is to encourage Indians to visit different tourism places of India and to inculcate the spirit of 'Dekho Apna Desh'.
- More than 50 food stalls, 79 handicrafts / handloom stalls and 27 theme pavilions have been setup during Bharat Parv.
- The Central theme of this year's Bharat Parv is 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Celebrating 150 Years of Mahatma Gandhi'.

Nagoba Jatara

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Nagoba Jatara + about Gond tribes)

What's the NEWS

- Nagoba Jatara is a tribal festival held in Keslapur village, Inderavelly Mandal Adilabad district, Telangana, India.
- It is the second biggest tribal carnival and celebrated by Mesaram clan of Gond tribes for 10 days.

Know! about the fest

- Thousands of Tribal people from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Karnataka, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh belonging to the Mesaram clan offer prayers at the festival Nagoba.
- The 10-day festival has begun after tribal priests performed abhishekam to Nagoba idol at the temple in Keslapur with water fetched by them from river Godavari in Jannaram mandal, 70 km away from the village.
- One of the most important part of the jatara, which followed the maha puja, was 'bheting' or introduction of the new brides in the clan to the clan god.
- The Gusadi Dance performance by dancers from the Gond tribe is a major special attraction of the event.

Know! about the Gond tribe

- The Gond are an Indian ethnic group.
- They speak Gond language which is a Dravidian language.
- They are one of the largest tribal group in India.
- They are spread over the states of Madhya Pradesh, eastern Maharashtra (Vidarbha), Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha.
- They are listed as a Scheduled Tribe for the purpose of India's system of positive discrimination.
- They are an Adivasi group (indigenous people) of India



India's first e-waste clinic opens in Bhopal

Relevance IN – Prelims (about e-waste clinic and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- Country's first e-waste clinic is being opened in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh today.

Know! more about it

- It would enable segregation, processing and disposal of waste from both household and commercial units.
- The e-waste clinic is jointly setting up by the Central Pollution Control Board-CPCB and Bhopal Municipal Corporation-BMC. The e-waste clinic is being started on the basis of a three-month pilot project.
- If this project is successful, e-waste clinics will be established at other places in the country.
- Electronic waste will be collected door-to-door or could be deposited directly at the e-waste clinic.
- The CPCB will provide technical support to the clinic. The most interesting aspect of e-waste clinic is that the clinic has been prepared in junk low floor bus.

40 buffaloes die of haemorrhagic septicaemia in Odisha's Kendrapara

Relevance IN – Prelims (about hemorrhagic septicemia)

What's the NEWS

- days due to suspected Sahana disease (hemorrhagic septicemia) in a number of villages located in the Garadapur block of Odisha's Kendrapara.
- Around 40 buffaloes have died within four days due to suspected Sahana disease (hemorrhagic septicemia) in a number of villages located in the Garadapur block of Odisha's Kendrapara.

Know! about Hemorrhagic septicemia

- It is a severe bacterial disease caused by certain strains.
- The disease is also spread through contact with infected animals, contaminated clothing, equipment, and through ingestion or inhalation of the bacteria
- Primary symptoms include swishing tails, reduced cudding, undigested food in faeces and reduced milk yield, he added.

Third Global Potato Conclave at Gandhinagar in Gujarat

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the global potato conclave)

What's the NEWS

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Third Global Potato Conclave at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.

Know! more about the conclave

- The four-day conclave will provide an opportunity to bring all stakeholders at one common platform.
- This will be a unique event to expose different stakeholders of the country to the frontiers of knowledge and innovations in potato research.
- Gujarat is one of the leading producers of Potato in the country. The Netherlands is the partner country of this conclave. About 100 foreign delegates of 14 different countries have confirmed their participation so far.
- This conclave is being organized by the Indian Potato Association (IPA) in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, ICAR, Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla and International Potato Center, Lima, Peru.
- This mega event has three major components, which include the Potato Conference, the Agri- Expo and Potato Field Day.
- It will have 10 themes out of which eight themes are based on basic and applied research.
- The remaining two themes will have a special emphasis on potato trade, value-chain management and policy issues.

Know! the potato statics

- In the last eleven years, while the area under potato in India has increased by 19 percent, it has increased by about 170 percent in Gujarat.
- With a productivity of more than 30 tones per hectore, Gujarat is holding the top position in India for the last decade.
- The state uses modern methods of agriculture like sprinklers and drip irrigation for cultivation.
- The state also has the best of the cold storage facilities and linkages and is a hub for major potato processing industries in the country.

Marashtra Launches Rs 10 Lunch Plate Scheme On Republic Day

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the scheme – Shiv Bhojan)

What's the NEWS

- The Shiv Sena-led Maharashtra government launched its much-awaited "Shiv Bhojan" scheme, which is aimed at providing a meal to the poor for just Rs 10, on the occasion of the 71st Republic Day.

Know! about the scheme

- Under the scheme, which was launched on a pilot basis, thalis or lunch plates would be available to people at designated centres/ canteens during a stipulated time in all the districts.
- Under the pilot scheme, at least one "Shiv Bhojan" canteen has been started at district headquarters.
- The goal of the scheme is to provide affordable and quality food to all, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and financial status
- The state government is expected to incur an expenditure of Rs 6.4 crore for the pilot "Shiv Bhojan" thali project that will run for three months.
- Even though the customer will have to pay just Rs 10 per thali, the actual cost of the food will be Rs 50 each in urban centres and Rs 35 in rural areas. The balance amount will be given as grant to the district collectorate
- These canteens will function at places where poor persons work or live like at markets, district hospitals, bus stations, railway stations and government offices.

Indian Navy Launches 'Operation Vanilla' to Provide Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief at Madagascar

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Operation Vanilla)

What's the NEWS

- Indian Navy Ship Airavat, has been diverted to Antsiranana based on request recieved from Madagascar.
- INS Airavat built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers in Kolkata is the third Shardul-class amphibious warfare vessel of the Indian Navy.
- The ship will undertake Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief mission as part of 'Operation Vanilla' which has been launched to provide assistance to the affected population of Madagascar post devastation caused by Cyclone Diane.

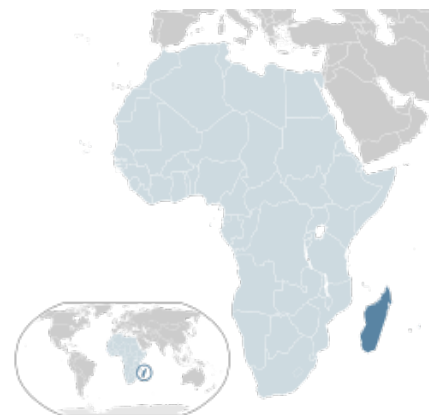
Madagascar

- Madagascar previously known as the Malagasy Republic, is an island country in the Indian Ocean, approximately 400 kilometres (250 miles) off the coast of East Africa.

Additional Information

Naming of tropical cyclones (North Indian Ocean)

- For tropical cyclones developing in the North Indian Ocean, countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan and Thailand send their names to the regional tropical cyclone committee.



- At present, all eight countries have submitted eight names each for naming future cyclones.

Northern Indian Ocean Names								
Contributors	List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4	List 5	List 6	List 7	List 8
Bangladesh	Onil	Ogni	Nisha	Giri	Helen	Chapala	Ockhi	Fani
India	Agni	Akash	Bijli	Jal	Lehar	Megh	Sagar	Vayu
Maldives	Hibaru	Gonu	Aila	Keila	Madi	Roanu	Mekunu	Hikaa
Myanmar	Pyarr	Yemyin	Phyan	Thane	Nanauk	Kyant	Daye	Kyarr
Oman	Baaz	Sidr	Ward	Murjan	Hudhud	Nada	Luban	Maha
Pakistan	Fanoos	Nargis	Laila	Nilam	Nilofar	Vardah	Titli	Bulbul
Sri Lanka	Mala	Rashmi	Bandu	Viyaru	Ashobaa	Maarutha	Gaja	Pawan
Thailand	Mukda	Khai Muk	Phet	Phailin	Komen	Mora	Phethai	Amphan

India-Bangladesh JT Exercise SAMPRITI-IX



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Exercise SAMPRITI)

What's the NEWS

- As part of the ongoing Indo-Bangladesh defence cooperation, a joint military training exercise SAMPRITI-IX is being conducted at UMROI, Meghalaya, India from 03 Feb to 16 Feb 2020.

Know! more about the exercise

- Exercise SAMPRITI is an important bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and Bangladesh and will be the ninth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- During the joint military exercise SAMPRITI-IX a Command Post Exercise (CPX) and a Field Training Exercise (FTX) will be conducted.

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GENERAL STUDIES I

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

Culture: Special exhibition on Indian Heritage in Digital Space



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the special exhibition and its outcome) + Mains (GS I Indian Culture and Heritage)

What's the NEWS

- The Cultural Ministry has launched a month long special exhibition titled Indian Heritage in Digital Space and a two day long first international heritage symposium
- The exhibition was organized in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

Know! more about it (exhibition)

- Visitors in this exhibition will be able to see the recreations of the socio-cultural life and traditions of Hampi, architectural and conjectural reconstructions of several important structures and experience demystification of many murals.
- Use of technology in heritage is very important and through this people will get a chance to know and understand the unseen aspects of heritage sites easily.

Know! about Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) initiative

- This special exhibition showcase adaptation and infusion of technologies being developed under the Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) initiative of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India in the cultural heritage domain of the country.
- The exhibition demonstrate the outcome of two flagship projects viz., A digital mini-spectacle to showcase the glory of Hampi and Augmented reality based interactions with physical models of monuments; that are completed under the DST mentored initiative Indian Heritage in Digital Space (IHDS).
- The goals of these projects are to create digital installations using 3D laser scan data, AR, holographic projections and 3D fabrication, to provide interactive and immersive experiences *showcasing the glory of Hampi and five Indian monuments namely KashiVishwanath Temple, Varanasi; TajMahal, Agra; Sun Temple, Konark; Ramachandra Temple, Hampi ; and RaniKiVav, Patan.*
- A special installation named '**ViRaasat**', consisting of a scaled down 3D printed replica shall provide a mixed reality experience to visitors for selected monuments, using laser-scanning, 3D modelling and rendering, 3D printing, computer vision and spatial AR.

Know! about Hampi

- Hampi, also referred to as the Group of Monuments at Hampi, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in east-central Karnataka, India
- It became the pilgrimage centre of the Hindu religion.
- Vijayanagara Empire capital in the 14th century.

- Chronicles left by Persian and European travellers, particularly the Portuguese, state Hampi was a prosperous, wealthy and grand city near the Tungabhadra River, with numerous temples, farms and trading markets.
- By 1500 CE, Hampi-Vijayanagara was the world's second-largest medieval-era city after Beijing, and probably India's richest at that time, attracting traders from Persia and Portugal.
- The Vijayanagara Empire was defeated by a coalition of Muslim sultanates; its capital was conquered, pillaged and destroyed by sultanate armies in 1565, after which Hampi remained in ruins

Art and Culture: How is a language declared 'classical' in India, what benefits it enjoys

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the classical language) + Mains (GS I Indian Culture and Heritage)

What's the NEWS

- The Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan recently demanded that Marathi be given the status of a 'classical language'.
- Currently, six languages enjoy the 'Classical' status: Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia.
- At the recently concluded 93rd edition of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, a resolution was passed demanding the declaration of Marathi as a 'Classical' language

Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan

- The Sammelan, an annual conference of Marathi writers, was started in 1878, and over the years has been headed by leading Marathi intellectuals,
- This year's conference was presided over by litterateur, environmentalist, and Catholic priest Francis D'Britto, the first Christian to do so in history.

Know! about Classical languages

- Currently, six languages enjoy the 'Classical' status: Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

The guidelines for declaring a language as 'Classical' are:

- High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
- The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community
- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

The benefits it provides once a language is notified as a Classical language:

- Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages
- A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up
- The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared.

GENERAL STUDIES II

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

Centre-State Relations: Kerala becomes first state to pass anti-CAA resolution

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the resolution passed by the Kerala government) + Mains (GS II Centre-State relations)

What's the NEWS

- Kerala became the first state to pass a resolution against the Citizenship Amendment Act amid widespread protests across the country.
- The resolution, which was moved by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and asks the centre to revoke the new citizenship law, was supported by leaders across party lines except the lone BJP MLA - O Rajagopal.
- Chief Ministers of several non-BJP ruled states including Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, had previously voiced their opposition to the law.
- However, Kerala is now the first state to go down the legislature route to register its opposition.

Reason stated by the state government

- Our Constitution is a milestone in the fight towards citizen rights and a society based on equality. Also our constitution is based on democracy, secularism, equality and scientific temper. This Act subverts the very Constitution
- The CAA was against the “secular” outlook and fabric of the country and would lead to religion-based discrimination in granting citizenship.
- When the Citizenship Act was passed in 1955, it followed all international conventions. The present central government has not followed the international conventions.
- Kerala has already put on hold all administrative activities for the National Population Register (NPR) considering the “apprehensions” of the public that it would lead to National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Health Sector: 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife”

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Florence Nightingale, Nursing Now and International Council of Nurses (ICN))

What's the NEWS

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife”, in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale.
- The year 2020 is significant for WHO in the context of nursing and midwifery strengthening for Universal Health Coverage.
- 2020 will be the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, it was announced at the 72nd World Health Assembly in Geneva.
- For the first time in history, the nations of the world will unite in celebration of the benefits that nursing and midwifery bring to the health of the global population.

Know! more about it

- WHO is leading the development of the **first-ever State of the World's Nursing report** which will be launched in 2020, prior to the 73rd World Health Assembly.
- Nurses and midwives play a vital role in providing health services.
- These are the people who devote their lives to caring for mothers and children; giving lifesaving immunizations and health advice; looking after older people and generally meeting everyday essential health needs.
- They are often, the first and only point of care in their communities. The world needs 9 million more nurses and midwives if it is to achieve universal health coverage by 2030.
- **That's why the World Health Assembly has designated 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.**

Florence Nightingale

- The designation of 2020 was especially welcome as it coincides with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, one of the founders of modern nursing.
- Florence Nightingale used her lamp to illuminate the places where nurses worked
- The designation of 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife will provide us with a new, 20-20 vision of what nursing is in the modern era, and how nurses can light the way to universal health coverage and healthcare for all.

Nursing Now

- Nursing Now has launched the Nightingale Challenge 2020, which calls for every employer of nurses globally to provide leadership and development training for 20 young nurses and midwives next year.
- The aim is to have at least 20,000 young nurses and midwives benefiting from this in 2020.
- The Nightingale Challenge will be launched at the ICN Congress in Singapore in June 2019.

International Council of Nurses (ICN)

- The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of more than 130 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide.
- Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally.
- Nursing Now is a three-year global campaign run in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organization.

World Health Assembly

- The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization, which determines its policies, appoints its Director General and approves and oversees its budget.

Health Sector: NITI Aayog for PPP model to link private medical colleges with district hospital

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

What's the NEWS

- To address shortage of qualified doctors and bridge gap in medical education, the Niti Aayog has come out with the public-private partnership model to link new or existing private medical colleges with functional district hospital to augment medical seats.

Know! more about the proposed draft

- In its draft 'Model Concession Agreement for Setting Up Medical Colleges Under the Public Private Partnership' guideline document, the government think-tank said a concession agreement has been developed based on international best practices and similar PPP arrangements that are operative in Gujarat and Karnataka.
- Such district hospitals need to have at least 750 beds — nearly half as “market beds” and the rest as “regulated beds”.
- Market beds would have a market price tag, which would help subsidise the regulated beds.

What's the need

- India has a dire shortage of qualified doctors. It is practically not possible for the Central/state government to bridge the gaps in the medical education with their limited resources and finances.
- This necessitates formulating a public private partnership (PPP) model by combining the strengths of public and private sectors.
- Accordingly, a scheme to link new and/or existing private medical colleges with functional district hospitals through PPP would augment medical seats and also rationalise the costs of medical education.

Know! more about the Scheme to link new and/or existing private medical colleges with functional district hospitals through PPP

- In consideration of making available the healthcare services, to the category of patients other than free patients, the concessionaire shall have the right to collect, appropriate and demand hospital charges... the concessionaire shall display the rates for the healthcare services, including the daily rate, for the bed occupancy in the district hospital at a place where it is visible to all
- It further said the concessionaire shall be allowed to charge ₹10 as registration fees from the free patients.
- The concessionaire shall provide all healthcare services to the free patient, free of cost

India's Foreign Policy: External Affairs Ministry Is Setting Up New Division To Focus On Technology Diplomacy

New, Emerging and Strategic Technologies (NEST) division

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NEST and its objective) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations + India's foreign policy)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of External Affairs is setting up a new division called New, Emerging and Strategic Technologies (NEST) division, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar announced it recently
- This will act as the nodal division within MEA for collaboration with foreign partners in 5G and artificial intelligence.
- The division will work to increase investment coordination among the states of the country and also with the foreign countries.
- The top Emerging Technologies in India are Artificial Intelligence and Internet of things. The emerging 5G technology will improve the performance of IoT Platforms



NEST's mandate reportedly includes:

- Evolving India's external technology policy in coordination with domestic stakeholders; this policy will also align with India's national security goal and developmental priorities.
- Recommending foreign policy choices by assessing foreign policy and international legal implications of new and emerging technologies.
- Negotiating "technology governance rules, standards and architecture" in multilateral frameworks.
- Creating HR capacity within MEA for technology diplomacy Medianama.

Social Issues: All India Radio marks World Braille Day in a unique way

Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Braille day + about Marrakesh Treaty) + Mains (GS II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States)

What's the NEWS

- All India Radio News and its regional units in Pune and Nagpur have observed World Braille Day in an innovative way by broadcasting news read by Visually impaired students and officers. The news was scripted in Braille and read Live.



- As a tribute to Louis Braille, All India Radio News has broadcast Hindi news bulletin read by Visually impaired officer Mr. Kamal Prajapati.

Know! more about world Braille Day

- The day is marked remembering the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille - for people with visual disabilities.
- Louis Braille was born on 4th January 1809 in the town of Coupvray in northern France.
- At the age of just 3, he lost both his eyes in an accident. This resulted in the invention of the language of 6 dots- which is popularly known as braille.

Know! about Braille

- Braille is a tactile representation of alphabetic and numerical symbols using six dots to represent each letter and number, and even musical, mathematical and scientific symbols. Braille (named after its inventor in 19th century France, Louis Braille) is used by blind and partially sighted people to read the same books and periodicals as those printed in a visual font.

Know! more about Marrakesh Treaty

- India becomes the first country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled on 30th June, 2014.
- The Indian Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2012 is in harmony with the Marrakesh Treaty.
- The WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) administered Marrakesh Treaty makes the production and international transfer of specially-adapted books for people with blindness or visual impairments easier.
- It does this by establishing a set of limitations and exceptions to traditional copyright law.
- The main goal of Marrakesh Treaty is to create a set of mandatory limitations and exceptions for the benefit of the blind, visually impaired and otherwise print disabled (VIPs).
- It addresses the “book famine” by requiring its contracting parties to adopt national law provisions that permit the reproduction, distribution and making available of published works in accessible formats - such as Braille - to VIPs and to permit exchange of these works across borders by organizations that serve those beneficiaries.

Bilateral Relations: India to resolve all boundary issues, including Kalapani, with Nepal through dialogue: MEA



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Kalapani issue) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reiterated the Indian government's commitment to resolving Kalapani issue with.

Statement given by MEA

- The map accurately depicts the sovereign territory of India. The new map in no manner has revised our boundary with Nepal.
- The boundary delineation exercise with Nepal is ongoing under the existing mechanism

Know! about the issue

- Last year, Nepal had raised objections after the Home Ministry had released a political map of India which showed the Kalapani territory within Indian borders.
- The territory is a disputed area between India and Nepal, and it is under Indian administration as part of Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand.
- The valley of Kalapani, with the Lipulekh Pass at the top, forms the Indian route to Kailash Manasarovar, an ancient pilgrimage site.
- The territory is also the traditional trading route to Tibet for the Bhotiyas of Uttarakhand.
- After India closed the Lipulekh Pass in the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, much of the Bhotiya trade used to pass through the Tinkar Pass.
- The Nepalese protests regarding the Kalapani territory started in 1997, after India and China agreed to reopen the Lipulekh Pass.
- In November last year, the MEA had said that the new political map released after bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir accurately depicts its sovereign territory and did not revise its boundary with Nepal in any manner.

Health Sector: NITI Aayog readying Make In India fillip for domestic medical devices

Relevance IN – Prelims (steps taken to promote domestic medical devices) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources).



What's the NEWS

- A preliminary list of 10 device-categories with most export potential have been drawn up for prioritising domestic production.

Know! more about it

- To eliminate bottlenecks in domestic medical devices businesses, government think-tank NITI Aayog is drawing up a list of devices which have most potential for export.
- A tentative list of 10 such device-categories has been drawn up
- Devices under the NITI Aayog scanner for providing priority subsidy or funding are cardiac stents, orthopaedic implants, surgical blades, catheters, X-Ray machines, syringes and needles, blood bags, CT Scan and MRI Machines as well as sutures.

- This list is being drawn up so that their domestic manufacturing can be prioritised.
- The government is looking at a single window framework for accelerating standardisation, body certification, declaring the device safe and so on.
- Currently there are too many departments involved in giving approvals, and thus they get delayed.
- The government is contemplating reimbursement to the company if the registration takes place in foreign countries.
- “Reimbursement of costs incurred while conducting clinical trials, as well as that for conducting Research and Development, patent filing charges will also be looked into
- There are a number of bottlenecks for domestic companies to boost exports. The government is looking at incentives like subsidies and preference, so that the exports of Indian products receives a fillip.

Focus Article (Bilateral Relations): With revived ‘Amber Way’, Latvia could be gateway to Europe for Indian exporters

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Amber Way) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What’s the NEWS

- Visit of Vice President to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia can enhance the bilateral relations with Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia).

Know! more about Amber Way

- India and Latvia have been historically linked by the ancient route called “the Amber Way”.
- India is keen to push the International North-South Transport Corridor Project that aims to link the Indian Ocean with the Baltic Sea and provide seamless connectivity.
- The International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) will help make Latvia a gateway for Indian goods entering northern Europe, the Baltic region and Belarus.
- Latvia, a tiny nation on the Baltic Sea between Lithuania and Estonia, is now hard-selling its main seaport Riga free port to exporters.
- Latvia wants to “widen and deepen the economic cooperation with India” while seeking to revive the ‘Amber Way’ — an ancient route that linked India and Latvia.
- Riga, Latvia’s biggest sea port, is ice-free, and therefore work through the year.
- Using the new corridor, a pilot container train service is planned this month from JNPT to Riga, a route that is expected to reduce transit time by 40 per cent and carriage cost by 30 per cent.



- The new Mumbai-Tehran-Moscow transport corridor is expected to rival the Suez Canal route, as it allows for faster, cheaper and smoother transit of goods between Asia and Europe.
- The new route will use a combination of ocean, rail and road — JNPT to Bandar Abbas in Iran by sea and from there by rail and road to Riga.



Know! about Amber and Amber Road

- It is fossilized tree resin which has been appreciated for its colour and natural beauty since Neolithic times. This resin produced from Taiga coniferous trees.
- It is much valued from antiquity to the present as a gemstone and amber are made into a variety of decorative objects.
- The Amber Road was an ancient trade route for the transfer of amber from coastal areas of the North Sea and Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.
- Throughout 1000 of years a key route developed between Venice and St. Petersburg for transporting amber through the ancient world.
- Amber was transported from the North Sea and Baltic Sea Coasts overland by way of the Vistula and Dnieper River to Italy, Greece, the Black Sea, Syria and Egypt.

Know! about INSTC

- The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a multimode network of transport for making freight.
- The trade route is around 7200 km long. This route will use the ship, rail and road route between India, Iran, and Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.
- India and Russia agree to step up trade to \$30 billion by 2025.
- The INSTC project would help Asian and Europe countries transport their cargo through the corridor at double speed compared to the Suez Canal.
- It is thought to be the most suitable route for transit traffic between Asia and Europe as only a few countries exist along the route, which means fewer border crossings and earlier for the countries to reach agreements.

The role of Latvia

- Exports to battle states are difficult due to the 16,129 km long sea takes 35 days via the traditional route.
- This makes Indian exports costlier and less competitive in the European market.
- Latvia connects the Baltic region and Russia with the rest of Europe and Central Asia.
- The new 'Rail Baltica' a Trans-European Rail Project to connect the Baltic states to the existing European rail network would be an advantage for India.
- Rail Baltica is one of the European Union's Territory projects and falls under the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).
- Ice-free ports and well-developed rail and road network would help Indian exports reach these (Europe+Russia) markets faster and cheaper via Riga.

Space Awareness: Challakere to be ISRO's astronaut training hub



Relevance IN – Prelims (about ISRO's astronaut training hub) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- India's world-class facility for training astronauts will be established in three years at Challakere, a shrubby, arid oilseeds town on the Bengaluru-Pune NH4 in Chitradurga district of Karnataka.

Know! more about the proposed training facility

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has proposed a 2,700-crore master plan to create top infrastructure that will house its young Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC).
- The HSP [Human Spaceflight Programme] will shift to Challakere.
- The ISRO wants to establish a self-contained facility there so that in future, whatever training and activities doing now in Russia for the Gaganyaan crew can all be done by ISRO here.
- The 400-acre ISRO land at Challakere will be the single-stop consolidating infrastructure and activities related to space travellers.
- The country pays a hefty, unnamed sum to use such facilities abroad.
- The first set of four astronaut candidates for the first Gaganyaan mission of 2022 are to train in Russia.
- Currently, HSP work is split across various centres such as the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram and the U. R. Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru.
- The Institute of Aerospace Medicine of the Air Force has been roped in for their selection, basic and final training in Bengaluru.
- Apart from all this work, Challakere will also host work related to crew and service modules of the spacecraft that carries the astronauts and up to mission control.

Quarantine facility at the second launch pad (SLP)

- Human-focussed infrastructure apart, the ISRO also planned to add a quarantine facility at the second launch pad (SLP) in the Sriharikota space port.
- It would ensure that astronauts who were about to enter the spacecraft before the launch stay unexposed.
- Among many human-rated projects, the SLP and the launch vehicle GSLV-MkIII will also be modified suitably for crew safety and comfort.

Challakera – The Science City

- Challakere, about 400 km and over three hours by road from Bengaluru, is also where premier scientific establishments have set up adjoining and interactive campuses on some 10,000 acres.
- Called the Science City, it houses facilities of the ISRO, the Defence Research & Development Organisation's Advanced Aeronautical Test Range, the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and the Indian Institute of Science.

Infrastructure Development: CCEA approves ₹5,559-cr VGF for North-East gas grid project

Relevance IN – Prelims (about North-East gas grid project) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development -energy + GS II government policies and interventions for the development of various sectors)

What's the NEWS

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved a Capital Grant as the Viability Gap Funding to Indradhanush Gas Grid Ltd for setting up the North East Natural Gas Pipeline Grid.

Know! more about the North -East grid project

- This viability gap funding would be capped at 60 per cent of the estimated cost of ₹9,265 crore (including interest during construction) for the project.
- The quantum of VGF would be capped at 60 per cent of the estimated project cost and would not be linked with upward capital cost variation
- A total of ₹5,559 crore has been earmarked as VGF. As per the plan, a 1,656-km gas pipeline grid would connect the eight states of the North-Eastern region, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura
- Indradhanush Gas Grid Ltd (IGGL) is a joint venture company of five central public sector enterprises, namely IndianOil, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, GAIL, Oil India and Numaligarh Refinery Ltd.
- The joint venture was incorporated in August 2018 to develop and operate a natural gas pipeline grid in the North-East.
- The Capital Grant will provide natural gas supplies to various types of consumers, including Industrial, PNG (Domestic), and CNG (Transport), among others, and would help in substituting liquid fuels.
- The pipeline grid would ensure reliable and uninterrupted natural gas supplies to consumers who are otherwise severely affected due to various reasons in this part of the country

Health Sector: New virus identified as likely cause of mystery illness in China – Coronavirus

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the virus coronavirus)

What's the NEWS

- Chinese state media reported that scientists have identified a new coronavirus as the likely cause of a pneumonia-like illness that has sickened dozens of people.
- Researchers have sequenced the virus's genome, and fifteen patients have tested positive to the virus

Know! more about it

- Coronaviruses are a specific family of viruses, with some of them causing less-severe damage, such as the common cold, and others causing respiratory and intestinal diseases.
- Apart from human beings, coronaviruses can affect mammals including pigs, cattle, cats, dogs, martens, camels, hedgehogs and some birds.
- So far, there are four known disease-causing coronaviruses, among which the best known are the SARS corona virus and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) coronavirus, both of which can cause severe respiratory diseases.
- In the newly identified coronavirus, a direct link with the disease has not been established yet.

- Previously, there was speculation that the mystery illness was related to the SARS epidemic in China in the latter half of 2002 that killed roughly 350 people.
- The infection is probably an emerging zoonotic virus — infections that spread from animals to humans
- Such infections often first appear in colder months when animal pathogens can survive and spread to people

International Relations: Raisina Dialogue 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Raisina Dialogue and its objective) + Mains (GS II international relations and regional grouping)

What's the NEWS

- The Raisina Dialogue 2020 to be held in New Delhi, India between January 14 and 16, 2020 promises to be a mega show amid presence of foreign ministers from across the globe.

Know! more about the event

- The three-day event, co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), will also witness the participation of many Deputy Foreign Ministers, former Prime Ministers, former Presidents, National Security Advisers, military chiefs and other high level policy-makers, scholars and officials
- Over 180 delegates from 105 countries are taking part in this edition, themed '21@20: Navigating the Alpha Century'

Know! about Raisina Dialogue

- The Raisina Dialogue is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
- The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.
- The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs
- This year's Dialogue titled 'Navigating the Alpha Century' is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of states, Cabinet ministers and local government officials as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.

NIIT University Welcomes Launch Of NEAT Portal By MHRD To Encourage Edtech Startups

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

What's the NEWS

- Established with a vision to bring about innovation in higher education and learning in emerging areas of the knowledge society, the not-for-profit NIIT University (NU) is to be a part of MHRD's pioneering initiative NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) to encourage EdTech start-up culture amongst students in the country.
- NIIT was established in 1991. It is a non-profit university of higher education and research.

Know! more about it

- The university looks forward to working with AICTE to implement MHRD's vision of harnessing technology for better learning outcomes.
- To encourage the scheme of MHRD, so that more faculty members and students come forward in the forthcoming selection of EdTech companies, NU will institute five awards of Rs 50,000 each for faculty members and ten awards for students of Rs 10,000 each.

- Future with an emphasis on Innovation and Entrepreneurship with a deep interest in Education Technology, NU has been laying emphasis on the usage of technologies right from inception in all areas of the University including academic operations, assessments and examinations, and administration.
- NEAT - The National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) was launched to customize learning process using Artificial Intelligence.
- NEAT will create a common one-stop access to technological solutions. The solutions will be developed by the EdTech companies. The institutes developing solutions are free to charge the companies according to their policy. The NEAT programme is being implemented by AICTTE.

Regional Grouping: Statue of Unity finds place in ‘8 Wonders of SCO’



Relevance IN – Prelims (about statue of Unity + about wonders of SCO)

What's the NEWS

- The 182-meter tall Statue of Unity in Gujarat has been included in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's '8 Wonders of SCO' list

Know! more about it

- The 'Statue of Unity', the world's tallest statue, is a monumental tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, independent India's first home minister as well as deputy prime minister.
- The statue was inaugurated in October 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the occasion of Patel's 143rd birth anniversary.
- The 182-metre-tall statute is a monumental tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was India's first home minister and Deputy Prime Minister.
- The statue is located near the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada in Kevadiya colony in Gujarat.
- Designed by Indian sculptor Ram V Sutar, the project was first announced in 2010 and was finally unveiled on October 31, 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- In November 2019, the world's tallest statue surpassed the footfall at the 133-year-old Statue of Liberty in the US, with an average of over 15,000 tourists visiting the monument in Gujarat daily.

Apart from Statue of Unity, the other seven wonders of SCO include

- Daming Palace in China
- Navruz Palace in Tajikistan
- Mughals Heritage in Pakistan
- Tamgaly Gorge in Kazakhstan
- Po-i-Kalan Complex in Uzbekistan

- The Golden Ring of Russia and
- Lake Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan

Know! about SCO

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), or Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and security alliance,
- It was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter, formally establishing the organisation, was signed in June 2002 and entered into force on 19 September 2003.
- The original five nations, with the exclusion of Uzbekistan, were previously members of the Shanghai Five group, founded on 26 April 1996.
- Since then, the organisation has expanded its membership to eight countries when India and Pakistan joined SCO as full members on 9 June 2017 at a summit in Astana, Kazakhstan.
- The Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO, it meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.

Social Issues: Cara Celebrates 5th Annual Day

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CARE 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

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) celebrated its 5th Annual Day
- CARA has conducted various training programmes and workshops at national and state levels for all the stakeholders of the adoption programme.
- It is giving emphasis to the rehabilitation of older and special needs children in various Child Care Institutions across the country.

Know! about CARA

- CARA is an apex body of Government of India for promoting and facilitating In-country Adoption and is the designated Central Authority for regulating Inter-country Adoption.
- CARA was designated as a Statutory Body on 15 Jan 2016, under the provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Health Sector: Govt releases Rare Disease Policy draft, proposes to give Rs 15 lakh help

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

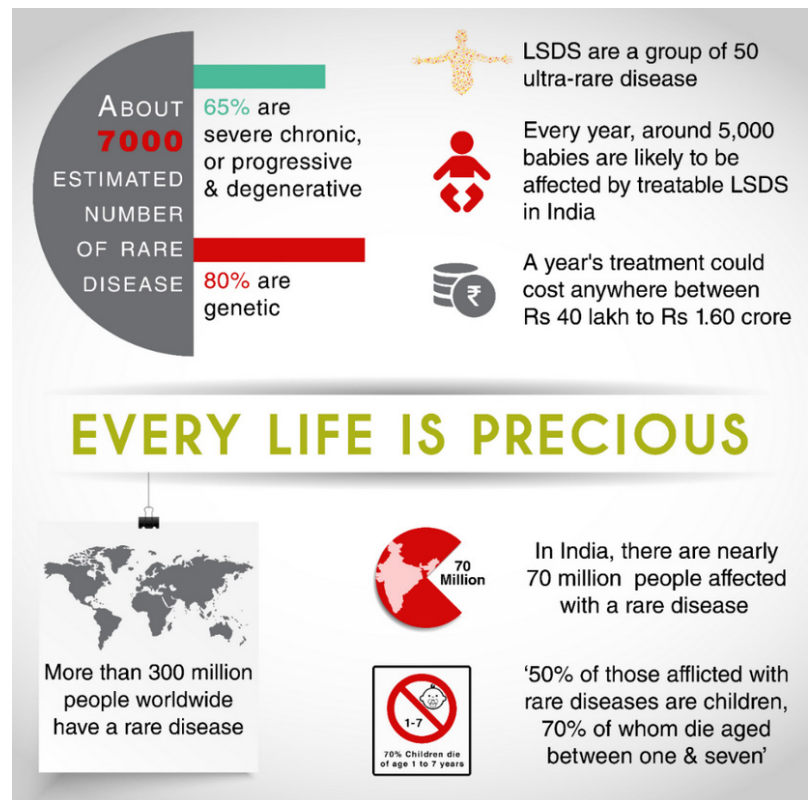
What's the NEWS

- The government will provide a financial support of up to Rs 15 lakh under its Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme for one-time treatment of rare diseases, according to the much awaited draft Rare Diseases Policy.

Know! about the draft policy

- Under the draft National Policy for Rare Diseases, beneficiaries would not be limited to Below Poverty Line families, but will also cover 40 per cent of the population eligible as per norms of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana for their treatment in government tertiary hospitals only.
- The Union Health Ministry intends to notify certain medical institutes as Centers of Excellence for Rare Diseases.

- The cost of treatment of patient in these centres of excellence will be met out of donations received through the online digital platform,” according to the draft policy.
- Rare diseases categorised under Group 1, such as Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs), immune deficiency disorders, chronic granulomatous disease, osteopetrosis, Fabry’s disease and liver or kidney transplant, will be funded under the scheme.
- The policy cited “resource constraints” to provide financial assistance to rare diseases like Gaucher’s disease, Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Hurler Syndrome and Wolman disease that require lifelong treatment.
- The government will endeavour to create alternate funding mechanism through setting up a digital platform for voluntary individual and corporate donors to contribute to the treatment cost of patients of rare diseases
- The draft policy states that at present very few pharmaceutical companies are manufacturing drugs for rare diseases globally and there are no domestic manufacturers in India.
- So far, only about 450 diseases have been recorded in India from tertiary care hospitals that are globally considered as rare diseases, according to the draft policy.
- Keeping in view the lack of availability of epidemiological data on rare diseases, constraints on resources and competing health priorities, the government is in the process of setting up a **National Registry for Rare Diseases at ICMR** with the objective of creating a database of various rare diseases.



Rare Disease

- Rare diseases are severe and chronic illnesses and often life-threatening. Patients suffering from rare diseases, especially Lysosomal Storage Disorders (LSDs), often lead a very incapacitating life.

Centre -State Relations: Kerala govt has invoked Article 131 to challenge citizenship law in SC

Relevance IN – Prelims (about article 131) + 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. Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

What's the NEWS

- The Kerala government moved the Supreme Court challenging the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019. It has been filed under Article 131 of the Constitution of India.
- The plea says the Act violates the right to equality under Article 14, right to life under Article 21, and freedom to practise religion under Article 25 of the Constitution of India

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

- The new law, which seeks to give citizenship to six non-Muslim minority communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, has seen vociferous opposition across the country ever since it passed by Parliament in December last year.

- Kerala, as a state, is constitutionally bound, under Article 256, to implement any law passed by Parliament.

Know! about Article 131

The Supreme Court has three kinds of jurisdictions: original, appellate and advisory.

- Under its advisory jurisdiction, the President has the power to seek an opinion from the apex court under Article 143 of the Constitution.
- Under its appellate jurisdiction, the Supreme Court hears appeals from lower courts.

Original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Supreme Court shall, to the exclusion of any other court, have original jurisdiction in any dispute

- between the Government of India and one or more States; or
- between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
- between two or more States, if and in so far as the dispute involves any question (whether of law or fact) on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends:

Original Jurisdiction

- The original jurisdiction of a court means the power to hear a case for the first time, as opposed to appellate jurisdiction, in which the court reviews the decision of a lower court.
- Unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 (which gives the top court the power to issue writs, etc.), the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive, meaning it is only the Supreme Court which has this authority.
- Under Article 226, the High Courts too have the power to issue writs, direction
- In its extraordinary original jurisdiction, the Supreme Court has exclusive power to adjudicate upon disputes involving elections of the President and the Vice President, those that involve states and the Centre, and cases involving the violation of fundamental rights.

Dispute to qualify as a dispute under Article 131

- It has to necessarily be between states and the Centre, and must involve a question of law or fact on which the existence of a legal right of the state or the Centre depends.
- Article 131, therefore, allows a state to file a suit in the Supreme Court in case of any dispute that it may have with the central government, invoking the court's "original jurisdiction".
- Under Article 131, the challenge is made when the rights and power of a state or the Centre are in question.

Other Petitions filed against CAA

- The other petitions challenging the CAA have been filed under Article 32 of the Constitution, which gives the court the power to issue writs when fundamental rights are violated.
- A state government cannot move the court under this provision because only people and citizens can claim fundamental rights.

But can the Supreme Court declare legislation unconstitutional under Article 131?

- A 2012 dispute between Bihar and Jharkhand that is currently pending for consideration by a larger Bench of the court will answer this question.
- Although earlier judgments had held that the constitutionality of a law can be examined under Article 131, a 2011 judgment in the case of State of Madhya Pradesh v. Union of India ruled otherwise.

Health Sector: WHO endorses indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis diagnosis

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

What's the NEWS

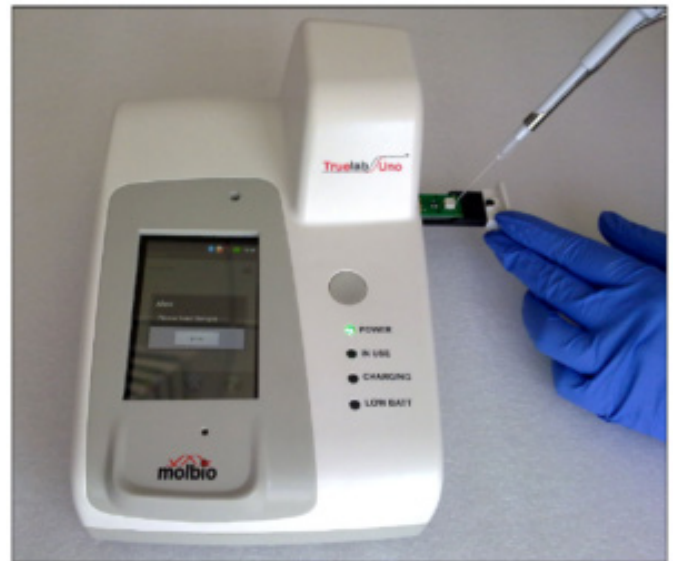
- The World Health Organisation has endorsed TrueNat, an indigenous molecular diagnostic tool for tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis.
- The disease remains a threat to public health and is the top infectious cause of death globally.

Know! the statics of Tuberculosis

- In 2018, an estimated 10 million people developed TB and 1.5 million died of it while at least a million children become ill with it every year.
- Also about 5,00,000 new cases of multidrug 2 and rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis (MDR/RR-TB) are estimated to emerge annually but only one in three cases was reported by countries to have been diagnosed and treated in 2018.
- India had 26.9 lakh TB patients in 2018 as stated by the Global Tuberculosis Report 2019
- TB kills an estimated 4.8 lakh Indians every year and more than 1,400 every day.
- India has the highest TB burden in the world and also has more than a million 'missing' cases every year that are not notified.

Know! about TrueNat TB Test

- The TrueNat TB test is a new molecular test that can diagnosis TB in one hour as well as testing for resistance to the drug rifampicin.
- The TrueNat test has been developed by the Indian firm MolBio Diagnostics Pvt Ltd Goa. It's development has been funded by Bigtec Labs, India.
- The test works by the rapid detection of TB bacteria using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) technique.
- The machine looks for the DNA specific to the TB bacteria. If the machine detects it, it then uses PCR to copy (amplify) small segments of DNA and this DNA can then be used in many different laboratory procedures.
- Any resistance to rifampicin (RR) is detected by doing a second RTPCR (Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction)



Know! all about Tuberculosis (TB)

- TB is a disease caused by bacteria called Mycobacterium tuberculosis. The bacteria usually attack the lungs
- Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful first-line anti-TB drugs.
- MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.
- The MDR-TB burden largely falls on 3 countries – India, China and the Russian Federation – which together account for half of the global cases. About 6.2% of MDR-TB cases had extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) in 2018.

Know! about 'Spit Seq' Test For Early Diagnosis Of Multi Drug Resistant TB

- SPIT SEQ (spit sequencing) is a Whole-Genome Sequencing-based test.
- This test can provide a detailed analysis of every single mutation present in any TB bacteria causing drug resistance, directly from the sputum.
- The existing sputum smear microscopy is called 'Cartridge Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (CB-NAAT)'
- These tests are not only time-consuming but do not provide a detailed analysis of resistance developed by the patient to every single mutation in the bacteria

Whole Genome Sequencing

- Whole genome sequencing is the process of determining the complete DNA sequence of an organism's genome at a single time.
- This entails sequencing all of an organism's chromosomal DNA as well as DNA contained in the mitochondria and, for plants, in the chloroplast.

What Is Multidrug Resistant TB?

- MDR TB is a particular type of drug resistant TB.
- It means that the TB bacteria that a person is infected with are resistant to two of the most important TB drugs, isoniazid (INH) and rifampicin (RMP).
- Other set of different drugs then need to be taken by the person if they are to be cured of TB.
- MDR-TB is on the rise because the patients either acquire it from their surroundings or they have not completed the course of their medications.

Know! The UN intervention

- On 26 September 2018, the United Nations (UN) held its first- ever high-level meeting on TB, elevating discussion about the status of the TB epidemic and how to end it to the level of heads of state and government.
- It followed the first global ministerial conference on TB hosted by WHO and the Russian government in November 2017.
- The outcome was a political declaration agreed by all UN Member States, in which existing commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WHO's End TB Strategy were reaffirmed, and new ones added.
- SDG Target 3.3 includes ending the TB epidemic by 2030.

International Affairs: Bangladeshi island Bhasan Char ready to house Rohingya refugees

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Rohingya refugees and about Bhasan Char island) + Mains (GS II international relations)

What's the NEWS

- A Bangladeshi island regularly submerged by monsoon rains is ready to house 100,000 Rohingya refugees, but no date has been announced to relocate people from the crowded and squalid camps where they have lived for years.
- Flood protection embankments, houses, hospitals, and mosques have been built on Bhasan Char, or floating island, in the Bay of Bengal
- The island, 21 miles (34 kilometers) from the mainland, surfaced only 20 years ago and was never inhabited.

Know! more about it

- The island is built to accommodate 100,000 people, just a fraction of the million Rohingya Muslims who have fled waves of violent persecution in their native Myanmar.
- About 700,000 people came after August 2017, when the military in Buddhist-majority Myanmar began a harsh crackdown against Rohingya in response to an attack by insurgents.
- Global rights groups and the UN called the campaign ethnic cleansing involving rapes, killings, and torching of thousands of homes. Foreign media have not been permitted to visit the island.

- The Bangladesh navy has been implementing a multimillion-dollar plan to bolster the swampy island, which is submerged for months during the annual monsoon season.
- International aid agencies and the United Nations have vehemently opposed the relocation plan since it was first proposed in 2015, expressing fear that a big storm could overwhelm the island and endanger thousands of lives.
- The current refugee camps near the beach town of Cox's Bazar are overcrowded and unhygienic. Disease and organized crime are rampant. Education is limited and refugees aren't allowed to work.
- Bangladesh attempted to start sending refugees back to Myanmar under a bilateral framework last November, but no one was willing to go.
- The Rohingya are not recognized as citizens in Myanmar, rendering them stateless, and face other forms of state-sanctioned discrimination.

Government Policies: Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund (TCEPF)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about TCEPF and about TRAI) + 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 Telecom service providers will need to deposit all unclaimed money of consumers, including excess charges and security deposit, in the Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund (TCEPF) as per the recent direction given by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

Know! more about TCEPF

- The authority observed that there is a need to bring clarity among service providers in depositing money which they are unable to refund to the consumers
- TRAI said, adding that while some service providers were depositing money only on account of excess billing and others were depositing unclaimed money such as security deposits and plan charges of failed activations.
- It is prudent to deposit any such unclaimed / unrefundable amount belonging to consumers in the TCEP fund as it will be utilised for the welfare measures of the consumers.
- An amendment in the TCEPF regulation may be carried out to remove any kind of ambiguity and facilitate deposit of any unclaimed money of the consumer such as excess charges, security deposit, plan charges of failed activations, etc.

Know! about TRAI

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is a statutory body set up by the Government of India under section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- It is the regulator of the telecommunications sector in India.
- It consists of a Chairperson and not more than two full-time members and not more than two part-time members.
- The TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000, establishing a Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI

Bilateral Relations: Inaugurate Integrated Check Post at Jogbani-Biratnagar inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the integrated check post) + Mains (GS II Bilateral system)

What's the NEWS

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, along with Prime Minister of Nepal Shri K. P. Sharma Oli jointly inaugurated the second Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Jogbani - Biratnagar

Know! more about it

- Jogbani – Biratnagar is an important trade point between the two countries. The ICP is equipped with modern facilities.

- The second Integrated Check Post at Jogbani - Biratnagar was built with Indian assistance to facilitate trade and people's movement across India-Nepal border. The first was built at the Raxaul-Birgunj border in 2018.

Additional Info: Housing reconstruction projects in Nepal

- Government of India assisted post-earthquake housing reconstruction projects in Nepal.
- Out of Government of India's commitment to build 50,000 houses in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts, 45,000 have already been completed.

Governance: PM to chair PRAGATI meeting

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PRAGATI initiative) + Mains (GS II Good governance)

What's the NEWS

- Prime Minister will chair the 32nd interaction through PRAGATI- the ICT-based, multi-modal platform for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation

Know! more about PRAGTI

- Prime Minister had launched the multi-purpose and multi-modal governance platform PRAGATI on 25th March 2015.
- PRAGATI is an integrating and interactive platform, aimed at addressing the common man's grievances.
- PRAGATI also helps in simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India, as well as projects flagged by various State governments.

Social Issues: 'One nation, one ration card' scheme to be implemented by June 1 across India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about one nation one card) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation + Issues relating to poverty and hunger.)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan announced that the 'One Nation, One Ration Card' scheme will be implemented by June 1 across the country.

Know! more about the scheme

- Under this scheme a beneficiary will be able to avail benefits across the country using the same ration card
- This facility has been started in 12 states in the country on the first day of the New Year.
- Under this facility, the beneficiaries of the public distribution of these states can get their share of rations in any of the 12 states in which they are residing, according to the Union Minister for Food and Public Distribution.
- One of the key advantages of the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme is that beneficiaries will be able to avail their entitled food grain under the National Food Security Act from any Fair Price Shop located across India.
- With the all-India roll-out of the scheme from 1st June 2020, migrants will be able to buy subsidized food grains from any fair price shop across the country, without having to apply for and obtain a new ration card.
- Under the new One Nation One Ration Card scheme, the beneficiary of the scheme will be identified and verified through Aadhaar authentication at the Fair Price Shops on the electronic point of sale (e-POS) devices.
- As per the data provided by PIB, NFSA currently provides coverage for about 81.34 Crore people across the country, who will now be able to take advantage of the One Nation One Ration Card Scheme.

Information Technology: Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurated second edition of NIC Tech Conclave-2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NIC tech conclave) + (GS II e governance + GS III awareness in the field of IT)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad inaugurated the second edition of NIC Tech Conclave-2020
- The two-day event is being organized by the National Informatics Centre.

Know! more about the Conclave

- This Conclave will contribute immensely to the capacity building of Government officers across the country and help in delivering high-quality citizen-centric services.
- This year's theme is Technologies for Next-Gen Governance
- The conclave will cover the latest trends in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) that are applicable for the expansion of various products and platforms of eGovernance.
- The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has been playing a vital role in the smooth application of the Information and Communications Technology at various Government levels.
- The application of ICT has facilitated wider transparency in the services offered to citizens, enhanced the quality of services and enabled data-driven planning & management.

Know! about National Informatics Centre (NIC)

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) is an attached office under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India
- NIC provides infrastructure to help support delivery of Government IT services and delivery of some of the initiatives of Digital India.
- NIC was established in 1976 and is under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Besides establishing a modern ICT Infrastructure, the NIC has been providing e-Governance & Information and Communications Technology (ICT) support to the Government for the last 4 decades.
- NIC is credited with helping the Indian Government embrace IT in the 1990s and has also helped disseminate E-Governance to the masses.

Social Issues: India ranks 76th on WEF's Social Mobility Index, Denmark tops the list

Relevance In – Prelims (about Social Mobility Index and its findings) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- India has been ranked very low at 76th place out of 82 countries on a new Social Mobility Index compiled by the World Economic Forum, while Denmark has topped the charts.

Know! more about the Social Mobility Index findings

- WEF lists India among the five countries that stand to gain the most from a better social mobility score

Measuring countries across five key dimensions distributed over 10 pillars

1. Health
2. Education (access, quality and equity)
3. Technology
4. Work (opportunities, wages, conditions); and
5. Protections and institutions (social protection and inclusive institutions)

- In the case of India, it ranks 76th out of 82 economies. It ranks 41st in lifelong learning and 53rd in working conditions.
- The Areas of improvement for India include social protection (76th) and fair wage distribution (79th).
- The most socially mobile societies in the world, according to the report's Global Social Mobility Index, are all European.

Social Mobility Report

- The Global Social Mobility Index is designed to provide policy-makers with a means to identify areas for improving social mobility and promoting equally shared opportunities in their economies
- The inaugural Social Mobility Report showed that across the Global Social Mobility Index, only a handful of nations across the 82 countries covered have put in place the right conditions to foster social mobility.
- The top five are all Scandinavian, while the five economies with the most to gain from boosting social mobility are China, the United States, India, Japan and Germany.

Bilateral Relations: India, Brazil to sign Strategic Action Plan

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Strategic action plan and about bilateral investment treaty) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- India and Brazil will upgrade their strategic partnership with an “action plan” and sign a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) when Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro visits as the Chief Guest of the Republic Day celebrations from 24-27.
- About 20 agreements set to be exchanged, are the Strategic Partnership Action Plan, along with the BIT, a Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement (MLAT) on crime, agreements on double taxation avoidance, bio-energy or ethanol production, cybersecurity, health, mining, oil and gas exploration and investment, and animal husbandry.

Know! more about the agreements

- The Strategic Partnership Action Plan will serve as an “umbrella agreement”, for plans between the two countries to increase defence cooperation, technology sharing and a logistics agreement.
- The Bilateral Investment treaty will be one of the first that the Modi government will sign since 2015, when it decided to scrap all existing treaties with 83 countries, and brought in a new “Model BIT”.
- Since then India has been able to sign BITs with Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, has concluded an agreement with Cambodia, and is negotiating treaties with about a dozen other countries.
- Brazil and India will also exchange a Social Security Agreement (SSA), first signed in March 2017, to allow investments in each other's pension funds, to help business processes and encourage the flow of investment.

Know! about Bilateral investment Treaties (BITs)

- BITs are agreements between two Countries (States) for the reciprocal promotion and protection of *investments* in each other's territories by individuals and companies situated in either State.
- The first BIT was signed by India on March 14, 1994. Since then till date the government has signed BIT with more than 83 countries.
- In 2015, India has unilaterally terminated bilateral investment treaties with more than 60 countries. There is around 50% of the total unilateral termination of BITs globally from 2010 to 2018
- India has adopted a new inward-looking Model BIT in 2016 that prioritises state interests over protection to foreign investment

10th National Voters' Day to be celebrated on 25th January 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about National voter day)

What's the NEWS

- The National Voters' Day (NVD) has been celebrated on January 25 every year since 2011, all across the country at over ten lakh locations across the nation, that include polling stations areas, sub divisions, divisions, district

and state headquarters, to mark the Foundation day of Election Commission of India, which was established on 25th January 1950.

- This year marks an important milestone in the history of Indian democracy as Election Commission of India (ECI) completes 70 years of its journey.

Know! more about NVD

- The main purpose of the NVD celebration is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrolment, especially for the new voters.
- Dedicated to the voters of the country, the Day is utilized to spread awareness among voters for promoting informed participation in the electoral process.
- New Voters are felicitated and handed over their Elector Photo Identity Card in the NVD function.
- Chief Election Commissioners and delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, who are coming to New Delhi to attend the 10th Annual Meeting of the Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA), shall grace the occasion.
- The theme for NVD 2020 is 'Electoral Literacy for Stronger Democracy'.

The Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about FEMBoSA + about Association of World Election Bodies)

What's the NEWS

- Chief Election Commissioner of India, Shri Sunil Arora assumed Chairmanship of The Forum of the Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of South Asia (FEMBoSA) for the year 2020.

Know! more about FEMBoSA

- FEMBoSA was established at the 3rd Conference of Heads of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of SAARC Countries held at New Delhi in May, 2012.
- With its eight members, FEMBoSA represents a very large part of the democratic world and is an active regional association of EMBs.
- Annual FEMBoSA meeting is held by rotation among the members. The last (9th) annual meeting of FEMBoSA was held in Dhaka in September 2018.
- A New Delhi Resolution was unanimously adopted at the 10th FEMBoSA Annual Meeting by the seven FEMBoSA members present at the meeting.
- The Members resolved to : Implement the Work Plan for 2020 as approved by the member EMBs in the 10th Meeting of FEMBoSA
- An International Conference was also organised on the theme "Strengthening Institutional Capacity", where nearly 30 delegates gathered to attend the International Conference.
- On this occasion, Election Commissioners of India launched the 10th issue of ECI's magazine – 'VOICE International' which carries articles on the theme of "Innovative Methods of Voter Registration".

Association of World Election Bodies

- In September 2019, ECI took over as Chair of the 115 member Association of World Election Bodies for 2019-21 term.
- The Association of World Election Bodies, commonly referred to as 'A-WEB,' was established on October 14, 2013 in Song-do, South Korea.
- A-WEB is the first global organization of election management bodies, and the membership currently consists of 115 members.
- Under the slogan of 'Democracy to Grow for All Worldwide,' the A-WEB Secretariat provides training programs for election officials of member nations and undertakes country programs at the request of member organization, providing support during the election cycle to boost election management capacity.
- The current chairman is Sunil Arora from Republic of India.

Bilateral Relations: Inaugural Ganga-Volga Dialogue of Civilizations between India and Russia held in New Delhi

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the inaugural dialogue + important takeaways) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- The maiden Ganga Volga Dialogue (Track 1.5) held recently in Delhi was conceptualized during the October 2018 India-Russia Summit between President Putin and Prime Minister Modi.

Know! about the Dialogue (key takeaways)

- The Ganga-Volga Dialogue of Civilizations between experts from India and Russia addressed upon the existing and emerging spheres of bilateral cooperation between the two countries in matter relating to education, culture and civilization, entrepreneurship, innovation and trade routes, among other matters.
- The Ganga-Volga Civilizations Dialogue was organized by the Ministry of External Affairs of India in cooperation with Doctor Syama Prasad Mukherjee Research Foundation.
- The dominant theme of the discussions was Connectivity.
- The Dialogue discussed the impact of a rapidly changing international situation on India-Russia relations.
- Special emphasis was placed on implementing the decisions agreed to at the 20th India-Russia Summit in Vladivostok in September 2019, including the utilization of the \$1 billion Line of Credit extended by India for development of Russia's Far East by Indian companies.
- The role of the two major river systems of the Ganga and Volga in providing the framework for a host of activities including in culture and civilization, development of economic activity using riverine systems, and connecting people from the two river basins was highlighted.
- The significance of the focus on water, and on maritime issues, was put in the context of the political priorities of India and Russia.
- This included cooperation in the framework of India's SAGAR Indian Ocean policy, environmental issues including water conservation and management, and climate change.
- Discussions on the Indo-Pacific endorsed the inclusive framework of cooperation in the Indian and Pacific Oceans contained in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018, and the possible role of Russia as a partner of India in the Indian Ocean, including in developing the Blue Economy.

Know! the key terms associated with this dialogue

Russia's Far East

- At the fifth summit of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) on September 4-6 in Vladivostok, Modi pledged a \$1 billion Line of Credit for development of the Russian Far East.
- The Russian Far East stretches from Lake Baikal, the world's largest freshwater lake, to the Pacific Ocean and comprises roughly a third of Russia's territory.
- Although it is rich in natural resources including minerals, hydrocarbons, timber and fish, it is an economically underdeveloped region.



- The region faces several challenges, including a harsh climate, sparse population, increasing outmigration, poor infrastructure and lacking connectivity. These have contributed to keeping the Russian Far East largely underdeveloped.
- In 2015, Putin set up the EEF to draw investment into the Far East and to integrate the region with East Asian economies.
- 2019 is the first time that India has participated in the EEF
- India opened a consulate in Vladivostok in 1992, the first country in the world to do so.
- India and Russia are also looking to open a maritime route linking Vladivostok with the southern Indian city of Chennai.

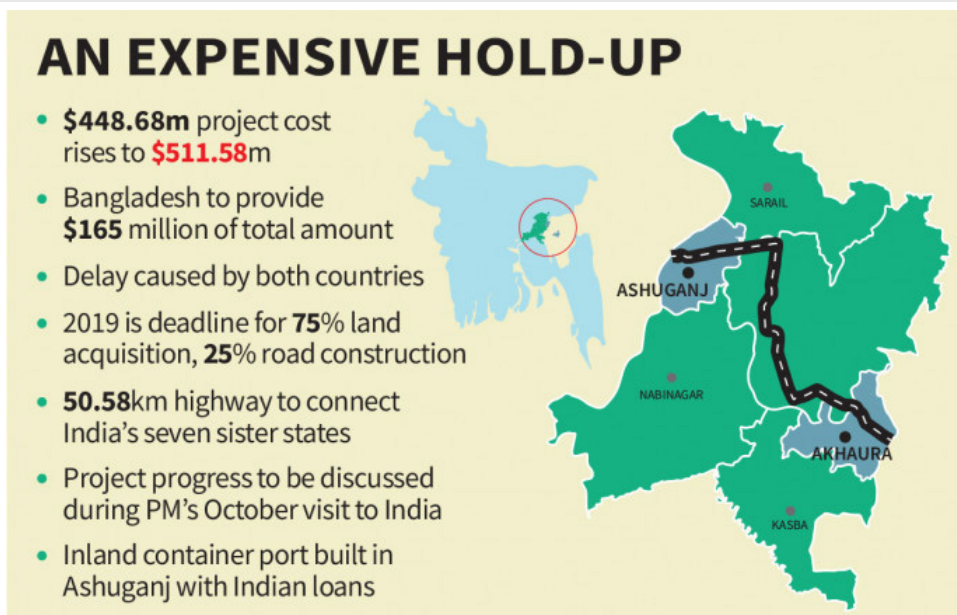
The Shangri-La Dialogue

- The IISS Asia Security Summit: The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD) is a “Track One” inter-governmental security forum held annually by an independent think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) which is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of 28 Asia-Pacific states.
- The forum gets its name from the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore where it has been held since 2002.

SAGAR Programme (Security and Growth for All in the Region)

- It is a maritime initiative which gives priority to Indian Ocean region for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity of India in Indian Ocean region.
- The term SAGAR is coined by PM Modi in 2015 during his Mauritius visit with a focus on blue economy
- The goal is to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime issues; and increase in maritime cooperation.

India, Bangladesh sign agreement to upgrade Ashuganj-Akhaura road into 4-lane highway



Relevance IN – Prelims (geographical location of Ashuganj and the Akhaura) + Mains (GS II Bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- India and Bangladesh signed an agreement to upgrade the 50.58-kilometre long road between Ashuganj river port and the Akhaura land port in Bangladesh into a 4-lane highway.

Know! more about it

- The deal to upgrade the 39 km long road between Ashuganj river port to Dharhar area was signed between the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) of Bangladesh and an Indian Company Afcons Infrastructure Limited.
- The RHD and an India-Bangladesh joint venture firm will take up the work of upgrading the remaining part of the road from Dharhar to Akhaura.
- The project is part of the dollar 2 billion second line of credit extended by India to Bangladesh in 2016.
- The project will boost connectivity between Bangladesh and North-eastern part of India which will facilitate sub-regional connectivity among South and South-east Asian countries.

Centre-State Relations: West Bengal Passes Anti-CAA Resolution, Becomes 4th State To Do So

Relevance IN – Prelims(about CAA and resolution passed by countries) + **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 Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government became the fourth state to pass a resolution against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in the Assembly.
- Following suit of Kerala, Rajasthan and Punjab, the resolution moved by the Trinamool Congress government appeals to the Centre to repeal the amended citizenship law and revoke plans to implement NRC and update NPR.
- Three states - **Kerala, Rajasthan and Punjab** - have already passed resolutions against the CAA amid nationwide protests against the law.
- Kerala was the first state to pass a resolution demanding the withdrawal of the CAA law.
- The West Bengal state assembly had previously passed a similar resolution against NRC in September 2019.

The Citizenship Amendment Act

- The Citizenship Amendment Act allows non-Muslim illegal migrants who came to India on or before December 31, 2014 to escape religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to gain Indian citizenship.
- The implementation of the law has led to protests across the nation.
- The main aim behind the introduction of the law is to help the religious minorities facing persecution in the Muslim-dominated neighbouring nations.

Centre- State Relations: Andhra Pradesh Assembly passes resolution to abolish Legislative Council

Relevance IN – Prelims(about legislative council + about bicameral legislation) + **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 **Andhra Pradesh legislative assembly** unanimously passed a resolution to **abolish the state legislative council**.
- The state cabinet had approved the resolution earlier in the day. The proposal will now be sent to the centre for further action.
- The resolution was passed with 133 members voting in favour of it.
- The proposal will now be sent to the central government, which will be required to take up further action on the matter.
- The move came after Reddy's government failed to pass two crucial bills in the upper house of the legislature.

- The bills were related to the government's plan of having three different capitals for the state- Legislative, judicial and executive capitals.

Know! all about Legislative Council

- The Legislative Council is the upper house in the state legislature. Similar to the Rajya Sabha, the council is a permanent house, which means that it cannot be dissolved. Only the state legislative assembly can be dissolved.
- The Parliament is the sole authority that can provide for the abolishment of a state legislative council or creation of a council in a state that has no council till now.
- The Parliament can pass the law if the state legislative assembly passes a resolution proposing the abolishment of the council by a majority of the total membership of the assembly and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of members present and voting.
- **Assam** was the first state to abolish its state legislative council in 1947
- After Assam, West Bengal had abolished its legislative council in 1969 and Punjab abolished it in 1970.
- The state **legislative council of Andhra Pradesh** was also abolished previously in 1985 and was revived again in 2006.

Bicameral Legislatures in India

- Presently, Seven Indian States such as **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Jammu-Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh**, have bicameral Legislatures, these are called legislative councils (Vidhan Parishad), one third of whom are elected every two years, there are graduate constituencies (members elected exclusively by graduates), teachers constituencies (members elected exclusively by teachers), municipal constituencies (members elected exclusively by Mayors and council members of the city Governments).

Governance: Gadkari gives 'GATI' to monitor Rs 3 lakh crore road projects

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

What's the NEWS

- Giving more teeth to the digital monitoring the union ministry of road transport and highways has launched an online portal 'GATI'.

Know! more about the portal and its benefits

- The new portal created by NHAI on the lines of PRAGATI portal used by PMO can be accessed from NHAI website and contractors, concessionaires can raise any project related issues on it.
- All the issues brought to the notice through the new portal will be immediately taken up by the top NHAI officials
- One can reach the GATI portal via NHAI website or it can be directly used.
- People can raise projects or construction-related issued on this portal. Not only this, the problem raised will be monitored daily by a team of officers in NHAI.
- Issues raised on GATI portal will be monitored daily by a team of officers in NHAI and will be constantly reviewed by the senior officers of NHAI and the ministry of road transport and highways.
- This will bring transparency and speed up the decision making giving real GATI to highway construction

Centre- State Relations: Tribal Affairs Ministry proposes 6th Schedule Area status to Ladakh

Relevance IN – Prelims (about sixth schedule and its provisions) + Mains (GS II Centre-State relations + Social Justice)

What's the NEWS

- Union Tribal Affairs Ministry has proposed 6th Schedule Area status to Union Territory of Ladakh.
- A proposal has been sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide sixth schedule status to the Ladakh.

- It was said in the proposal that the Tribal Ministry will look after all requirements to enrich and preserve the legacy of Ladakh.

Know! more about Sixth Schedule

- The Four states of North East India got tribal status under the sixth schedule.
- They come under the Ministry of State Home Affairs. However, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram have been declared as tribal areas under the Fifth Schedule. These states come under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution makes separate arrangements for the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. Article 244A was added to the constitution through the 22nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1969.
- It was passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949 and it empowers Parliament to establish an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas of Assam and for local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both can create.
- It provides the power of the enactment of autonomous district councils (ADCs) to protect the rights of tribal populations. ADCs are those bodies representing the district. These bodies have been given autonomy within the state assembly.
- The Sixth Schedule grants considerable autonomy to tribal communities.
- The District Council and the Regional Council gets the real power to make laws. These bodies can sanction funds from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet the costs of schemes for development, health care, education, roads and regulatory powers in the area.
- The people of Ladakh want to get tribal status so that people from other parts of the country do not come and settle there. It will also protect their demographic recognition. The sixth schedule will also protect the natives' privilege on the land.

Government Schemes: Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli district tops Niti's ranking in December

Relevance IN – Prelims (about aspiration districts and delta ranking) + 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

- Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh has topped the list of aspirational districts ranked by the government think tank Niti Aayog in December.
- Belangir (Odisha) and YSR (Andhra Pradesh) have been placed at the second and third positions, respectively
- Sahibganj (Jharkhand) has been ranked at the fourth spot and Hailakandi(Assam) at the fifth place.

Know! more about delta ranking and aspirational districts

- The delta rankings took into account incremental progress made by over 112 aspirational districts across six developmental areas in December 2019.
- Health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion, skill development and basic infrastructure were the development areas that were taken into consideration for the ranking.
- Aspirational districts programme, launched in January 2018, aims to transform districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas and have emerged as pockets of under-development.
- The ranking of aspirational districts is done every month.

Social Issues: Composite Regional Center for Skill Development, Rehabilitation & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (CRC) inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CRC and its objective) + Mains (GS II Social issues 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 Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot addressing the gathering at the inauguration of a Composite Regional Centre (CRC) for skill development, rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities, at Brookshabad, in Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar on January



Know! more about CRC

- The Ministry for Social Justice & Empowerment inaugurated the Composite Regional Center for Skill Development, Rehabilitation & Empowerment of Persons with disabilities
- All kinds of facilities (aids and appliances) will be made available for the divyangjan in the Center, beside providing education and skill development trainings to them with the objective to empower them and enable them to be economically self reliant and serve their parents.

Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016

- The Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016', which came into force in 2016, providing 5% reservation in Govt. and Govt. aided institutions of higher education for divyang to pursue higher education in all disciplines

Health Sector: Cabinet approves official amendments to National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill

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

What's the NEWS

- The union cabinet approved amendments to the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019 (NCIM), which is pending in the Rajya Sabha.

Know! about the proposed amendments and how it will benefit

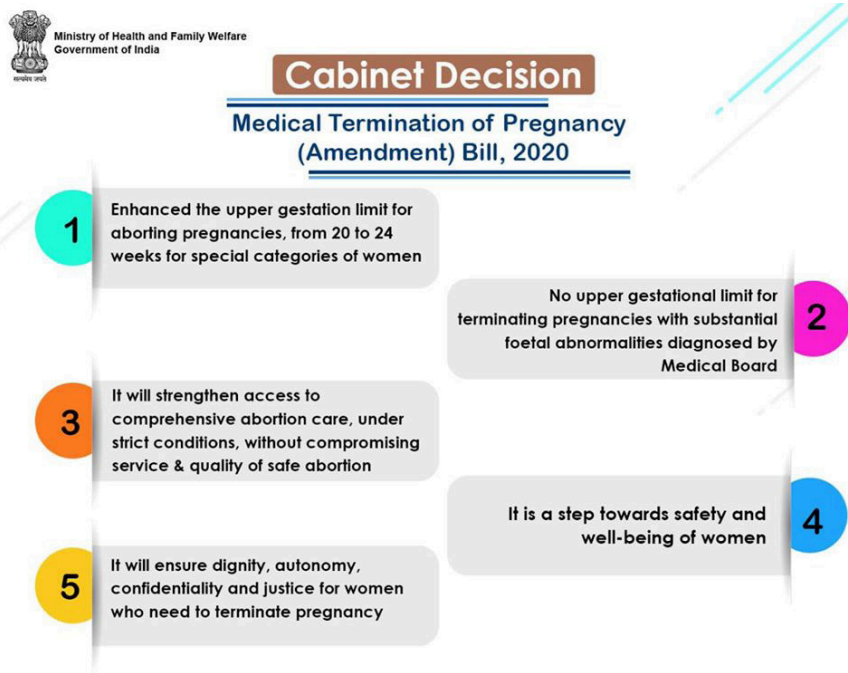
- The proposed legislation will ensure necessary regulatory reforms in the field of Indian System of Medicine education.
- It said the proposed regulatory structure will enable transparency and accountability for protecting the interest of the general public.
- The commission will promote the availability of affordable healthcare services in all parts of the country.
- It has been structured to streamline the functions related to academic standards, evaluation, assessment and accreditation of educational institutions pertaining to Indian System of Medicine
- The main objective of establishing NCIM is to promote equity by ensuring an adequate supply of quality medical professionals and enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services in the Indian System of Medicine.

Social Justice: Union Cabinet approves amendments to Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill

Relevance IN – Prelims (facts related to the amendments to medical termination of pregnancy bill) + Mains (GS II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resource + GS III Social justice)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which will amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The bill will be introduced in the upcoming budget session of the Parliament, which will begin on February 1, 2020.
- For Medical termination of pregnancy, permission will be needed, from two doctors and one of them must be a government doctor.
- The limit of termination of pregnancy has been increased from 20 weeks to 24 weeks.
- The Bill aim to expand women's access to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, social and humanitarian grounds.



Know! more about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Amendment bill

- The bill proposes requirement for an opinion from one provider for termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion from two providers for termination of pregnancy up to 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- The amended bill proposes increasing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women such as vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and others such as differently-abled women and minors.
- Under the amendment bill, the upper gestation limit will not apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by the Medical Board.
- Further, the name and other details of the woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised by the law.
- Recently several petitions were received by the Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at a gestational age beyond the present permissible limit on grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women.
- The proposed increase in gestational age will ensure dignity, autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate pregnancy.

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Space Awareness: China Successfully Launches Its Heaviest Satellite On Powerful Long March-5 Rocket

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Long March -5) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- China's biggest and most powerful carrier rocket, the Long March 5, kicked off its latest space mission on Friday night in Hainan province. It was carrying the largest satellite ever built domestically.
- The Long March-5, China's most powerful rocket and a critical ingredient in the nation's ambitious space programme, can carry a maximum payload of 25 tonnes into low Earth orbit and 14 tonnes into geosynchronous orbit.
- The successful launch is a major step forward for its planned mission to Mars in 2020.

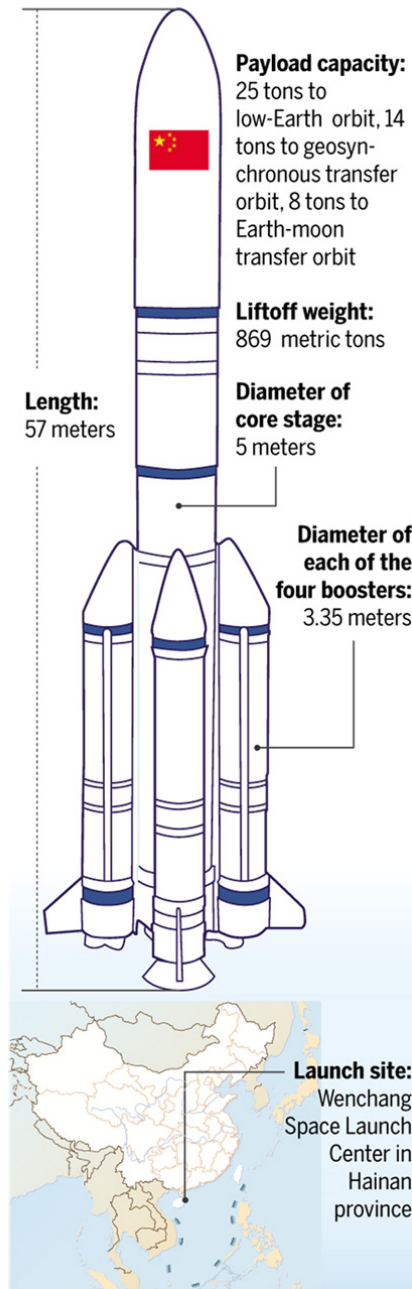
Know! more about it

- The satellite will carry out orbit experiments for a series of key technologies
- It will demonstrate in orbit its heat transfer technology based on cryogenic loop heat pipes, an efficient thermal control device for space applications, to lay the foundation for the development of highly sensitive space probes.
- The satellite will test the controllable deformation of shape memory polymers, a type of smart material that can switch between temporary shapes, to pave the way for the development of large variable space structures.
- It will also carry out satellite-ground communication tests using Q/V bands, which lie between 33-75 GHz, within the extremely high frequency (EHF) area of the radio spectrum.
- These frequencies are used mainly for satellite communications.

Benefits of Q/V Band

- The major way to improve satellite communication capacity is to expand the bandwidth of the available frequency bands.
- If we liken the geostationary orbit to an expressway, which is now the most crowded in space, the use of Q/V bands will help to widen the expressway by four to five times
- The test is key to the development of the next generation of high throughput satellites capable of delivering 1Tbps bandwidth for ultrafast speeds

Long March 5:



Most powerful space rockets (including retired models):

(R) retired (A) active service

1. Saturn V, (R) the United States, 110.6 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 140 metric tons, first launched in 1967



2. Energi, (R) former Soviet Union, 60 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 100 tons, first launched in 1987



3. Falcon Heavy, (A) US, 70 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 63.8 tons, first launched in 2018



4. Delta IV Heavy, (A) US, 72 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 28.8 tons, first launched in 2004



5. Long March 5, (A) China (top)

6. Angara A5, (A) Russia, 64 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 24.5 tons, first launched in 2014



7. Falcon 9, (A) US, 70 meters tall, payload capacity to low-Earth orbit 22.8 tons.



Economic Development: Finance Minister Sitharaman launches 'eBkray' auction platform for assets attached by banks

UPCOMING AUCTIONS

DURATION	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	INDUSTRIAL
Within Next 7 Days	131	42	11
Within Next 30 Days	583	189	55

Search Property | FAQs | Visitors: 1433775

Indian Banks Auctions Mortgaged Properties Information (IBAPI) portal is an initiative of Indian Banks Association (IBA) under the overarching policy of the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance to provide a common platform to display details of mortgaged properties to be auctioned online by Banks, starting with Public Sector Banks.

Prospective buyers may use this portal to search and view details of properties and participate in the auction process.

Relevance IN – Prelims (about eBkray) + Mains (GS III Economic developments)

What's the NEWS

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched eBkray, an e-auction platform to enable online auction of attached assets by banks.

Know! more about eBkray

- The eBkray platform provides navigational links to all PSB e-auction sites, property search feature and presents single-window access to information on properties up for e-auction, comparison of similar properties, and also contains videos and photographs of the uploaded properties.
- Indian Banks Auctions Mortgaged Properties Information (IBAPI) portal is an initiative of Indian Banks Association (IBA) under the policy of the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance, to provide details of mortgaged properties to be auctioned online by banks, starting with PSBs.
- There has been information asymmetry when bank attached assets are auctioned which will come to an end with the launch eBkray.
- Buyers can use IBAPI portal to search and get properties details and participate in the auction process. Presently 21 banks are onboard on this portal
- As on December 27, 2019, a total of 35,000 properties had been uploaded on the e-auction platform by PSBs
- Currently, there are 2,457 residential, 576 commercial, 333 industrial and 18 agricultural properties are available on eBkray platform among others.
- PSBs have attached assets worth over Rs 2.3 lakh crore in the last three fiscal years.
- The purpose of this portal is to enhance user experience through seamless access to information by the search based on the type and location of the property put up for e-auction by the banks in India.
- The platform also helps the buyer to easily navigate to the bank e-auction site after a notified property is selected. It also helps the user to search property using State-wise, District-wise and bank-wise details.

Space Awareness: ISRO Upcoming Projects



Relevance IN – Prelims (about ISRO upcoming projects) + Mains (GS III space awareness)

What's the NEWS

- The Chairman Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Dr K Sivan briefed media at a Press Meet organised at ISRO Headquarters, Bengaluru

Know! ISRO's achievements during the last one year and the plans to be accomplished during the current year.

- During 2019, six launch vehicle and seven satellite missions were realised by ISRO.
- The year also marked the 50th launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- Two new variants of the PSLV were introduced. (PSLV-QL and PSLV-DL)
- For the first time, the spent fourth stage of the PSLV was successfully demonstrated as an experimental orbital platform.
- Indigenously developed Vikram processor by Semi-Conductor Laboratory was flight tested during the year.
- International mobile standards body 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) approved India's regional navigation satellite system NavIC which would facilitate NavIC's use in mobile phones.
- A second launch port, exclusively for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), is planned to be established in Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu.
- A second Vehicle Assembly Building in SDSC SHAR Sriharikota was dedicated to the nation during the year for increasing the launch frequency.
- A special programme for school children called "YuvaVigyanikAryakram (YUVIKA)" aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications was also introduced during the last year.
- To carry forward the industry production of space systems, ISRO incorporated New Space India Limited (NSIL), under the Department of Space and efforts in realising PSLVs from industry initiated.

Future programmes

- Chandrayaan-3 mission to the moon, comprising a lander and a rover is approved by the Government and activities for its realisation are in progress.
- India's first human space flight mission Gaganyaan (Updates)
- The process of Astronaut selection for the mission is completed
- Four astronauts have been selected, who will undergo extensive training.
- Other projects during the year include SSLV, GSLV with 4m ogive payload fairing, GSAT-20 satellite, NavIC with indigenous atomic clocks, Indian Data Relay Satellite System, Aditya-L1 and XPOSAT.

- ISRO has planned 25 missions for 2020.
- It was also informed during a press conference that the cost of the Chandrayaan-3 mission will be about 250 crores and its launch can be done next year.

Economic Development: RBI launches mobile app MANI for visually challenged to identify currency notes

2 easy steps for the visually impaired to identify the denomination of a currency note.

1 Download and install the MANI app

2 Open the app and point the camera of the mobile phone to the currency note

RBI launches the MANI App (Mobile Aided Note Identifier) Empowering the visually impaired.

- Identifies denomination of Mahatma Gandhi Series and Mahatma Gandhi (New) series banknotes
- Identification by audio notification in Hindi and English and vibration mode
- After downloading, internet is not required and works in offline mode
- Available on both Android Play Store and iOS App Store without any charges/payment

The mobile application does not authenticate the note as genuine or counterfeit

For more details, give a missed call to 14440 or visit www.rbi.org.in/MANI
For feedback on this advertisement, write to rbikehtaha@rbi.org.in

RBI Kehta Hai... Jaankaar Baniye, Satark Rahiye!

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Relevance IN – Prelims (about MANI app)

HIGHLIGHTS

The mobile app MANI was launched following reports of problems faced by visually-challenged persons in identifying the new currency notes launched after demonetization

The application also work offline once installed

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das launched a mobile app to help visually-impaired people to identify the denomination of currency notes.

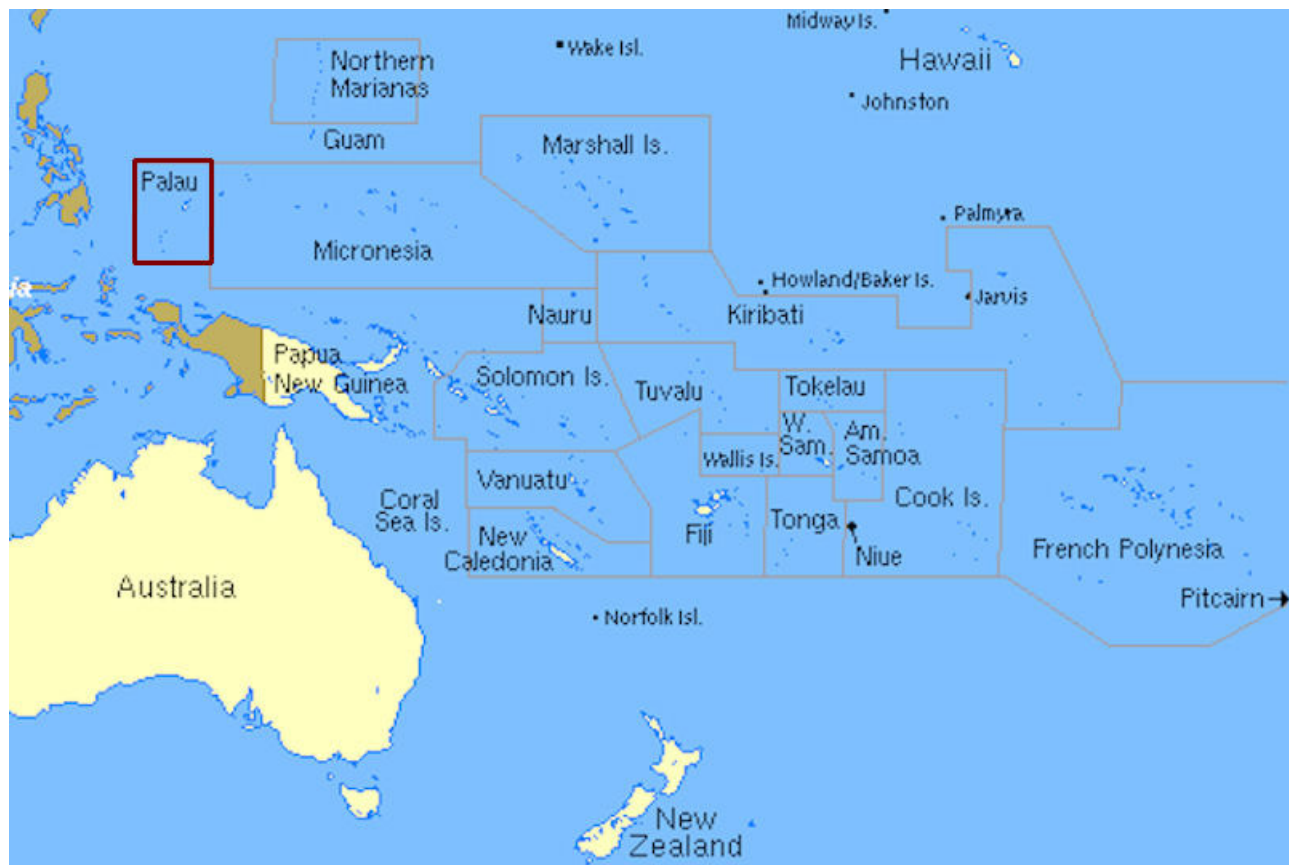
Know! more about MANI App

- Now, the visually challenged people can identify the denomination of a currency note by using the mobile app, the RBI said. The application also works offline once installed, the central bank added.
- Users can freely download the app, called 'MANI' (Mobile Aided Note Identifier), from Android Playstore or iOS App Store.

- The application can scan the currency notes using the camera of the mobile phone. It also gives audio output in Hindi and English.
- The central bank has introduced several currency notes, under 'Mahatma Gandhi Series', with significant changes in the sizes and designs after the demonetization in November 2016.
- Under the new series, banknotes of ₹10, ₹20, ₹50, ₹100, ₹200, ₹500 and ₹2,000 have been released in the past couple of years. However, there were reports of problems faced by visually-challenged people in identifying these new currency notes.
- The RBI also said the app does not authenticate a note as either genuine or counterfeit.

Environment Conservation: Palau sunscreen ban: Pacific island becomes first nation to prohibit varieties considered toxic

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the prohibition of varieties considered toxic + Palau geographical location) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)



What's the NEWS

- The tiny Pacific island nation of Palau has become the first country in the world to ban sunscreen considered toxic to coral reefs.

Know! more about it

- Palau, which lies in the western Pacific about halfway between Australia and Japan, is renowned for its marine life and is regarded as one of the world's best diving destinations, but the government is concerned its popularity is coming at a cost.
- There was scientific evidence that the chemicals found in most sunscreens were toxic to corals, even in minute doses.
- Toxic sunscreen chemicals have been found throughout Palau's critical habitats, and in the tissues of our most famous creatures

- With Palau's popular dive sites regularly packed with tourists, there were concerns a build-up of these chemicals would irreparably harm the reefs.
- From New Year's Day, any reef-toxic sunscreen imported or sold in Palau will be confiscated and the owner will be fined US\$1,000 (€893).
- On 1 January the island's waters also became a marine sanctuary, one of the world's largest, closing 80% of its exclusive economic zone to fishing and other marine activities. The marine sanctuary prohibits commercial fishing in about 500,000 square kilometres (190,000 square miles) of ocean.
- The legislation also requires most foreign fleets working in the limited fishing area to land their catch in Palau and then pay an export tax.
- The law ensures Palau has first rights to purchase fish caught in the area to satisfy the local demand before exports are allowed.
- In 2009, pioneering Palau established the world's first shark sanctuary, to prevent finning – a practice that sees sharks having their fins hacked off before they are thrown back into the sea to die.

Know! about Coral reef

- A coral reef is an underwater ecosystem characterized by reef-building corals. Reefs are formed of colonies of coral polyps held together by calcium carbonate. Most coral reefs are built from stony corals, whose polyps cluster in groups.
- Coral belongs to the class Anthozoa in the animal phylum Cnidaria, which includes sea anemones and jellyfish.
- Unlike sea anemones, corals secrete hard carbonate exoskeletons that support and protect the coral.
- Most reefs grow best in warm, shallow, clear, sunny and agitated water.

Science and Technology: PM dedicates 5 DRDO Young Scientists Laboratories to the Nation



Relevance IN – Prelims (about DRDO young scientists laboratories and its objectives) + Mains (GS III Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology. Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology)

What's the NEWS

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation 5 Young Scientists Laboratories of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
- DRDO Young Scientist Laboratories (DYSLs) are located in five cities viz, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad.

Know! more about it

- Each lab will work on a key advanced technology of importance to the development of futuristic defence systems viz, Artificial intelligence, Quantum technologies, Cognitive technologies, Asymmetric technologies and Smart materials.
- DRDO to empower the youth, by giving them decision making powers and challenging research opportunities.
- These labs would help in shaping the pattern of research and development in the field of emerging technologies in the country.
- The Government is willing to walk the extra mile with the scientific community so that it can invest time in emerging technologies and innovations for national security.
- DRDO's innovations would play a huge role in strengthening programmes like Make in India and in promoting a vibrant defence sector in the country.
- The establishment of the five DRDO Young Scientist Labs lays down the foundation for research and development of futuristic technologies.
- It will be a big leap forward for DRDO from the goal of making India self reliant to future ready in defence technologies.
- Research in the area of rapidly evolving **Artificial Intelligence** will be carried out at Bengaluru.
- The all-important area of **Quantum Technology** will be based out of IIT Mumbai.
- The future is dependent on **Cognitive Technologies** and IIT Chennai will house the lab embarking in this area of research.
- New and futuristic area of **Asymmetric Technologies**, which will change the way wars are fought, will be based out of the campus of Jadavpur University, Kolkata.
- The research in the **hot and critical area of Smart Materials** and their applications will be based out of Hyderabad.

Disaster Management: Disaster Response Mechanisms

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the steps taken by the government to strengthen the disaster response mechanism + about Subhash Chandra Bose Award) + Mains (GS III Disaster Management)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah dedicated to the Nation the new campus of the National Fire Service College (NFSC) in Nagpur
- He also laid the foundation of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Academy at Nagpur.
- Shri Shah also announced Subhash Chandra Bose Award in the field of Disaster Management.
- The government has given importance to institutionalise the capacity building in the field of Fire Services and National Disaster Management by building dedicated institutions like NFSC and NDRF Academy
- Though fire services is a State subject, all States would have a better coordination with the Centre to fight fire disasters through the NFSC.
- NDRF has emerged as the leading disaster management force globally and it has achieved all benchmarks under Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- India has been able to reduce the loss of lives to less than 1% in the comparisons to that of past

Steps taken by the government to optimize the disaster response Mechanism

- Optimization of disaster management resources at the district level.
- Efforts of NDRF being the first responder during disasters in our neighbouring countries and how it is getting accolades for India from its neighbours.
- India has become the hub for training disaster management personnel in the SAARC region and expressed hope that this will facilitate exchange of best practices and minimise the effects of disasters on the people.

Know! about Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

- The award will be announced every year on the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- All Indian Citizens and organizations who have excelled in areas of Disaster Management like Prevention, Mitigation, Preparedness, Rescue, Response, Relief, Rehabilitation and Early Warning will be eligible for the award.
- The Award carries a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakh.

Science & Technology: Prime Minister inaugurates 107th Indian Science Congress



Relevance IN – Prelims (all about ISC 2019) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of S&T)

What's the NEWS

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 107th Indian Science Congress (ISC) at University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru.
- Theme of 107th ISC - “Science and Technology: Rural Development”
- The ICS is to be hosted by Department of Science and Technology.
- The five-day summit is expected to witness participation from several policymakers, scientists, academicians, inventors and politicians from across the world.
- Two Nobel Prize winners, Stefan Hell and Ada Yonath are also expected to attend the congress and conduct lectures.

Objective

- The 107th Indian Science Congress aims to bridge the gap between farmer and tech-developers.
- ISC will provide the desired platform to the farmers who introduced innovations in agriculture.

Some achievements done by India in the field of S&T

- India now stands at 3rd position globally, in the number of Peer-reviewed Science and Engineering Publications.
- India published 5.31 per cent of such publications worldwide (2008-2018), while China topped the list with 20.67 per cent followed by the United States (16.54 per cent), according to a recent release by the US National Science Foundation.
- India, though, clocked the highest growth rate among the three at 10 per cent. The country also moved to 52 from 57 on the global innovation index.

P. M inaugural statement

- Four interrelated processes — innovate, patent, produce and prosper — would lead to faster development. For this, both technology and logical temperament was required

- The Prime Minister also asked scientists and innovators for solutions to the most pressing problems facing India and the world, including:
 1. Better management of water resources
 2. Finding alternatives to plastic
 3. Extraction of resources from e-waste
 4. Reuse of kitchen and farm waste
 5. Better energy storage in batteries
 6. Innovation in health care and medical devices
 7. Sustainable energy
 8. Transportation infrastructure

I-STEM portal launch

- The Prime Minister launched the Indian Scientific, Technology and Engineering facilities Map (I-STEM) Portal on this occasion.
- The portal has been designed to be the gateway for researchers to locate a specific type of facility they require to conduct their research and development work in India.

Know! more about ISC 2019

- The Indian Science Congress has a special focus on rural development through science and technology and for the first time, Congress includes a Farmers' Science Congress.
- Other events include Children's Science Congress, Women Science Congress and former Vice-Chancellors' Science Congress.

Children's Science Congress

- motivate students and increase their participation in scientific and technological fields.

Women Science Congress

- showcasing women achievements.

Vice-Chancellors' Science Congress

- address the need of higher education institutions.

Infrastructure Development: Charging Stations under Fame II scheme

Relevance IN – Prelims (about FAME India + about charging technologies) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The Department of Heavy Industries has sanctioned 2,636 charging stations under the FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India) scheme phase II.
- These stations are spread over 62 cities across 24 States and Union Territories
- Of these 2,636 charging stations, 1,633 Charging Stations will be Fast Charging Stations and 1,003 will be slow charging stations.

Know! more about it

- In all, 317 EV charging stations have been allotted in Maharashtra, 266 in Andhra Pradesh, 256 in Tamil Nadu, 228 in Gujarat, and 205 in Rajasthan.
- Another 207 have been sanctioned in Uttar Pradesh, 172 in Karnataka, 159 in Madhya Pradesh, and 141 in West Bengal.
- In future at least one charging station will be available in most of the selected cities in a grid of 4 km X 4 km.
- It will boost the confidence of users of Electric Vehicles and also encourage the OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) to launch the new electric vehicle models.

Charging Technologies India has planned to use three charging technologies.

- It includes CHAdeMO, Indian Bharat Standard and Combined Charging System

- India will deploy both **CHAdEMO** and Combined Charging System (CCS) fast-charging technologies, besides the existing Bharat Standard, at its public electric vehicle charging stations.
- CHAdEMO is a quick charging method that delivers up to 62.5 KW by 500 volt and 125 ampere DC (Direct Current).
- The CCS involves both DC and AC charging.
- Bharat Standard is a low voltage charging technology (72 volts – 200 volts).
- The CCS and CHAdEMO chargers are high voltage chargers (200 volt and above).

Know! about FAME Indian

- FAME India is Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) and Electric Vehicles.
- The objective of the scheme is to increase the use of electric and hybrid vehicles by offering incentives.
- The phase I of the scheme was launched on April 1, 2015 with an allocated budget of Rs 895 crores.
- The phase I of the scheme was launched on April 1, 2015 with an allocated budget of Rs 895 crores.
- The phase II was launched on April 1, 2019 with an allocated budget of Rs 10,000 crores.

Environment Conservation: Assam state zoo first to breed endangered Hargila



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Greater Adjutant)

What's the NEWS

- The Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden and Aaranyak NGO has jointly attained a landmark achievement by successfully hatching a pair of Greater Adjutant chicks in an artificial platform within the zoo enclosure, in the first ever experiment of its kind.
- This is the first ever such experiment on breeding Greater Adjutant stork inside a Zoo and success of this project shows that captive breeding of this species is possible in the near future.

Know! about Endangered Greater Adjutant stork (Leptoptilos dubius)

- The Endangered Greater Adjutant stork (Leptoptilos dubius) is one of the rarest species of Storks out of twenty species of Storks in the world.
- In India, eight species of residential storks are found, out of which Greater Adjutant is one of them.
- Once abundantly distributed in Southeast Asia, this stork is now restricted to a few isolated pockets in Assam and Bihar in India and Prek Toal in Cambodia.

Economic Development: Nirmala Sitharaman unveils ₹102 lakh crore national infrastructure plan

Relevance IN – Prelims (facts about the national infrastructure pipeline) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today unveiled a ₹102 lakh crore national infrastructure pipeline, in accordance with the government's vision to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25.
- The finance ministry had set up a task force headed by Economic Affairs Secretary to prepare a road map for the "national infrastructure pipeline" from 2019-20 to 2024-25 under the ₹100 lakh crore infra plan.

Key benefits of the NIP



Economy

Well-planned NIP will enable more infra projects, grow businesses, create jobs, improve **ease of living**, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, making growth more inclusive



Government

Well-developed infrastructure enhances level of economic activity, creates additional fiscal space by **improving revenue base of the government**, and **ensures quality of expenditure focused in productive areas**



Developers

Provides better view of project supply, provides time to be **better prepared for project bidding**, reduces aggressive bids/ failure in project delivery, ensures enhanced access to sources of finance as result of increased investor confidence

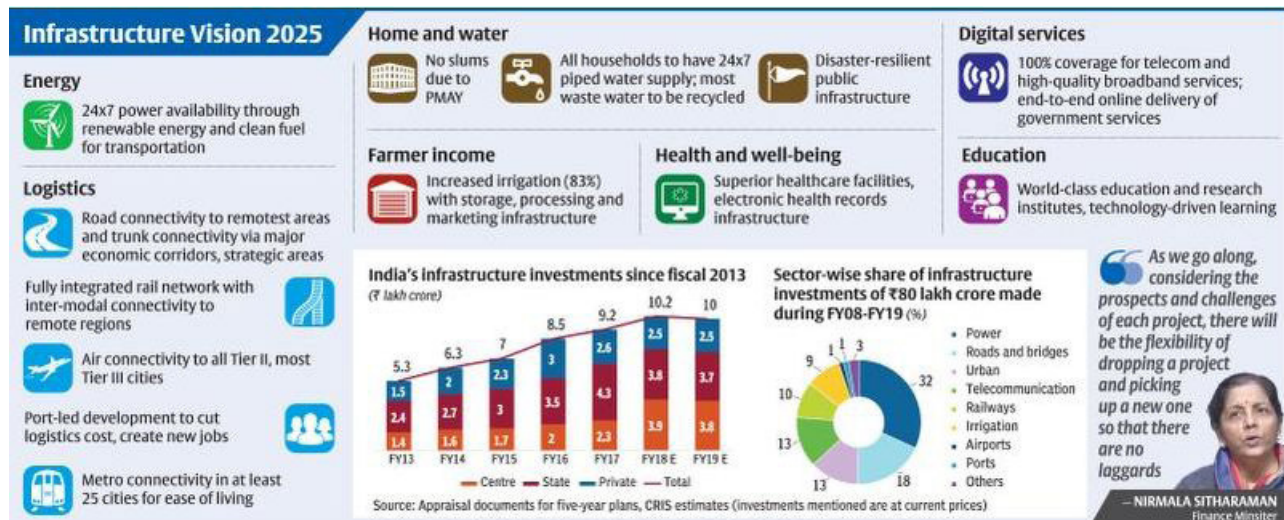


Banks/ financial institutions (FIs)/ investors

Builds investor confidence as identified projects are likely to be better prepared, exposures less likely to suffer stress given active project monitoring, thereby **less likelihood of NPAs**

Know! the important highlights

- Power, railways, urban irrigation, mobility, education, health form bulk of infra project pipeline
- The private companies will account for 22%-25% of the investments and the balance will come from the Centre and the states in equal proportions.
- The projects have been classified under two broad categories namely economic infrastructure and social infrastructure for both ease of doing business and ease of living.
- Under the projects, energy sectors make up the lion's share of 24%, followed by roads(19%), urban development(16%) and the railways (13%).
- ₹24.54 lakh crore investment will flow in the energy sector, and of that ₹11.7 lakh crore would be in just the power sector.
- The shares of rural and social infrastructure projects which includes health, education and drinking water is 8% and 3% respectively.
- The central government and state governments would have an equal share of 39% each in the NIP.
- The private sector, on the other hand, would have 22% share which the government expects to increase to 30% by 2025.



National Infrastructure Pipeline

- The National Infrastructure Pipeline will enable a forward outlook on infrastructure projects, it will create jobs, improve ease of living, and provide equitable access to infrastructure for all, thereby making growth more inclusive:
- National Infrastructure Pipeline Coordination mechanism will be launched to monitor identified infra projects
- Out of the projects included in the national infrastructure pipeline, 43% are under implementation, 33% are at conceptual stage and 19% are under development.

Infrastructure Development: Government of India's UJALA & Street Lighting National Programme Complete Five Successful years of Illuminating India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about UJALA and about SLNP schemes) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development – energy security)

What's the NEWS

- Launched by the Prime Minister on January 5th, 2015, the Government of India's **zero subsidy** Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) and LED Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP), marked its fifth anniversary.

Know! about Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)

- SLNP is the world's largest streetlight replacement programme and UJALA is the world's largest domestic lighting project.
- Both have been spearheaded and implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- Under the SLNP programme, over 1.03 crore smart LED streetlights have been installed till date
- Through the UJALA initiative, over 36.13 crore LED bulbs have been distributed across India.
- These programmes have bagged global awards
- LED Street Lighting National Programme has enabled citizens to increase productivity at night and made roads safer for pedestrians and motorists due to enhanced brightness and reduced dark spots.

What Next: The Targets...

In 3 years, every bulb in India should be an LED



Less power consuming 5 star-rated fans (50W against usual 75-80W) should replace all conventional fans (programme has begun in Vizag, Andhra Pradesh)

Govt contemplates LED-like programme to **replace all conventional ACs** with less power-consuming ones

Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (GSA)

- Apart from this, the Government of India initiated the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (GSA) in 2018, which was aimed at promotion of social harmony by apprising rural communities of various government welfare schemes and initiatives.
- As a part of GSA, 21,058 Indian villages with a significantly large number of poor households were able to buy LED bulbs for a special price under UJALA programme.

Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)

- Launched in January 2015, SLNP is the world's largest streetlight replacement programme, being implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Ltd, a joint venture of Central PSUs under the power ministry.
- The installation of 1 crore LED streetlights has resulted in annual energy savings of 6.71 billion kwh and avoided 1,119.40 mw of peak demand, resulting in reduction of GHG emission by 4.63 million tonnes of CO2 every year.
- Under SLNP, Andhra Pradesh is leading with an installation of 28.9 lakh LED streetlights followed by Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh with 10.3 lakh and 9.3 lakh, respectively.
- EESL has adopted the Pay-As-You-Save (PAYS) model where EESL makes the entire upfront investment in installation of the LED streetlights and no additional budget allocation from the municipalities is required.
- The contract with the municipalities/ULBs is for a period of 7 years. The seven-year contract with the local bodies guarantees a minimum energy saving of typically 50 per cent and provides free replacements and maintenance of lights at no additional cost to the civic partners.

EESL

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is an energy service company (ESCO) of the Government of India and is the world's largest public ESCO.
- It is 100% government owned, a joint venture of state-owned NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation, Rural Electrification Corporation and POWERGRID.
- EESL was formed under India's Ministry of Power to facilitate energy efficiency projects. Innovative business and implementation models can significantly reduce consumption and costs.
- The programme runs without any budgetary allocation from the central government. The cost of using efficient lighting is repaid by municipalities from savings in energy and maintenance expenditure over a period of time.

Cyber Security: Maharashtra Govt launches 'Cyber Safe Women' initiative

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Cyber Safe Women initiative) + Mains (GS III cyber security)

What's the NEWS

- Maharashtra Government has launched a 'Cyber Safe Women' initiative under which awareness camps will be held across all the districts of the state regarding cyber safety.

Know! more about it

- The initiative will help in educating women about how the web is used by anti-social elements and child predators to commit various types of crimes.
- Rising instances of cyber-crime need to be curbed and the government is looking to take all measures to ensure that women and children do not fall prey to these criminal activities.
- The campaign will be implemented across the state in collaboration with the state Government, Directorate General of Information and Public Relations and the state's cyber cell. Awareness camps will be organized across all districts of the state on the issue of cyber safety.
- The '**cyber safe women**' initiative will educate women about how the web is used by anti-social elements to commit various types of crimes.
- The campaign will cover cybercrime crimes such as cyberbullying, internet phishing, fraud identity on marriage site, bank fraud, photo shuffling, child pornography, online gaming, false information sites, cyber defamation information and the use of social media.
- The campaign mainly aims to help the women and children in the state become aware of good cyber practices, as only awareness can contribute to the creation of responsible netizens.

Economic Development: Commerce and industry minister inaugurates NSE knowledge hub in New Delhi

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Knowledge Hub) +Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- Commerce and Industry & Railways Minister Piyush Goyal inaugurated the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Knowledge Hub, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered learning ecosystem that will assist the banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector.

Know! more about it

- The Knowledge Hub created by NSE will fill in these gaps and help the financial sector to move into the future.
- The NSE Knowledge Hub will enhance skills and help academic institutions in preparing future-ready talent for the financial service industry.
- It is also available on mobile and attempts to bring together world class content and learners through this state-of-the-art and future-ready platform.

Way Forward

- The use of AI will ensure that the skill upgradation is affordable and accessible and helps in the creation of a workforce that is adequate for the requirements of the sector
- AI and Machine Learning will contribute USD 1 trillion by 2035 and this is a good beginning by NSE to tap the potential of AI and use it as a tool to create a workforce in the BFSI sector in India

Science & Technology: Farmer's Science Congress

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Farmer's Science Congress) + GS III (Steps taken by the government for doubling the farmer's income)

What's the NEWS

- The Farmer's Science Congress was inaugurated for the first time in the 107 years of history of the Indian Science Congress, highlighting the importance of farmer's innovations and their scientific validity.

Know! more about it

- It is for the first time in the history of Indian Science Congress that a farmer centric event has been organized, which is a big encouragement for the farmer's community.
- Farmers Science Congress was organized as a part of the ongoing 107th Indian Science Congress at University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru. Around 120 innovative farmers from across the country are participating in Farmers Science Congress and showcase their products.
- The benefits for farmers from such a platform and said that innovators from different parts of the country can share their experiences and learn from each other.
- Scientist-farmer interactions can boost innovations to the next level and this can benefit the people in general

Know! the steps taken by the government

- ICAR has developed 56 models of integrated farming, which will be promoted with NABARD by linking them to the Rural Development programmes
- Farmers Innovation Fund and Innovation Centres will be set up to encourage innovations made by progressive farmers.
- To encourage organic farming, 45 types of organic farming systems have also been developed in niche areas.
- To reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, ICAR are developing Nano fertilizers and nano pesticides to promote organic farming.
- To improve rural bio-economy and attract youth to agriculture, a programme named Arya is being implemented.
- Till now over 5000 youth have been brought into this programme in which they have been trained to be entrepreneurs

Space Awareness: ISRO signs pact with astrophysics institute to set up optical telescopes

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the agreement signed and about NETRA) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- Indian Space Research Organisation has inked a pact with Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) to pave the way for collaboration in establishing optical telescope facilities under Project 'NETRA' for tracking space objects.
- The agency has also tied up with NIT-Karnataka to set up a regional academic centre for space to promote research in space technology.

Project NETRA

- Under the Rs 400-crore NETRA' project, an early warning system is being set up in space to detect debris and other hazards that could pose a danger to Indian space assets like satellites and experimental platforms.
- Like other space powers, NETRA will give the country its own capability in space situational awareness.

Know! more about agreement

- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between ISRO and IIA for space cooperation in space situational awareness and astrophysics was signed
- The MoU will boost tie-up between ISRO and IIA in setting up optical telescope facilities for space-object tracking, studies related to space weather, asteroids and other near earth objects
- In another development, ISRO has set up a regional academic centre for space at the National Institute of Technology (NIT-K) at Surathkal in Karnataka's southwest Dakshina Kannada district.
- Under this the centre will conduct joint research and development in space technology applications to meet the needs of space programmes.
- ISRO will provide Rs 2 crore grant annually to NIT for R&D projects and promotional activities through the year.
- A joint policy and management committee will guide the centre in optimal utilisation of the research potential, infrastructure, expertise and experience of the space agency and the autonomous institute.
- Intellectual property rights generated in projects will be jointly owned by ISRO and NIT.

Environment Conservation: Kochi to host global meet on marine ecosystem; 3rd International Symposium on Marine Ecosystems Challenges and Opportunities (MECOS3)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about MECOS3) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The year 2020 is the time for the 3rd International Symposium on Marine Ecosystems Challenges and Opportunities (MECOS3) organized by the Marine Biological Association of India (MBAI).
- Eminent marine scientists, oceanographers, fisheries researchers and marine biotechnologists from across the globe are expected to participate in the third international symposium on marine ecosystems – challenges and opportunities (MECOS-3) in Kochi from January 7 to 10.

Know! more about MECOS-3

- Organised by the Marine Biological Association of India, MECOS-3 will serve as a platform for discussions on a range of topics, including the impact of the climate crisis on marine ecosystems and an unusual warming of the Arabian Sea.
- The four-day meet, which will be held at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, assumes significance in the backdrop of the recent spate of cyclonic storms and other climatic phenomena in the Arabian Sea.
- The meet will also focus on the UN's sustainable development goal-14 (life under water), development of small-scale fisheries, recent developments in aquaculture, eco-labelling and green fishing technologies.

- The symposium is aimed at reviewing the concerns involved in marine ecosystem and formulating strategies for the better and sustainable utilisation of marine wealth by enhancing livelihood options

Need to Conserve the Maine Ecosystem

- Healthy oceans, coasts and related ecosystems are crucial for economic growth and food production.
- Billions of people worldwide, especially the world's poorest, rely on healthy oceans to provide jobs and food, underscoring the urgent need to sustainably use and protect this natural resource, he said.
- However, numerous issues such as depletion of resources, marine pollution, extreme weather conditions and rising sea surface temperature, among others, pose a threat to the sustainable utilisation of marine resources
- The symposium would come up with a roadmap to deal with these issues.

Know! about Marine Biological Association of India

- The Marine Biological Association of India was established in the year 1958 to serve the cause of promotion of research on adana seo mersin escort ankara escort sohbet hatti canli bahis marine sciences in the Asia -Pacific region

Infrastructure Development: BEE Notifies New Energy Performance Standards for Air Conditioners

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BEE and ISEER) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development- energy security + environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Central Government in consultation with the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has notified new energy performance standards for Room Air Conditioner (RACs) on 30th October 2019.
- The **240C** default setting has been made mandatory from *Jan 1, 2020* for all room air conditioners covered under the ambit of BEE star-labelling program
- Additionally, the Indian Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (ISEER) as per the new standards will range from (3.30 - 5.00) for split and (2.70 – 3.50) for window air conditioners, which will be applicable from 1st January 2021 onwards.
- All brands and types of star labelled room air conditioners, which are rated from one star to five star, based on their relative energy efficiencies and manufactured, commercially purchased or sold in India, shall ensure default setting of temperature in the room air conditioners at twenty-four degrees Celsius with effect from the 1st January 2020.”
- ISEER (Indian Seasonal Energy efficiency ratio) is the energy performance index used for Room Air Conditioners (RACs) and its assessment is based on the bin hours defined in ISO 16358.

Know! about BEE

- BEE is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power, Government of India. It is assisted in developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies, and other organization to identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the energy conservation act.

Economic Development: Cabinet approves ‘In Principle’ strategic disinvestment

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the approval of strategic disinvestment) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister, has given ‘in principle’ approval for strategic disinvestment of equity shareholding of
- Minerals & Metals Trading Corporation Limited (MMTC) (49.78%)

- National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) (10.10%)
- MECON (0.68%) and
- Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) (0.68%)
- Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL)



Know! about NINL

- NINL is a Joint Venture company, in which four CPSEs namely MMTC, NMDC, BHEL and MECON and 2 State PSUs of Odisha Government, namely IPICOL and OMC are shareholders.
- The proposed strategic disinvestment of NINL would unlock resources to be used to finance the social sector/developmental programmes of the Government benefiting the public.

Know! about Strategic disinvestment

- There are different methods for the sale of shares. If the government is selling just minority shares, say, less than 50% of the shares in a PSE, it will continue to the owner of the PSE. In most cases, the government is retaining the majority shares while selling only a minor proportion of the shares.
- But in the case of some enterprises, the government will be selling majority shares to a selected private sector or other entity and this method is called strategic disinvestment or strategic sale.
- Strategic disinvestment is transferring the ownership and control of a public sector entity to some other entity.
- Strategic disinvestment would imply the sale of a substantial portion of the Government shareholding of a central public sector enterprises (CPSE) of upto 50%, or such higher percentage as the competent authority may determine, along with transfer of management control.
- The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) under the Ministry of Finance has been made the nodal department for the strategic stake sale in the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

Disaster Management: Centre approves Rs 5,908 crore to seven states for calamity damage relief

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NDRF and SDRF) + Mains (GS III Disaster Management)

What's the NEWS

- The Centre approved the release of Rs 5,908.56 crore to seven states, including Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam, as assistance for the damage caused due to various calamities last year.

Know! more about it

- The decision was taken at a meeting of a high-level committee (HLC), chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.
- The HLC approved additional central assistance of Rs 5908.56 crore to seven states from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) of which Rs 616.63 crore will be given to Assam, Rs 284.93 crore to Himachal Pradesh, Rs 1869.85 crore to Karnataka, Rs 1749.73 crore to Madhya Pradesh, Rs 956.93 crore to Maharashtra, Rs 63.32 to Tripura and Rs 367.17 crore to Uttar Pradesh for floods or landslides or cloudburst during the 2019 southwest monsoon,

Know! about NDRF

- National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) is defined in Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act) as a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
- NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.
- The DM Act defines “disaster” to mean ‘a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life
- The primary purpose of NDRF is to supplement the SDRF, in case there is a calamity of “severe nature” which requires assistance over and above the funds available under SDRF.
- NDRF is located in the “Public Accounts” of Government of India under “Reserve Funds not bearing interest”
- Department of Agriculture and Cooperation under Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) monitors relief activities for calamities associated with drought, hailstorms, pest attacks and cold wave /frost while rest of the natural calamities are monitored by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Environment Conservation: Bhitarkanika census finds an increase of 15 saltwater crocodiles from last year



Relevance IN – Prelims (about saltwater crocodile + bhitarkanika National park) + Mains (GS III environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The population of the saltwater or estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) has increased in the water bodies of Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park and its nearby areas in Kendrapara district, with forest officials counting 1,757 individuals in this year's annual reptile census on January 3, 2020.

- Last year, they had counted 1,742 crocodiles in the area.
- The peak winter is the ideal time to carry out the census as it exposes more than 50% of mud banks.
- The IUCN status of salt water crocodile is Least Concern.

Bhitarkanika National Park

- The Park obtained the status of Ramsar site in 2002.
- The area is also been designated as second Ramsar site of the State after the Chilika Lake.
- It is surrounded by Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary
- Gahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary are to the east, separating swamp region and mangroves from the Bay of Bengal.
- The national park and wildlife sanctuary is inundated by the rivers Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, Pathsala.
- It hosts many mangrove species, and is the second largest mangrove ecosystem in India.
- The Fauna of the park includes saltwater crocodile, black ibis, Indian Python, wild boar, cobra, darter, monitor lizard, etc.
- The park holds Guinness World Record of spotting largest male salt water crocodile in the world that weighed 2,000 kg in 2006.

UPSC Map Course

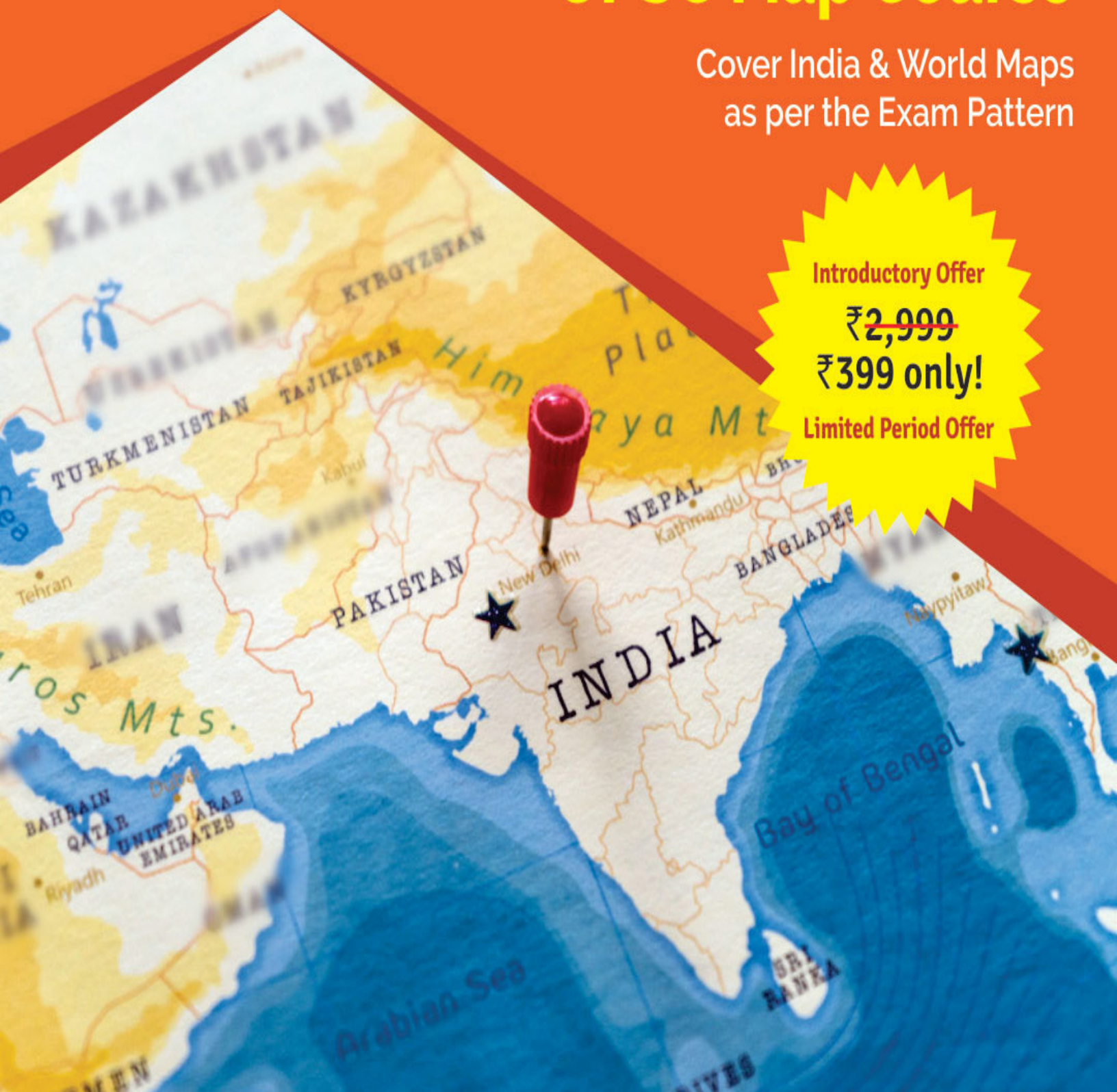
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Environment Conservation/ Prelims Factoids

First-of-its kind turtle rehab centre comes up in Bihar



Relevance IN – Prelims (why Bhagalpur? And about the rehab centre)

What's the NEWS

- A first-of-its-kind rehabilitation centre for freshwater turtles will be inaugurated in Bihar's Bhagalpur forest division in January 2020.

Know! more about the rehab centre for the turtle

- The rehab centre, spread over half a hectare, will be able to shelter 500 turtles at a time.
- The need to build such a centre was felt after several turtles were found severely wounded and sick when rescued from smuggles by rescue teams.
- This centre will play a significant role in treating these animals and their proper upkeep before being returned to their natural habitat

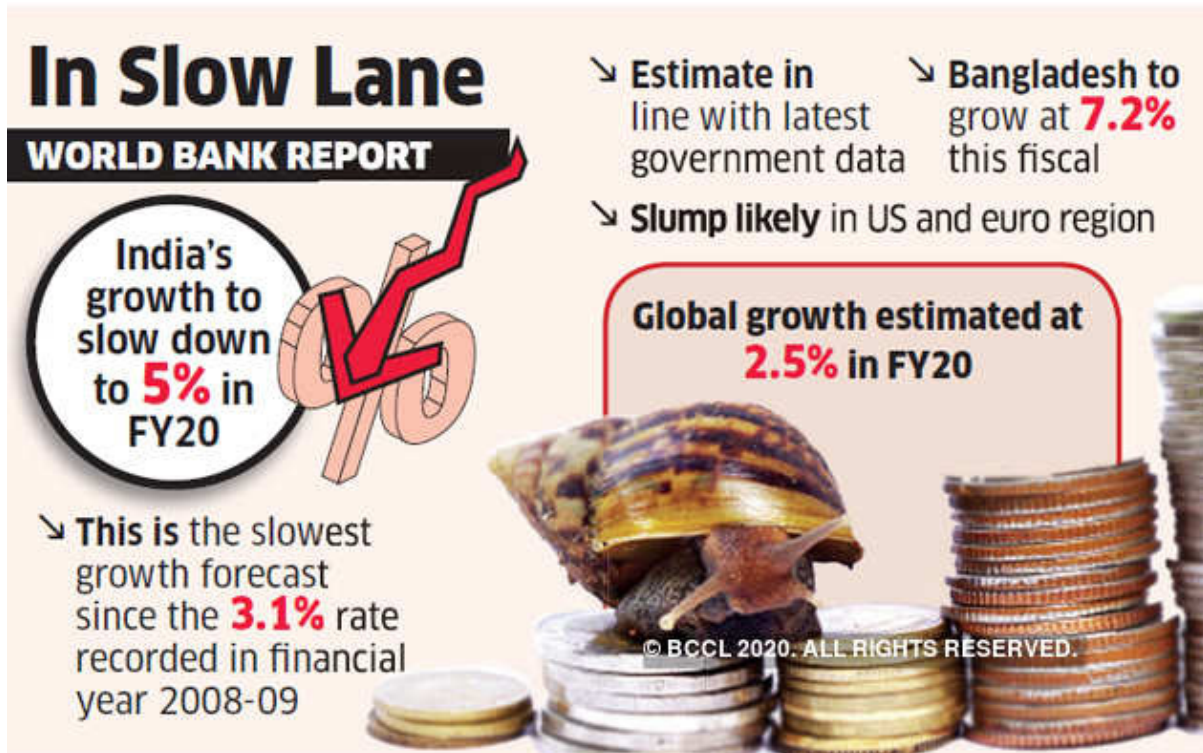
Why Eastern Bihar chosen as Rehab Centre

- Eastern Bihar has been an ideal breeding ground for turtles
- In Bhagalpur, the flow of water in the Ganga is ample. Also, there are many sandbanks in the middle of the river, which are ideal breeding ground for turtles
- The size of turtles found in eastern Bihar is good as well. A turtle weighing up to 15 kilograms can be found here

Significance of turtle

- The turtles play a significant role in the river by scavenging dead organic materials and diseased fish, controlling fish population as predators and controlling aquatic plants and weeds. They are also described as indicators of healthy aquatic ecosystems.
- However, these species are now under severe threats due to habitat fragmentation and loss through dams and barrages, pollution, illegal poaching, accidental drowning through fishing nets and threats to their nesting habitats.

Economic Development: World Bank pegs India's growth for FY20 at 5%; Global Economic Prospects report



Relevance IN – Prelims (about global economic prospects report and its findings) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The World Bank cut India's growth for financial year 2020 to 5% from 6% estimated earlier, a day after the country's statistics office pegged growth in the current financial year at 5%, the lowest in 11 years.
- The multilateral lender expects the country's growth to recover only slightly to 5.8% in the next fiscal year.

Know! more about the report findings

- The bank's Global Economic Prospects report released cited a lingering weakness in credit from non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) as the main cause for the downgrade.
- This is the slowest growth forecast since the 3.1% rate recorded in financial year 2008-09 when the global financial crisis had derailed the economy.
- The World Bank's latest update is also in line with the Reserve Bank of India's October policy estimate in which it slashed the economy's expected growth to 5% this fiscal year.
- Global economic growth, is expected to rise to 2.5% in the current calendar year, underpinned by a gradual recovery in investment and trade from last year's significant weakness, although downward risks persist
- Growth in advanced economies is likely to slip to 1.4% in calendar year 2020, in part due to softness in the manufacturing sector.
- Growth in the US is expected to ease to 1.8% due to tariff increases, while weak industrial activity will bring down the Euro region's growth to 1% this calendar year.
- On the other hand, growth in the emerging markets and developing economies is expected to accelerate this year to 4.1%.
- With growth in emerging and developing economies likely to remain slow, policymakers should seize the opportunity to undertake structural reforms that boost broad-based growth, which is essential to poverty reduction.

Regional growth

- In comparison, the report forecasts Bangladesh's growth to ease to 7.2% for the fiscal year ending June 30 for the country, while Pakistan and Sri Lanka's growth rates are expected to rise to 3% and 3.3%, respectively, in FY20.
- It also estimates growth to rise to 5.5% for the South Asian region as a whole in calendar year 2020, on the assumption of a modest rebound in domestic demand and accommodative policy in India and Sri Lanka.
- The report also cites improved business confidence and support from infrastructure investments in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan for the expected uptick.

Information Technology/Cyber Awareness: Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) inaugurated; National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal



**Relevance IN – Prelims (about I4C and about national Cyber Crime reporting portal)
+Mains (GS III cyber security)**

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah, inaugurated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and also dedicated National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to the Nation. This state-of-the-art Centre is located in New Delhi.

Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) – Objective

- To deal with all types of cybercrimes in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
- It has seven components viz., National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit, National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, National Cyber Crime Training Centre, Cyber Crime Ecosystem Management Unit, National Cyber Crime Research and Innovation Centre, National Cyber Crime Forensic Laboratory Ecosystem and Platform for Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Team.
- At the initiative of Union Ministry for Home Affairs (MHA), 15 States and UTs have given their consent to set up Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centres at respective States/UTs.

National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal

- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) is a citizen-centric initiative that will enable citizens to report cyber crimes online through the portal.
- All the cyber crime related complaints will be accessed by the concerned law enforcement agencies in the States and Union Territories for taking action as per law.
- So far, more than 700 police districts and more than 3,900 police stations have been connected with this Portal.

- After successful completion, this portal can improve the capacity of the law enforcement agencies to investigate the cases and will improve success in prosecution.
- This portal also focuses on specific crimes like financial crime and social media related crimes like stalking, cyber bullying, etc.
- This portal will improve coordination amongst the law enforcement agencies of different States, districts and police stations for dealing with cyber crimes in a coordinated and effective manner.

Infrastructure Development: Purvodaya : Accelerated development of Eastern India through an Integrated Steel Hub



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

What's the NEWS

- Ministry of steel in partnership with CII and JPC launched Purvodaya-Accelerated Development of Eastern Region through an Integrated Steel hub

Know! the significance

- Creation of such a world-class steel hub would significantly contribute to Purvodaya by propelling socio-economic development in the Eastern region.
- This will play a significant role in overall socio-economic growth of Eastern India, thus reducing the disparity between the East and other regions of the country.

Eastern states of India

- The Eastern region of India, though extremely rich in resources, lags behind other states in terms of development.
- (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh) collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.
- In addition to its rich mineral reserves, these states also have a significant locational advantage.
- There is a presence of major ports such as Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, Kolkata etc. with >30% of India's Major Port capacity, 3 major National Waterways as well as strong road, rail connectivity to most parts of the country.
- Despite these advantages, these states are currently behind many other Indian states in terms of economic and development indicators such as GSDP per capita and Human Development Index (HDI).

Time to explore the untapped Potential of Eastern states

- India's march towards a \$5 trillion economy, the 5 Eastern states can play a major role where steel sector can become the catalyst.

- The presence of natural resources, coupled with an already established steel industry, presents excellent opportunity for Eastern India to spearhead the expected growth in the domestic steel industry, the region at large and the country as a whole.
- This Eastern belt has the potential to add more than 75% of the country's incremental steel capacity envisioned by the National Steel Policy.

Integrated Steel Hub

- The proposed Integrated Steel Hub, encompassing Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh, would serve as a torchbearer for socio-economic growth of Eastern India.
- The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.
- In addition to increased steel capacity, this hub would also help enhance best-in-class value addition capabilities.

The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:

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

Asia's largest Civil Aviation platform- 'Wings India 2020' to be held at Hyderabad from 12-15 March 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Wings India 2020) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

Wings India 2020

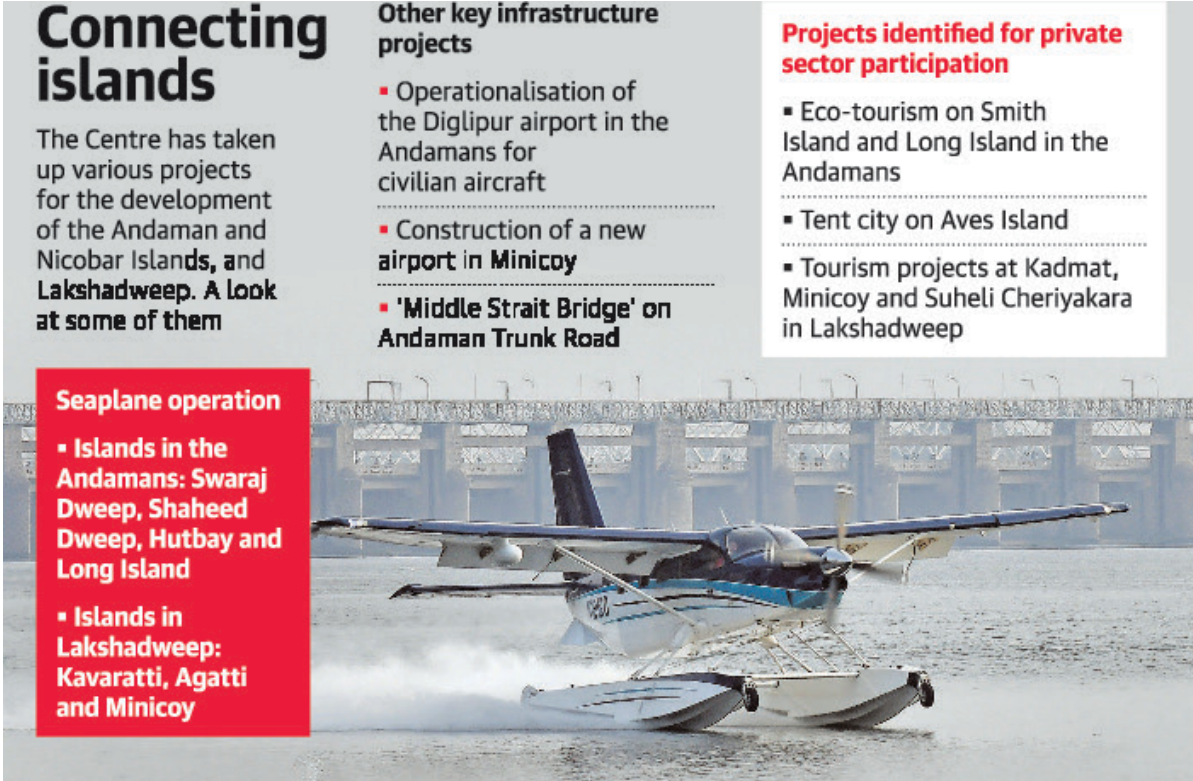
- Wings India 2020, a flagship event of Indian Civil Aviation industry **will be held at Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad from 12-15 March 2020.**



Know! more about Wings India

- Wings India 2020' - a four-day event themed: "Flying for All" is an international platform focused on new business acquisition, investments, policy formation and regional connectivity in civil aviation industry.
- Wings India 2020 is a platform for the aviation fraternity to discuss challenges along with new developing growth spots that can be targeted to ensure a positive curve.
- Wings India 2020 is also Asia's largest and most popular gathering in the industry. Organized by Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt. of India, AAI and FICCI the event is expected to attract top leaders, special invitees in foreign ministers for civil aviation and global CEOs, suppliers, strategic partners, organizations and the media.

Infrastructure Development: Home Minister chairs Meeting of the Island Development Agency



Connecting islands

The Centre has taken up various projects for the development of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. A look at some of them

Other key infrastructure projects

- Operationalisation of the Diglipur airport in the Andamans for civilian aircraft
- Construction of a new airport in Minicoy
- 'Middle Strait Bridge' on Andaman Trunk Road

Projects identified for private sector participation

- Eco-tourism on Smith Island and Long Island in the Andamans
- Tent city on Aves Island
- Tourism projects at Kadmat, Minicoy and Suheli Cheriyakara in Lakshadweep

Seaplane operation

- Islands in the Andamans: Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep, Hutbay and Long Island
- Islands in Lakshadweep: Kavaratti, Agatti and Minicoy

Relevance IN – Prelims (about IDA) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Home Minister Amit Shah, chaired the sixth meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA)
- The Island Development Agency reviewed the progress made towards the programme “Holistic development of islands”.

Know! the highlights of the meeting

- For the first time in the country, under the guidance of IDA, an initiative of sustainable development in the identified Islands within scientifically-assessed carrying capacity has been taken-up.
- Development Plans with focus on creation of jobs for the islanders through tourism promotion as well as export of seafood and coconut-based products made in the Islands have been prepared and are being implemented in four islands of Andaman & Nicobar and five islands of Lakshadweep.
- In the second phase, suitable sites in 12 more islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and 5 islands in Lakshadweep have been covered.
- For strengthening infrastructure support, projects for improving air, sea and digital connectivity are also being implemented.
- Port Blair and another 7 islands in Andaman & Nicobar would get digitally connected through submarine optical fibre cable by June, 2020.
- The Naval air station at Shibpur near Diglipur in northern Andaman & Nicobar Islands would be co-used as Joint User Airport.
- It was also decided to develop a PPP package including a airport (Joint User Airport) at Minicoy Island, to unlock the tourism potential.
- The meeting was attended by Lt. Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Admiral D. K. Joshi (retd); Administrator of Lakshadweep Shri Dineshwar Sharma, Shri Rajiv Gauba Cabinet Secretary, Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog,

Know! more about The Island Development Agency (IDA)

- The IDA was set up on June 01, 2017 following the Prime Minister's review meeting for the holistic development of islands under the aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs
- Objective - to look into the holistic development of 09 islands (four in A&N Islands i.e. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis) and (five in Lakshadweep i.e. Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriya, Suheli).
- The project being steered by NITI Aayog aims at promoting and implementing development based on sustainable approach to building a thriving maritime economy of the project islands.
- Home Minister of India is its chairman and CEO of NITI Aayog (Amitabh Kant at present) acts as its convener.
- Other members of IDA include Secretary- Tourism, Tribal affairs, Home secretary, Secretary Ministry of Environment and Cabinet secretary.
- NITI Aayog has been mandated with the task to steer the holistic development of the islands in sustainable manner.

Defence: Indian Navy to Get Upgraded Fuel HFHSD – IN 512

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the upgraded fuel)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Navy in collaboration with M/s IOCL carried out an extensive and thorough study and a comparative evaluation of existing international regulations (ISO, MARPOL, NATO etc).
- As an outcome, a revised technical specification was arrived. The new specification will not only ensure a better quality fuel but also result in a reduced carbon footprint.
- Given the positive results, the new fuel was therefore decided for pan Navy implementation.
- **On 13 January 2020, the launch of the new fuel (High Flash High Speed Diesel) HFHSD – IN 512, with revised technical specifications was undertaken.**

Know! the benefits of using new fuel

- With this, the country will be able to ensure interoperability amongst foreign navies during fleet exercises and provide fuel of quality better than that mandated to all foreign navies under bilateral/ multi-national logistics support pacts including LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement).

Defence: Two Coast Guard ships commissioned at Kolkata



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the ships) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management)

What's the NEWS

- Two Indian Coast Guard Ships (ICGS) — Annie Besant and Amrit Kaur — were commissioned by Defence Secretary at Kolkata

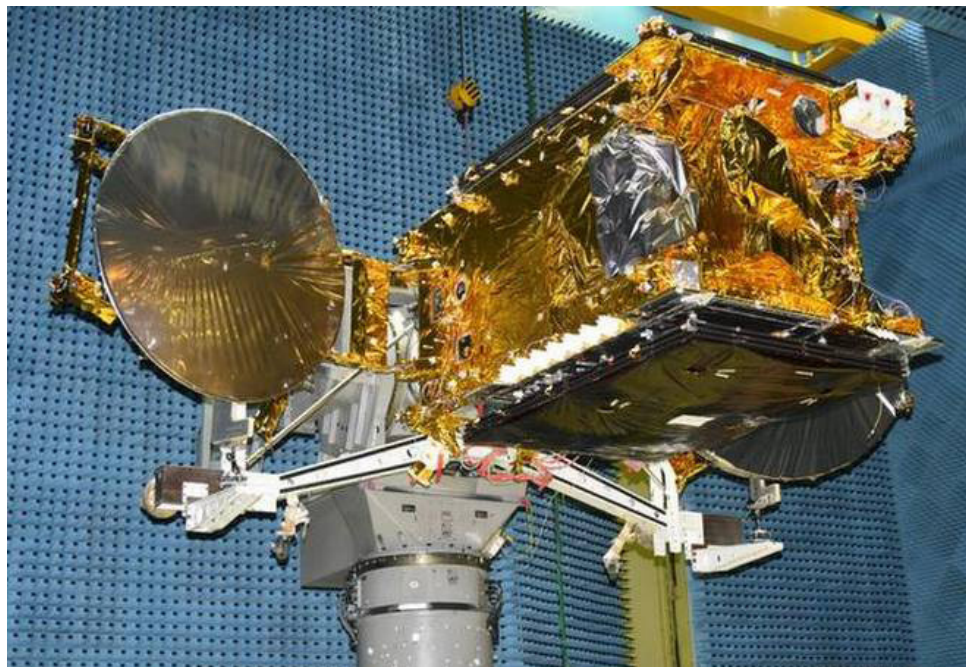
Know! more about it (Annie besant and Amrit Kaur)

- ICGS Annie Besant was named in honour of Annie Besant, philanthropist, theosophist, prolific author and supporter of the Indian freedom struggle.
- The ship will be based at Chennai under the operational and administrative control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (East).
- ICGS Amrit Kaur derives the name from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who belonged to the ruling family of Kapurthala, Punjab.
- She took active part in the 'Salt Satyagraha' and 'Quit India Movement', and served Independent India as its first Health Minister.
- She worked towards uplift of the less privileged, the progress of women, and was a founder-member of All India Women's Conference and founder-President of Indian Council for Child Welfare.
- The ship will be based at Haldia under the operational and administrative control of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (North East).

Know! about the ships

- The ships are capable of achieving a maximum speed of 34 knots, powered with MTU 4000 series engines and propelled by three 71S type III Kamewa water jets by Rolls Royce.
- The ships are also capable of undertaking multi-faceted tasks such as surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue, and medical evacuation.
- ICGS Annie Besant and ICGS Amrit Kaur are fitted with state-of-the-art technology, navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery.
- The ships are also equipped with Bofors 40/60 guns and 12.7 mm SRCGs (Stabilised Remote Controlled Gun) for enhancing the fighting efficiency of the ship.

Space Awareness: Ariane rocket to launch ISRO's GSAT-30 satellite on January 17



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Communication satellite and about GSAT-30) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- India would launch a communication satellite GSAT-30 onboard Ariane-5 launch vehicle (VA 251) from French Guiana on January 17.

Know! more about it

- The 3,357-kg satellite is slated to blast off from the Ariane Launch Complex at Kourou, a French territory located along the northeastern coast of South America, at 02:35 hrs IST.
- GSAT-30 is to serve as a replacement to INSAT-4A spacecraft services with enhanced coverage
- The satellite provides Indian mainland and islands coverage in Ku-band and extended coverage in C-band covering Gulf countries, a large number of Asian countries and Australia
- With a mission life of 15 years, GSAT-30 is an operational communication satellite for DTH, television uplink and VSAT services.
- The satellite is configured on ISRO's enhanced I-3K bus structure to provide communication services from geostationary orbit in C and Ku bands.
- The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series.
- The spacecraft would be extensively used for supporting VSAT network, television uplinking and teleport services, digital satellite news gathering (DSNG), DTH television services, cellular backhaul connectivity and many such applications.
- Since the launch of India's APPLE experimental satellite on Ariane Flight L03 in 1981, Arianespace has orbited 23 satellites and signed 24 launch contracts with the Indian space agency

Know! about communication satellites

- The Indian National Satellite (INSAT) system is one of the largest domestic communication satellite systems in Asia-Pacific region with nine operational communication satellites placed in Geo-stationary orbit.
- Established in 1983 with commissioning of INSAT-1B, it initiated a major revolution in India's communications sector and sustained the same later.
- GSAT-17 joins the constellation of INSAT System consisting 15 operational satellites, namely - INSAT-3A, 3C, 4A, 4B, 4CR and GSAT-6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 18.
- The INSAT system with more than 200 transponders in the C, Extended C and Ku-bands provides services to telecommunications, television broadcasting, satellite newsgathering, societal applications, weather forecasting, disaster warning and Search and Rescue operations.

Environment Conservation: Climate crisis fills top five places of World Economic Forum's risks report

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Global Risks Report findings) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- In its 15th Global Risks Report published, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has said that for the first time in the report's history all of the "top long-term risks by likelihood" are environmental.
- While in the previous decade economic and financial crises were seen as most dangerous, the report has found that risk perceptions have shifted to extreme weather, environmental disasters, biodiversity loss, natural catastrophes and failure to mitigate climate change.

WEF said the top five risks in terms of likelihood in the next 10 years were:

1. Extreme weather events with major damage to property, infrastructure and loss of human life.

Long-Term Risk Outlook

Top 10 risk over the next 10 years



Environmental

Extreme weather
Climate action failure
Natural disaster
Biodiversity loss
Human-made environmental disasters



Technological

Data fraud or theft
Cyberattacks



Societal

Water crises



Geopolitical

Global governance failure



Economic

Asset bubble



Source: World Economic Forum

2. Failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation by governments and businesses.
3. Human-made environmental damage and disasters, including environmental crime, such as oil spills and radioactive contamination.
4. Major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse with irreversible consequences for the environment, resulting in severely depleted resources for humankind as well as industries.
5. Major natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and geomagnetic storms.

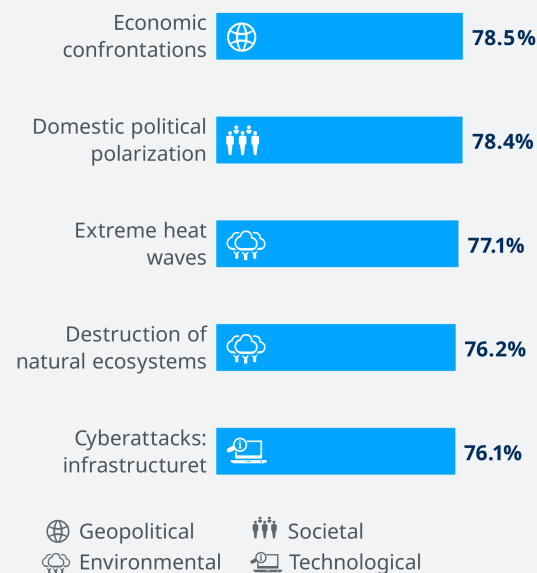
- The report was released ahead of the WEF's annual meeting in Davos next week, which will be attended by the chief executives of some of the world's biggest and powerful companies.
- The report surveyed the opinions of more than 750 global experts and decision-makers to rank their biggest concerns in terms of likelihood and impact.
- Among the short-term risks facing mankind already in 2020, three out of four respondents to the survey cited economic confrontations, political polarization, extreme heat waves, destruction of natural resource ecosystems and cyberattacks as the most pressing ones.

Know! about WEF

- WEF is an international organization focusing on cooperation between the public and private sectors, and brings together business leaders, government policymakers and representatives of civil society to foster global deliberations on burning issues.

Short-Term Risk Outlook

Percentage of respondents expecting risk to increase in 2020



Source: World Economic Forum

Infrastructure Development: World Bank and Government of India Sign \$88 million loan agreement for the implementation of Assam Inland Water Transport Project

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the agreement signed and its benefits + inland waterways + Jal Marg Vikas Prog.) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development-ports)

What's the NEWS

- The Government of India, the Government of Assam and the World Bank signed a loan agreement of \$88 million to help modernize Assam's passenger ferry sector that runs on its rivers including the mighty Brahmaputra.

Know! more about the agreement

- A majority of Assam's more than 361 ferry routes cross the Brahmaputra or serve its islands, providing a crucial means of transport to thousands of commuters in both the urban and rural areas of the Brahmaputra Valley.
- The Assam Inland Water Transport Project (AIWTP) will help Assam improve the passenger ferry infrastructure and its services and strengthen the capacity of the institutions running the inland water transport.
- Technically better designed terminals and energy-efficient vessels (both new and retrofitted) will make the ferry services more sustainable with least disruption to nature.

Inland waterways

- India's large network of inland waterways can play a significant role in the country's economy.
- Its fuel efficiency contributes to lower operating costs and reduces environmental impact.
- Inland Water Transport is also a more sustainable mode of transport. It provides low-carbon and low-cost options when compared to the cost of constructing and maintaining flood-resilient roads and bridges across the long stretches of the Brahmaputra river.

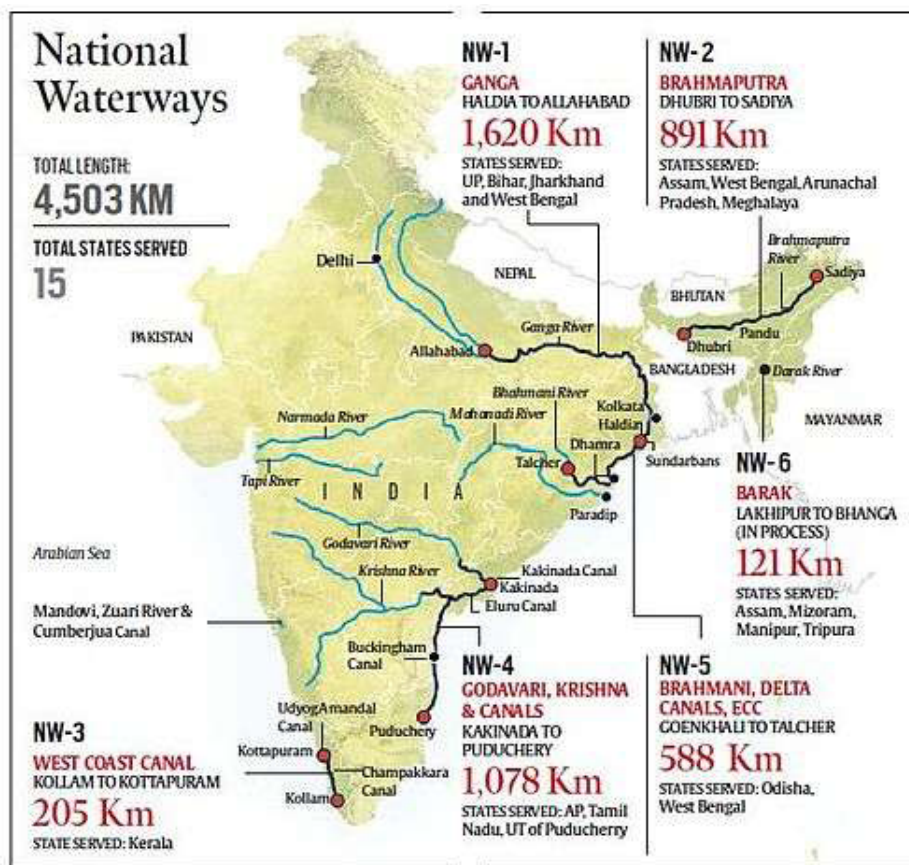
- In Assam, the rivers are a vital transport asset for its people.
- The Assam Inland Water Transport Project will help develop a modern, efficient and safe river transport system for the large volume of passengers and cargo carried by the
- Assam has the largest network of navigable waterways in India.

Know! all about Inland Waterways developments in India

- *Inland waterways* is a network in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks that can be used for transportation in place of or in addition to roads and rails.

National Waterways

- There are 111 officially notified Inland National Waterways (NWs) in India identified for the purposes of inland water transport, as per The National Waterways Act, 2016.
- Out of the 111 NWs, 106 were created in 2016. The NW network covers around 20,275.5 km. NW-1, 2, & 3 are already operational. Cargo as well as passenger / cruise vessels are plying on these waterways



Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)

- The Government is implementing the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) for the capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of National Waterway-1 (Ganga) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs.5,369.18 crore.
- Under this project, construction of three multimodal terminals, two intermodal terminals, one new navigational lock and works for fairway development, River Information System (RIS), vessel repair and maintenance facilities and Ro-Ro terminals are envisaged to be completed by December, 2022.

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Shipping.

- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- About 55 million tones of cargo is being moved annually by Inland Water Transport (IWT), a fuel - efficient and environment -friendly mode.
- Its operations are currently restricted to a few stretches in the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly rivers , the Brahmaputra, the Barak river, the rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai and the deltaic regions of the Godavari - Krishna rivers.

Sagarmala Programme

Vision



Components of Sagarmala Programme are:

- **Port Modernization & New Port Development:** De-bottlenecking and capacity expansion of existing ports and development of new greenfield ports
- **Port Connectivity Enhancement:** Enhancing the connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, optimizing cost and time of cargo movement through multi-modal logistics solutions including domestic waterways (inland water transport and coastal shipping)
- **Port-linked Industrialization:** Developing port-proximate industrial clusters and Coastal Economic Zones to reduce logistics cost and time of EXIM and domestic cargo
- **Coastal Community Development** Promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism etc.
- **Coastal Shipping & Inland Waterways Transport** Impetus to move cargo through the sustainable and environment-friendly coastal and inland waterways mode.

Environment Conservation: Centre eases CRZ rules for 'Blue Flag' beaches

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the eased CRZ rules and about blue flag certification) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Environment Ministry has relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive 'Blue Flag' certification.
- Last year, the Ministry selected 13 beaches in India to vie for the certificate , one of them, Chandrabhaga beach, has already received the Blue Flag tag. Other 12 notified beaches are:
- Ghoghala beach (Diu), Shivrajpur beach (Gujarat), Bhogave beach (Maharashtra), Padubidri and Kasarkod beaches (Karnataka), Kappad beach (Kerala), Kovalam beach (Tamil Nadu), Eden beach (Puducherry), Rushikonda beach (Andhra Pradesh), Miramar beach (Goa), Golden beach (Odisha), Radhanagar beach (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) and Bangaram beach (Lakshadweep).
- This is an international recognition conferred on beaches that meet certain criteria of cleanliness and environmental propriety.

Know! more about it (restrictions eased)

- The Blue Flag certification, however, requires beaches to create certain infrastructure — portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like.
- However, India's CRZ laws don't allow the construction of such infrastructure on beaches and islands.
- Via an order on January 9, the Environment Ministry eased these restrictions for the "purposes of Blue Flag certification".
- The following activities and facilities shall be permitted in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), including Islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from HTL (High Tide Line)," the gazette notification notes.

Blue Flag certification

- The certification is accorded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environment Education, with 33 stringent criteria under four major heads for the beaches, that is, (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services.
- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an 'eco-tourism model' and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.
- The Blue Flag Programme started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- Japan and South Korea are the only countries in south and south eastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches. Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395 Blue Flag beaches, respectively.
- Chandrabhaga beach located on the Konark coast of Odisha is the first beach in the country to receive 'Blue Flag Certification'.

Coastal Regulation Zone

- It describes an area of coastal areas of rivers, seas, backwaters, and bays declared as Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) under coastal zone regulation notification in 1991.
- It has been further classified into four different zones - ecologically sensitive areas, urban areas, rural areas, low tide line area.

Defence: Winged Raider; Army conducts biggest airborne exercise of Special Forces in North Eastern Theatre

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Winged Raider + about Integrated Battle Groups and about Him Vijay) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Army recently carried out its biggest Airborne Exercise in the North Eastern Theatre which involved large number of the Special Force's troops and all kind of air transport platforms of the Air Force.

Know! more about it

- More than 500 soldiers of Special Forces troops parachuted from C 130 Hercules, C 17 Globemaster and Dhruv helicopters during day and night.
- The Exercise was code-named 'Winged Raider' signifying the multi dimensional nature of the exercise.
- The exercise was preceded by a series of intense preparations involving movement of special forces and rallying up of transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force.
- Exercise Winged Raider demonstrated the operational readiness of our Paratroopers and Air Warriors to undertake airborne missions.
- The newly inducted aerial platforms and equipment were validated, with clockwork precision and seamless integration between the Indian Army and Indian Air Force in difficult terrain

Additional Information: Know! about Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs)

- The new concept of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) which the Indian Army plans to create as part of overall force transformation is close to implementation.

- IBGs are brigade-sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations, which can swiftly launch strikes against adversary in case of hostilities.
- Each IBG would be tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain and Task and resources will be allotted based on the three Ts.
- They need to be light so they will be low on logistics and they will be able to mobilise within 12-48 hrs based on the location.
- An IBG operating in a desert needs to be constituted differently from an IBG operating in the mountains. The key corps of the Army are likely to be reorganized into 1-3 IBGs.
- IBGs, which will be quicker, flexible and self-sustainable combat units as the Army readies itself for future warfare.

What are Integrated Battle Groups?

- IBGs are brigade – sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations

- Each of them is tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain & Task. Resources will be allotted based on the three T's

- They will be able to

mobilise within 12 – 48 hrs based on the location

- Concept of IBG pilot-tested by 9 Corps. They are reorganising based on the feedback and will be restructured by August end

- Army will approach Centre for sanction after that



- The IBGs will also be defensive and offensive. While the offensive IBGs would quickly mobilise and make thrust into enemy territory for strikes, defensive IBGs would hold ground at vulnerable points or where enemy action is expected.
- Preparing for the changing character of warfare across the world, the Indian Army will be ready with number of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs)
- The IBGs will come up facing China and Pakistan, while the Mountain Strike Corps will also be converted into IBGs.

New tri-services agencies

- Three new tri-services agencies are also being built up – a Cyber Agency, a Space Agency and an Armed Forces Special Operations Division. These three agencies will have a joint command,
- the Cyber Agency is looking at a strength of around 1,000, which will include defence and civilian personnel. “It is being raised for the last two years
- The Navy will lead the Cyber Agency and the personnel are being trained with the National Technical Research Organisation.”
- The forces are “focusing on creating cyber assets” with both, offensive as well as defensive capability.

Him Vijay

- ‘Operation Him Vijay’, a military exercise designed to test out Indian army’s offensive capabilities against China
- The exercise was held in Arunachal Pradesh in the month of October 2019 away from the line of actual control with China
- The army plans to convert the new 17 Corps or ‘Brahmastra’ Corps into ‘a lean and mean force’ for ‘swift attacks’ inside Chinese territory in the event of a war.
- This exercise is also meant as a major combat exercise to test its new integrated battle groups (IBGs) for mountain warfare in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The three IBGs, carved out of the 17 Corps with around 5,000 soldiers each and a mix of tanks, light artillery, air defence units, signals and other elements, exercised in conjunction with IAF’s C-17 Globemaster-III, C-130J Super Hercules and AN-32 aircraft as well as helicopters for airlift of soldiers and equipment as well as rapid inter-valley transfers.

Know! about Mountain Strike Corps and their role in IBG

- Indian Army’s XVII Corps or Mountain Strike Corps, headquartered in Panagarh, West Bengal.
- This Corps has been specifically raised and designed to undertake offensive operations across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China.
- The Mountain Strike Corps “has become too huge, a bit of an elephant” and will be “divided into five to six IBGs”.
- There will be four IBGs in Sikkim and another four in the Jammu-Sialkot sector facing Pakistan.
- The IBGs will have the capacity to 10-15 km deep into enemy territory without requiring support.

Internal Security: Banned Assamese insurgent group NDFB gives up arms signs agreement to join peace talks with govt

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NDFB + about bodo tribes + about 6th schedule) + Mains (GS III internal security Linkages between development and spread of extremism. Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.)

What’s the NEWS

- Banned NDFB, an insurgent group active in Assam, has signed an agreement with the government for suspension of operations
- According to the pact, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland under the leadership of its ‘president’ B Saoraigwra will abjure violence and join in peace talks with the government.
- The tripartite agreement was signed by representatives of the NDFB and the central and Assam governments

National Democratic Front of Bodoland(NDFB).

- It is an armed separatist outfit which seeks to obtain a sovereign Bodoland for the Bodo people.
- Bodo Security Force(BdSF) was formed in 1986 and in 1994, the BdSF renamed itself as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland(NDFB).
- The group has carried out several attacks in Assam targeting non-Bodo civilians as well as the security forces.
- In 2008, NDFB was divided into two factions namely NDFB(Progressive) and NDFB (RD). In 2012 NDFB(RD) again broke away and the NDFB(S) faction was formed.

Know! about Bodos

- Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam making up over 5-6% of the state’s population.
- The Bodo people speak the Bodo language, a Tibeto-Burman language recognized as one of twenty-two scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution.
- The Bodos have had a long history of separatist demands marked by armed struggle. They demanded for a separate state called Bodoland.
- This demand led to the signing of Bodo Accord in 2003. The accord provides for the establishment of a Bodoland Territorial Council under Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

- The four districts in Assam namely Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang constitutes the Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD).

Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, according to Article 244 of the Indian Constitution.
- Passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, it seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).

Know! about ADC

- ADCs are bodies representing a district to which the Constitution has given varying degrees of autonomy within the state legislature.
- The governors of these states are empowered to reorganise boundaries of the tribal areas.
- In simpler terms, she or he can choose to include or exclude any area, increase or decrease the boundaries and unite two or more autonomous districts into one.
- They can also alter or change the names of autonomous regions without a separate legislation.

Autonomous districts and regional councils

- Along with ADCs, the Sixth Schedule also provides for separate Regional Councils for each area constituted as an autonomous region.
- In all, there are 10 areas in the Northeast that are registered as autonomous districts – three in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram and one in Tripura.
- These regions are named as district council of (name of district) and regional council of (name of region).
- Each autonomous district and regional council consists of not more than 30 members, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them remain in power for a term of five years.
- The Bodoland Territorial Council, however, is an exception as it can constitute up to 46 members out of which 40 are elected.
- Of these 40 seats, 35 are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes and non-tribal communities, five are unreserved and the rest six are nominated by the governor from unrepresented communities of the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD).

ADCs empowered with civil and judicial powers

- The ADCs are empowered with civil and judicial powers, can constitute village courts within their jurisdiction to hear trial of cases involving the tribes.
- Governors of states that fall under the Sixth Schedule specifies the jurisdiction of high courts for each of these cases.
- The councils are also empowered to make legislative laws on matters like land, forests, fisheries, social security, entertainment, public health, etc. with due approval from the governor.

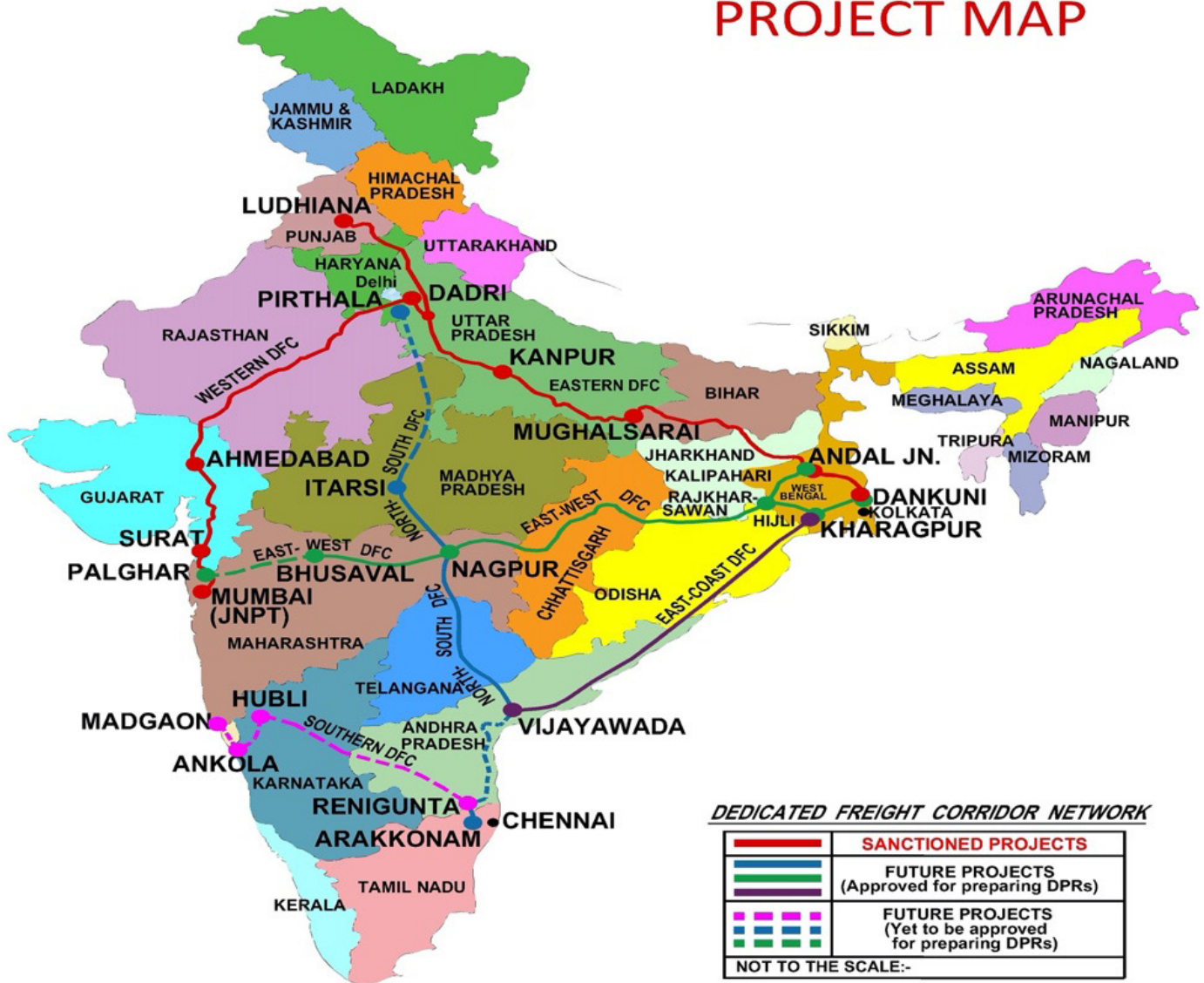
Infrastructure Development: 14th Foundation Day of Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL) celebrated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about DFCCIL) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The 14th Foundation Day of Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL) was celebrated recently
- The Ministry of Railways congratulated team DFCCIL for completing 500 km of Dedicated Freight Corridor and exhorted the team to achieve the goal of 991 km by March 2020.
- The Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFC) are a mega rail transport project being undertaken to increase transportation capacity, reduce unit costs of transportation, and improve service quality.
- The Eastern DFC (1839 route kilometres (RKM)) extends from Dankuni near Kolkata to Ludhiana in Punjab, while the Western DFC (1499 RKM) extends from the Jawahar Lal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Mumbai to Dadri / Rewari (Delhi)

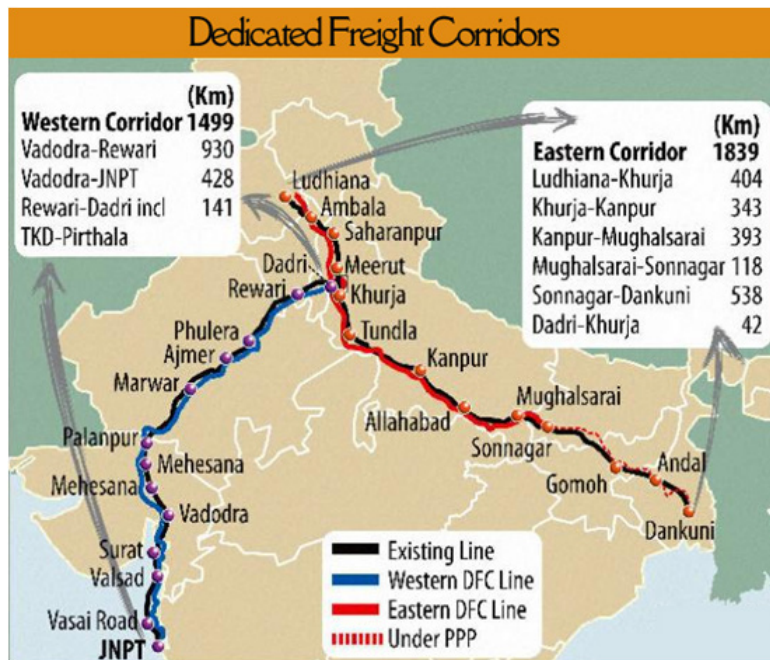
PROJECT MAP



MAP FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSE ONLY

Know! more about DFCCIL

- The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL) is a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) corporation run by government of India's Ministry of Railways to undertake planning, development, and mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors.
- The DFCCIL was registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 in 2006.
- It is both enabler and beneficiary of other key Government of India schemes, such as and Industrial corridor, Make in India, Startup India, Standup India, Sagarmala, Bharatmala, UDAN-RCS, Digital India, BharatNet
- While Japan International Cooperation Agency is providing loan for the Western India project, the Eastern DFC (Mughalsarai-Allahabad-Kanpur-Khurja-Dadri- & Khurja-Ludhiana) is being funded by the World Bank



DFCCIL's mission is:

- To build a corridor with appropriate technology that enables Indian railways to regain its market share of freight transport by creating additional capacity and guaranteeing efficient, reliable, safe and cheaper options for mobility to its customers.
- To set up Multimodal logistic parks along the DFC to provide complete transport solution to customers.
- To support the government's initiatives toward ecological sustainability by encouraging users to adopt railways as the most environment friendly mode for their transport requirements.

Apart from the Eastern and Western DFCs, a feasibility study has also been undertaken on four future freight corridors, viz.

- East-West Corridor (Kolkata-Mumbai)
- North-South Corridor (Delhi-Chennai)
- East Coast Corridor (Kharagpur-Vijayawada)
- Southern Corridor (Goa-Chennai).

Govt awards over Rs 2000 cr for completing Z Morh tunnel

Light at End of...

Tunnel: Z-morh in J&K | **Length: 6.5 km**

Link:
Will provide all-
weather connectivity
between Srinagar
and Kargil

- Expected completion in 3.5 years
- Tunnel being constructed on BOT model

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Relevance IN – Prelims (about Z Morh tunnel) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- All the union ministers are to pay a visit to Jammu and Kashmir. The aim of the visit is to spread information about the
- A Concession Agreement for completing the 6.5-kilometre long Z-Morh tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir was signed

Know! about the agreement signed

- Under the agreement, the two-lane bi-directional tunnel with parallel escape tunnel will be completed in 3.5 years at a cost of 2379 Crore rupees.
- The project includes construction, operation and maintenance of the tunnel with approaches on NH-1 at Srinagar-Sonmarg-Gumri Road from 61 kilometres to 89.30 kilometres on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer Annuity basis.
- Z-Morh Tunnel will provide all-weather road connectivity to Sonmarg tourist spot in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The tunnel will open NH-1 Srinagar-Sonmarg-Gumri highway throughout the year. The highway is seldom closed in winter due to snow.
- It mostly remains closed during the winters due to heavy snowfall in Gaganger area.

Know! more about the tunnel

- The National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) awarded the crucial Z-Morh Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir to APCO Amarnathji Tunnelway Pvt Ltd to be built at a cost of Rs 2,379 crore
- The project was earlier allotted to Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), but the contractor abandoned it after IL&FS Group faced financial crisis.
- Z-Morh Tunnel would provide all-weather road connectivity to Sonamarg tourist spot in Jammu and Kashmir which mostly remains closed during the winters due to heavy snowfall in Gaganger area.
- The pact between NHIDCL and APCO Amarnathji Tunnelway was signed in presence of Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari.

Science and Technology: Centre of Excellence in Blockchain Technology inaugurated recently

Relevance IN – Prelims (about blockchain + about NIC and NKN) + Mains (GS III Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology)

What's the NEWS

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) has set up the Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Blockchain Technology in Bengaluru, Karnataka, aiming to provide Blockchain as a service and allowing all stakeholders to benefit from shared learning, experiences and resources.

Know! about the objective/applications of CoE

- The Centre of Excellence will facilitate the Government Departments in building proof of concepts for use of Blockchain technology in different dimensions of governance leading to large scale deployment of some such applications.
- With National Informatics Centre (NIC) providing a robust and an agile infrastructure, the CoE shall also provide Blockchain as a Service (BaaS) for efficient hosting of Blockchain network.
- The CoE has developed Blockchain based Proof of Concepts (PoCs) for select government use cases to understand potential benefits provided by this emerging technology.
- New and previously unforeseen applications of Blockchain in the Government are expected to enhance transparency, traceability and trust in e-governance systems.

Know! about National Informatics Centre (NIC)

- National Informatics Centre (NIC) as a premier technology advisor and ICT solution provider to Government at all levels

- It has been set up by the Indian government in 1976 to drive its technology and e-governance initiatives in the country under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's Department.
- NIC has always taken the first step to introduce the latest technologies and services in government, be it the introduction of ICT in Government, establishment of NICNET or National Knowledge Network (NKN), development of critical e-Governance solutions and a host of other services required by the Government.

Know! about Block Chain

- A blockchain is a database that is shared across a network of computers. Once a record has been added to the chain it is very difficult to change.
- To ensure all the copies of the database are the same, the network makes constant checks.
- Blockchains have been used to underpin cyber-currencies like bitcoin, but many other possible uses are emerging.
- Blockchain technology is upcoming & niche technology and adoption of the same in sectors such as health, finance, agriculture and various other sectors would aid the government in implementing various programmes and provide trust and immutability to the assets.

Know! about NKN

- National Knowledge Network (NKN) project is aimed at establishing a strong and robust Indian network which will be capable of providing secure and reliable connectivity.
- In India, NKN with its multi-gigabit capability aims to connect all universities, research institutions, libraries, laboratories, healthcare and agricultural institutions across the country to address such paradigm shift.
- National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, is the implementing agency.

Know! the role of NKN

- Establishing a high-speed backbone connectivity which will enable knowledge and information sharing amongst NKN connected institutes
- Enabling collaborative research, development and innovation amongst NKN connected institutes
- Facilitating advanced distance education in specialized fields like engineering, science, medicine etc.
- Facilitating an ultra-high speed e-governance backbone
- Facilitating connection between different sectoral networks in the field of research

Defence: India's Nuclear Triad Gets New Teeth, 3500km Range Nuclear-capable K-4 Missile Tested



Relevance IN – Prelims (about K-4 missile and about Arihant) + Mains (GS III security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- India successfully test-fired a 3,500 kilometre range nuclear capable missile that can be launched from a submarine
- The test-fire of the K-4 ballistic missile, however, took place off the coast of Andhra Pradesh

Know! more about the missile

- The missile is being developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and is to be fitted into
- The missile is developed by DRDO to deploy it on the fleet of the indigenously built Arihant-class nuclear-powered submarines of the Indian Navy.
- It is one of the two underwater missiles that are being developed by India for its submarine force. The other missile is a 700-kilometre range BO-5. INS Arihant is nuclear-powered submarine.
- The K-4's circular error of probability CEP (the radius of the missile's point of impact which is also a measure of the efficacy of its guidance systems) was 40 meters or less.
- CEP is an indicator of the delivery accuracy of a weapon system. It is used as a factor in determining probable damage to a target.
- Once these missiles are successfully inducted, they'll be a central component of the Arihant class of indigenous ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBN) and will give India the standoff capability to launch nuclear weapons submerged in Indian waters.
- India's nuclear triad -- the ability to use nuclear weapons from the air, land and from underwater.

Know! about INS Arihant

- INS Arihant is the lead ship of India's Arihant class of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines.
- The 6,000 tonne vessel was built under the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project at the Ship Building Centre in the port city of Visakhapatnam. It has the code name S2.
- In November 2018, India had announced that its first nuclear armed submarine Arihant had successfully completed its first deterrence patrol, heralding India's entry into an exclusive club of powers with land, air and sea-based nuclear weapons delivery platforms.
- The vessel is classified as a Strategic Strike Nuclear Submarine by India.

Environment: 146 Irrawaddy dolphins sighted in Odisha's Chilika



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Irrawaddy dolphins + Chilika lake) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Odisha Forest Department officials, wildlife experts and researchers on Sunday sighted 146 endangered Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika Lake, which boasts of the highest single lagoon population of the aquatic mammal in the world.

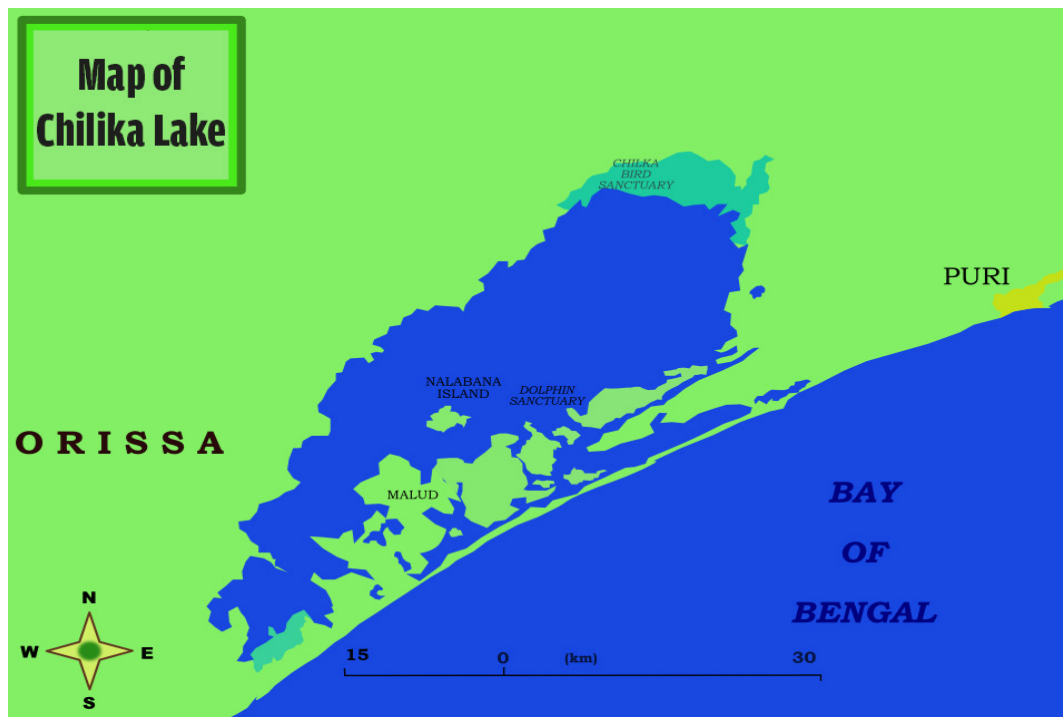
Know! more about the Dolphin Census

- The dolphin census was simultaneously taken up in Chilika and off Odisha coast.
- The direct sighting of 146 dolphins meant that its population in the lake would stabilise well above 150.
- According to last year's census, the Irrawaddy dolphin population in Chilika was 151.

Know! about Irrawaddy dolphins

- Irrawaddy Dolphin is not a true river dolphin, but an oceanic dolphin that lives in brackish water near coasts, river mouths and in estuaries in South and Southeast Asia and in three rivers: the Ayeyarwady (Myanmar), the Mahakam (Indonesian Borneo) and the Mekong.
- The total population of these aquatic mammals in the world is estimated to be less than 7,500.
- Of these, more than 6,000 Irrawaddy dolphins have been reported from Bangladesh, while the dolphin distribution in Chilika is considered to be the highest single lagoon population.
- Irrawaddy dolphins are IUCN listed as an Endangered species, which applies throughout their whole range.
- In 2004, CITES transferred the Irrawaddy dolphin from Appendix II to Appendix I, which forbids all commercial trade in species that are threatened with extinction.

Know! about Chilika lake



- Chilika Lake is a brackish water lagoon, spread over the eastern coast of India in the state of Odisha
- It is located at the mouth of the Daya River, flowing into the Bay of Bengal, covering an area of over 1,100 km.
- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest brackish water lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef.
- It has been listed as a tentative UNESCO World Heritage site.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Science & Technology: India's first global Mega Science Exhibition "Vigyan Samagam" inaugurated

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Vigyan Samagam + implementing ministries) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of science and technology)

What's the NEWS

- India's first global Mega Science Exhibition "Vigyan Samagam" has been inaugurated at National Science Centre, New Delhi



Know! more about the exhibition

- This is fourth such exhibition after being organised at Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata.
- The objective of this exhibition is to showcase to the people of India, that how science can influence, specially our youngsters, in this changing world, which is beyond imagination.
- Under the aegis of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), this prestigious science exhibition Vigyan Samagam is being jointly organised.
- These three organisations will be hosting some of the world's biggest science projects under one roof. The capital will be marking the completion of this caravan event. The exhibition will be open to public till 20th March, 2020.
- The Exhibition is expected to ignite the minds of students, academia and industry to look for opportunities to pursue fundamental science and research as a strong career option.
- These projects will help our scientist to work and contribute to international collaborations on fundamental science and research.

Know! about NCSM

- National Council of Science Museums (NCSM) is an autonomous organisation under Indian Ministry of Culture.
- It is the largest chain of science centers or museums under a single administrative umbrella in the world.
- There are 24 own science centers or museums and one R & D laboratory and Training centre of NCSM, located in different states in India.
- Functioning under the Ministry of Culture (and drawing its funding primarily from it), the NCSM has been built to co-ordinate all informal science communication activities in the museum space in the country.

Defence: IAF inducts its first squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft equipped with BrahMos missiles

Relevance IN - Prelims(about first squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI) + **Mains (GS III security challenges and their management in border areas)**

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Air Force has inducted its first squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft carrying the BrahMos missiles in the South at its Thanjavur base in Tamil Nadu
- The Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Bhadauria inducted the squadron

Know! more about it

- The newly reinstated 222-squadron, also known as the Tigersharks, would serve as a lethal weapons platform capable of carrying both aerial and maritime roles in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Thanjavur is strategically located in the southern peninsula and from there, the Tigersharks can dominate the seas and provide very close and integrated support to the Indian Navy.
- The Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft integrated with the supersonic cruise missiles BrahMos is the strongest maritime combination
- The newly inducted squadron of Sukhoi-30MKI is armed with 2.5 ton air-launched BrahMos Missile. The supersonic cruise missile is capable of striking targets at a distance of 300 KM.



Squadron

- A flying squadron or unit is a sub-unit of an air force station which carries out the primary task of the IAF.
- A fighter squadron consists of **18 aircraft**; all fighter squadrons are headed by a commanding officer with the rank of wing commander.

Economic Development: IMF revises downward India's economic growth to 4.8% for 2019-20

Relevance in – Prelims (about the report outcome + about IMF) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday sharply revised downward India's growth forecast by 130 basis points to 4.8% for 2019-20
- Global growth to increase modestly from 2.9 percent in 2019 to 3.3 percent in 2020 and 3.4 percent in 2021
- The slight downward revision of 0.1 percent for 2019 and 2020, and 0.2 percent for 2021, is owed largely to downward revisions for India

Know! about the report findings

- India slowed sharply "owing to stress in the nonbank financial sector and weak rural income growth"
- India's economic growth had decelerated to a six-and-a-half-year low of 4.5% in the September quarter.
- Indian economic growth is estimated to be at 4.8 percent in 2019 and it is expected to rise to 5.8 percent in 2020 and 6.5 percent in 2021.

Suggestive measures given by IMF

- Indian government should avoid a fiscal stimulus to boost the sagging economy and, instead, opt for an easier monetary policy.

Know! about IMF

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF), is an international organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., consisting of 189 countries working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world
- It plays a central role in the management of balance of payments difficulties and international financial crises.

Environment Conservation: India 5th among countries with corporate commitments to science-based targets

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Carbon Disclosure Project and the findings by Global Reporting Initiative) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- India has ranked 5th among the countries surveyed for corporate commitments to science-based targets (SBT), ahead of Germany and Sweden, according to a report by a non-profit organisation

Know! more about the project

- **Carbon Disclosure Project** is an initiative of the Global Reporting Initiative, is aimed at measuring the carbon reduction activities undertaken by different companies and firms operating in various countries across the globe.
- The report surveys corporate commitments to **science-based targets (SBT)** and evaluates the climate change risk that they are exposed to.
- The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) India annual report, which examines carbon reduction activities of companies, shows a whopping 58 Indian companies, 98 per cent of the 59 firms surveyed between 2018 and 2019, have board-level oversight of climate-related issues.
- India was ranked 5th, ahead of Germany and Sweden. India is the first developing economy with maximum number of companies committing to the science-based targets.
- The US and Japan topped the list with 135 and 83 companies, where as the UK ranked third with 78 countries, and France took the fourth spot with 51 companies.

Environment Conservation: One Trillion Trees Initiative

Relevance IN – Prelims (about one trillion trees initiative) +Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The World Economic Forum has launched 'One Trillion Trees Initiative' to grow, restore and conserve 1 trillion trees across the world by 2030. The global initiative is aimed at restoring biodiversity and help fight climate change.

Know! more about the initiative

- The one trillion trees project is also aimed at uniting governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses and individuals in mass-scale nature restoration.
- US President Donald Trump announced that the United States will join the one trillion trees initiative.



- The main purpose of planting one trillion trees is to slow down climate change by removing large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- The process of restoring, planting and conserving one trillion trees by 2030 will provide the much-needed progress against climate, biodiversity and SGD goals.
- Planting over 1 trillion additional trees will help cool the earth and reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations to where they stood a century back.

One Trillion Trees: objectives

- To unite and promote reforestation efforts worldwide.
- To mobilise funds and political support.
- To plant, restore and conserve trees and forests.
- To lock up carbon in the world's forests, grasslands and wetlands.

Know! more about 1t.org

- The 1t.org is a WEF initiative, which has been designed to support the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, led by UNEP and FAO.
- It will offer a platform to connect, empower and mobilize a global reforestation community comprising governments, businesses, civil society and millions of people from across the world.
- The community will help people unleash their potential to act at an unprecedented scale and speed up the conservation and restoration efforts for one trillion trees within this decade.

Know! about WEF

- The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in Cologny-Geneva, Switzerland, is an NGO, founded in 1971.
- The WEF's mission is cited as "committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas"
- It is a membership-based organization, and membership is made up of the world's largest corporations.
- The WEF hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubünden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland.
- The meeting brings together some 3,000 business leaders, international political leaders, economists, celebrities and journalists for up to five days to discuss global issues, across 500 public and private sessions.

Science & Technology: International Summit on Women in STEM– “Visualizing the Future: New Skylines”

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

What's the NEWS

- The Department of Biotechnology organized an International Summit on Women in STEM–“Visualizing the Future: New Skylines”
- The Summit was organized with the overall aim to boost the participation of women in STEM field for development of scientific career.
- The aim was to showcase women in STEM successes as real-world examples of successful women scientists, doctors and engineers demonstrating the excitement of being in the STEM fields as well as the rewards associated with it.
- Around 350 participants from different STEM field across the globe participated in the event including scientists, socialists, entrepreneurs, researchers, teachers and students.



- The summit provided a good platform for young students and researchers to interact and network with leaders in the field, to develop ideas and generate a future action plan for making career in STEM fields.

Know! about STEM

- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), is a term used to group together these academic disciplines.
- This term is typically used when addressing education policy and curriculum choices in schools to improve competitiveness in science and technology development.

Government Agreements: Government of India and the World Bank sign USD 210 million loan agreement for State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project.

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the project and its benefits) + Mains (GS III issues related to farmer's welfare)

What's the NEWS

- The Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra and the World Bank signed a loan agreement of USD 210 million to support small holder farmers participate in competitive agriculture value chains, facilitate agri-business investments, increase market access and productivity in focus commodities, and build resilience of crops to recurrent floods or droughts in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

Know! more about the project

- The USD210 million **Maharashtra Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project**, will help build capacity of the nodal departments and institutions; increase private sector investments in agricultural value chains; remove constraints for producers and entrepreneurs in accessing emerging domestic and export markets; build the capacity of the state to respond to commodity-price fluctuations by providing access to timely information on markets and production trends; and enhance adoption of climate resilient production techniques in the state.
- This project in Maharashtra is a significant step towards transforming the state's rural economy through sustainable agriculture practices and empowerment of farmers by connecting them directly to the markets.
- The project will be implemented in all 36 districts of Maharashtra. Over one million farming households will directly benefit from the project.

Space Awareness: Gaganyaan Mission: ISRO Unveils Half-Humanoid Talking Robot 'Vyom Mitra' That Will Travel To Space

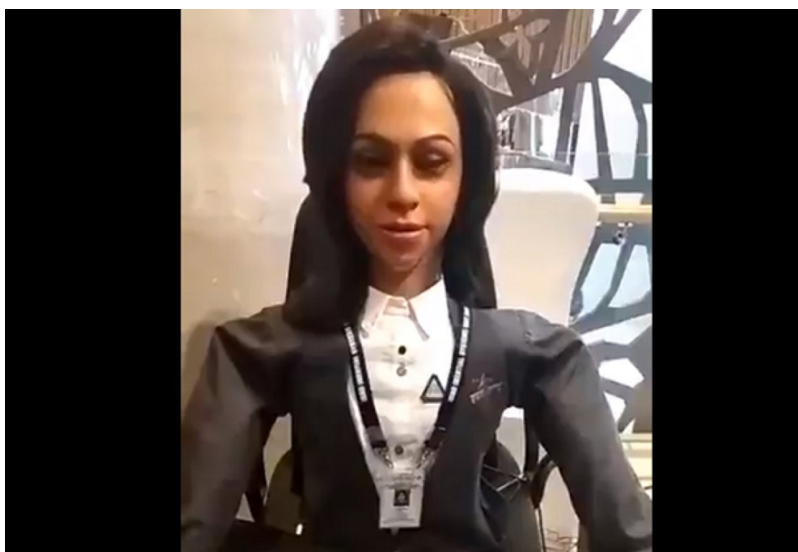
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Vyom Mitra and about Gaganyaan mission) + Mins (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) has unveiled a space faring 'half-humanoid' called Vyom Mitra at the inaugural function of a three-day meet titled 'Human Spaceflight & Exploration: Present challenges & future trends

Know! about Vyom Mitra

- It is called half-humanoid since it does not have legs, though it can bend forward and sideways.



- ISRO plans to send her to space as part of test flights that will be undertaken ahead of the ambitious launch of India's maiden human spaceflight mission.
- In her own words she said, "I can monitor few module parameters and alert you, and perform life support operations. I can be your companion, recognise the astronauts and respond to their queries."
- Two test space missions would be carried out before sending three Indian astronauts into space sometime in 2022.
- The test missions expected by this year-end and mid-2021 will validate ISRO's crew module and its systems.
- 'Gaganyaan' not only aims at India's maiden human flight to the space but also setting up a new space station

Cyber Security: NITI Aayog to develop National Data Platform



Relevance IN – Prelims (about NDAP) + Mains (GS III Cyber security)

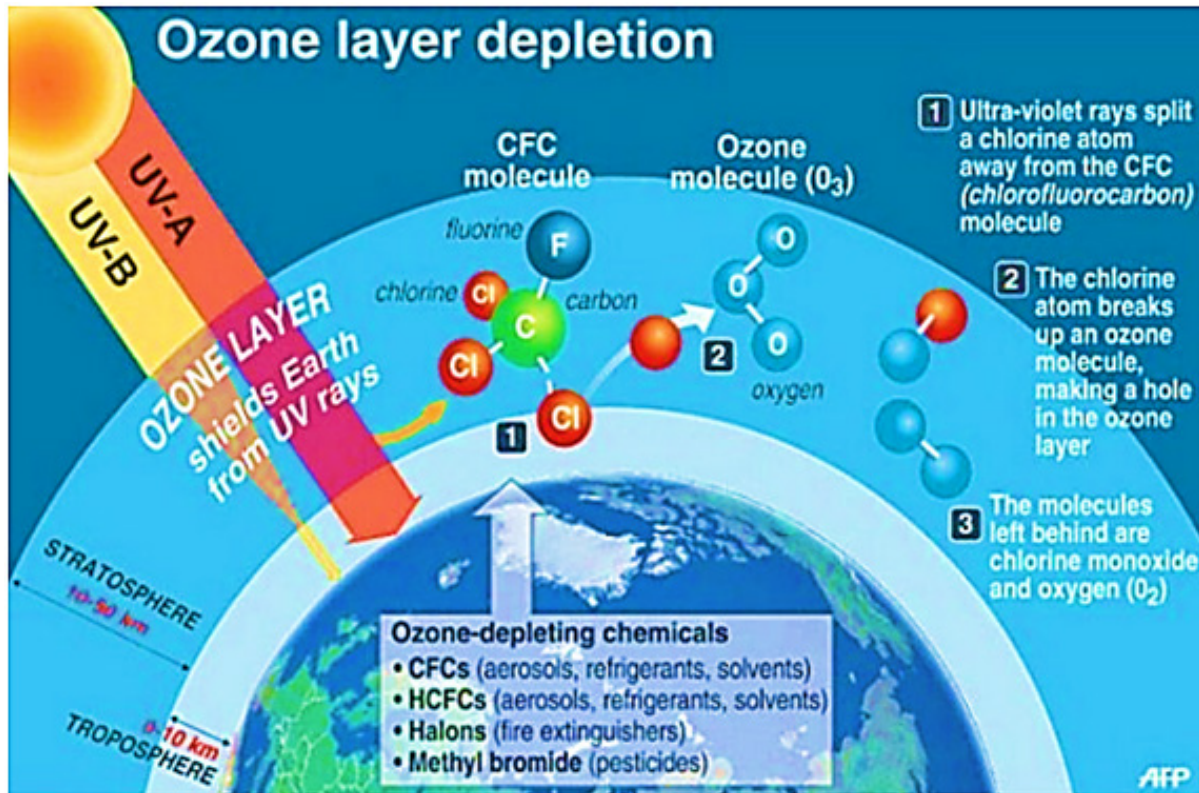
What's the NEWS

- Government think-tank Niti Aayog will develop a national data and analytics platform to make all government data accessible to stakeholders in a user-friendly manner.

Know! more about the National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP) (Draft highlights)

- The NDAP will strive to ensure that the data is assured, consistent, coherent and credible.
- Data across sectors should be coherent to support analysis and dissemination
- In addition, there should be easy access to the most recent data, published reliably
- The NDAP will host multiple datasets, present them coherently and provide visualisation and analytics tools.
- The NDAP will act as a platform for different stakeholders to access data in an easy way.
- It will host latest data from all the government websites. Also, the platform will standardize formats in which data has to be presented.
- The platform will be powered by a user friendly search engine, backed by seamless navigation, with a worldclass user interface.
- Data will be provided in a machine-readable format with customisable analytics
- NDAP will provide access to data from multiple sectors in one place, the document said data will be sourced from different Central and State Ministries and Departments.
- NDAP will be a reliable platform for up-to-date data. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be developed to keep data updated
- The NDAP will act as a platform for different stakeholders to access data in an easy way
- The first version of National Data and Analytics Platform is proposed to be released in 2021.

Environment Conservation: India achieves complete phase out of one the most potent ozone depleting chemical



Relevance IN – Prelims (about HCFC 141 b) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation – steps taken by the government)

What's the NEWS

- India has successfully achieved the complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b, which is a chemical used by foam manufacturing enterprises and one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs)

Know! more about it

- On 31 December, 2019 the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) brought out a notification in the Gazette of India through which the issuance of import license for HCFC-141b is prohibited from 1st January, 2020 under Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Amendment Rules, 2019 issued under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- HCFC-141b is not produced in the country and all the domestic requirements are met through imports. With this notification, prohibiting the import of HCFC-141 b, the country has completely phased out the important ozone depleting chemical.
- Simultaneously, the use of HCFC-141 b by foam manufacturing industry has also been closed as on 1st January, 2020 under the Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Amendment Rules, 2014.
- The complete phase out of HCFC 141 b from the country in foam sector is among the first at this scale in Article 5 parties (developing countries) under the Montreal Protocol.
- The step will have great impact on ozone layer. This is because around 50% of ozone depleting chemicals being used in the country attribute to HCFC-14

Know! about Montreal Protocol

- The Montreal Protocol was signed by 190 countries in 1987 to phase out Ozone Depleting Substances. In order to achieve this, India in 2017 launched a phase out plan.
- Though the target of the plan was 2023, India achieved the goal far ahead of the deadline.

Internal Security: Signing of Historic Comprehensive Bodo Settlement Agreement to end the over 50 year old Bodo Crisis



Relevance IN – Prelims (about the agreement and about Bodo tribes) + Mains (GS III internal security + GS II Centre -state relations)

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah presided over the signing of a historic agreement between Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo representatives, in New Delhi, to end the over 50-year old Bodo crisis.
- The tripartite agreement has been signed by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, the leadership of four factions of NDFB, Satyendra Garg, Joint Secretary of ABSU, Ministry of Home Affairs and Kumar Sanjay Krishna, Chief Secretary of Assam.
- The National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), one of the dangerous militant groups in Assam. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), agitating for a long time demanding Bodo state, also signed the deal.

Know! about the agreement (important takeaways)

- With this agreement, over 1500 armed cadres will abjure violence and join the mainstream.
- A Special Development Package Rs. 1500 crores over three years will be given by the Union Government to undertake specific projects for the development of Bodo areas.
- After the agreement, the NDFB factions will leave the path of violence, surrender their weapons and disband their armed organizations within a month of signing the deal.
- The Union Government and the Government of Assam will take necessary measures to rehabilitate over 1500 cadres of NDFB (P), NDFB (RD) and NDFB (S), as per the laid down policy of the government.
- The current agreement proposes to set up a commission under Section 14 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, which will recommend the inclusion or exclusion of tribal population residing in villages adjoining BTAD areas.
- The Government of Assam will establish a Bodo-Kachari Welfare Council as per existing procedure.
- The Assam government will also notify Bodo language as an associate official language in the state and will set up a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools.

- The present settlement has proposal to give more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers to BTC.
- The agreement provides political and economic benefits to the tribal areas without seeking a separate Bodoland state or union territory.

Know! the history of Bodo Accord

- The government of India has been signed three agreements with Bodo tribes so far for 27 years. Several clashes between extremists groups of Assam and the government have claimed hundreds of lives.
- The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Government of India have signed the first accord in 1993. This agreement resulted to the creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council with some political powers.
- The second Bodo accord was signed in 2003 between Government of India and extremist group Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT).
- The second agreement resulted to the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with four districts – Udaiguri, Chirang, Baska and Kokrajhar. These areas are commonly called Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD).

Know! about Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)

- BTC was constituted under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution to look after issues of Bodo tribes like education, horticulture and forests. However, police, general administration and revenue are controlled by the Government of Assam. The BTC was

Know! about Bodo Tribe and their movements

- The Bodo people are the largest tribe of Assam settled in the northern part of the Brahmaputra river valley.
- These tribes claimed themselves as natives of the Assam. According to an estimate, the Bodo tribe is about 28 percent of Assam's population.
- The Bodo tribe has been complaining that their land in Assam was occupied by other cultures and communities with different identities.
- In 1966 the Bodo tribals formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) and demanded a separate union territory Udayachal.
- The Bodo movement started witnessing violence post-1980s. Now, this movement divided into three streams.
- The first group NDFB is demanding for a separate state for itself. The second group Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) is demanding greater autonomy and targeted non-Bodo groups.
- The third group All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) is looking for more political powers and involvement in state administration.

Infrastructure Development: Indian Railways to run 100% on electricity by 2024

Relevance IN – Mains (GS III Infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- Railways Minister Piyush Goyal announced that the Indian Railways is expected to switch entirely to electricity by 2024, as it is already shunting diesel locomotives gradually out of service.
- By the year 2024, the entire Indian Railways to be run 100 per cent on electricity.
- It will be the first railway network in the world to be run fully on electricity.
- India is also planning to make the entire railways network a “net-zero emission network” by 2030.
- So far, till 2017-18, 4,087 km route had already been electrified. Upon success, the fuel bill will reduce by Rs 13,510 crores.
- Electrification of Railways is also Government's plan to create 500 GW of renewable energy by 2028.

Environment Conservation: 10 more wetlands from India get the Ramsar site tag

NEED FOR CONSERVATION			PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES WITHIN WETLANDS
WHAT IS WETLAND			
➤ Land area covered by water, either temporarily/seasonally or permanently (marsh, fen and peatland come under this category)		➤ It has characteristics of a distinct ecosystem	
WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT			
➤ Play a key role in hydro-logical cycle and flood control, water supply, providing food, fibre and raw materials		➤ Wetlands support lakhs of migratory birds from colder regions of the world in summers, apart from mangroves that protect coastlines and filter pollutants	
WETLANDS IN NUMBERS			
It mapped 2,01,503 wetlands	They comprise around 4.63% of the geographic area of India	No. of wetland sites in India under Ramsar Convention 37	
INDIA'S PROMINENT WETLANDS			
Chilika lake areas (Odisha) Wular lake (J&K) Renuka (Himachal Pradesh) Sambhar lake (Rajasthan) Deepor Beel (Assam) East Kolkata wetlands (West Bengal) Nal Sarovar (Gujarat) Harike (Punjab) Rudra Sagar (Tripura) and Bhoj wetland (Madhya Pradesh)			

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RAMSAR sites and convention + about Montreux Record + about Wetlands) +Mains (GS III Environment Conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Ramsar has declared 10 more wetland sites from India as sites of international importance.
- The total number Ramsar sites in India are now 37 & the surface area covered by these sites is 1,067,939 hectares

The new Indian sites include

- Nandur Madhameshwar bird sanctuary (Maharashtra)
- Beas conservation reserve, Keshopur-Miani community reserve and Nangal wildlife sanctuary (Punjab)
- Nawabganj bird sanctuary, Parvati Arga bird sanctuary, Saman bird sanctuary, Sarsai Nawar lake, Samaspur bird sanctuary and Sandi bird sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh).
- India's list of 37 includes Sambhar lake of Rajasthan which had last year seen mass mortality of migratory birds due to avian botulism caused by a bacteria.
- This saline lake had entered the global list in 1990. Globally, there are over 2,300 Ramsar sites around the world, covering over 2.1 million sq km.

Ramsar Convention

- The Ramsar Convention signed on February 2, 1971, is one of the oldest inter-governmental accord signed by members countries to preserve the ecological character of their wetlands of international importance.
- The aim of the Ramsar list is to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.
- Wetlands declared as Ramsar sites are protected under strict guidelines of the convention.
- Under the Ramsar (Iran) Convention of 1971, the member countries identify those sites which are recognised as being of significant value not only for the country or the countries in which they are located, but for humanity as a whole.

The Ramsar Convention works closely with six other organisations known as International Organization Partners (IOPs). These are:

- Birdlife International
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
- Wetlands International
- WWF International
- Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)

Montreux Record

- The **Montreux Record** is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List.

There are two Indian sites on the Montreux Record

- Loktak Lake, Manipur and Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan
- Chilika Lake, Odisha was the first Indian site to be placed on Montreux Record in 1993 due to siltation, which was choking the mouth of the lake but after a range of interventions, primarily the successful dredging of lake-mouth, opening it to the Bay of Bengal, it was removed from the list in 2002.

Know! about Wetlands

- The convention uses a broad definition including all areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metre
- Wetlands play a key role in flood control, water supply and providing food, fibre and raw materials, groundwater recharge, water purification, flood moderation, erosion control and climate regulation.
- Besides, such land areas also support migratory birds from colder regions of the world in summers, apart from mangroves that protect coastlines and filter pollutants.
- They are, in fact, are a major source of water and our main supply of freshwater comes from an array of wetlands which help soak rainfall and recharge groundwater.

Steps taken by the government for the conservation of Wetlands

- Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change has prepared a four pronged strategy for the restoration of wetlands which includes preparing a baseline data, wetland health cards, enlisting wetland mitras and preparing targeted Integrated Management Plans.
- The ministry had on January 6 notified new guidelines for implementing Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 which prohibit setting up or expansion of industries, and disposal of construction and demolition waste within the wetlands.

Environment Conservation: SC allows introduction of African cheetah in India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about African and Asian cheetah + about NTCA) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Supreme Court allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to a suitable habitat in India.

Know! more about it (the genesis)

- Stating that the rare Indian cheetah is almost extinct in the country, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had filed an application seeking permission for the introduction of the African cheetah from Namibia.
- The top court said the animal could be brought to **Madhya Pradesh's Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary** or any other part of India after a detailed study.
- The apex court set up a three-member committee to guide the NTCA in taking a decision on the issue.

- The apex court will monitor the project and the committee will submit its report every four months.
- The decision for relocation of the African cheetah will be taken after a proper survey and the action of introduction of the animal will be left to the NTCA's discretion.
- It was submitted before the apex court that the African cheetah will be introduced on an experimental basis in the best suitable habitat to see whether it can adapt to Indian conditions.
- The NTCA had earlier also filed an application before the apex court, seeking permission to introduce the mighty cat, but the application was rejected by the SC in 2013
- *'Reintroduction' of a species means releasing it in an area where it is capable of surviving.*

Cheetah/African Cheetah

- The cheetah is a large cat that occurs in North, Southern and East Africa, and a few localities in Iran.
- It inhabits a variety of mostly arid habitats like dry forests, scrub forests, and savannahs.
- The species is IUCN Red Listed as Vulnerable

Asiatic cheetah

- The Asiatic cheetah is classified as a "critically endangered" species by the IUCN Red List, and is believed to survive only in Iran.



- Critically endangered' means that the species faces an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.
- In 1952, the cheetah was officially declared extinct from India.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country
- 'Project Tiger' is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Environment, Forests and Climate Change, providing funding support to tiger range States, for in-situ conservation of tigers in designated tiger reserves

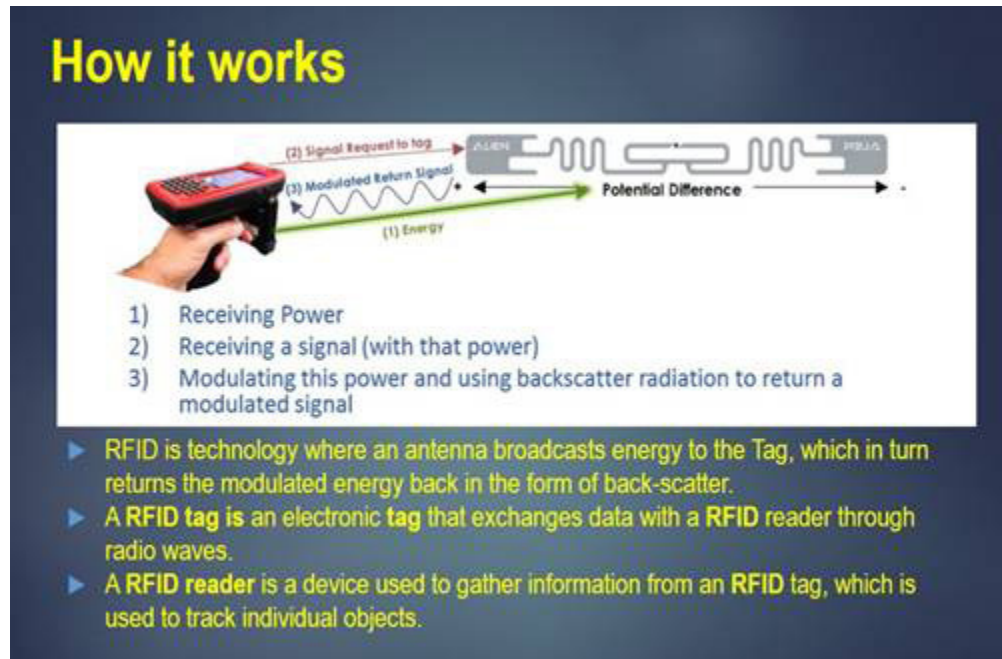
Infrastructure Development: Indian Railways implementing Automatic Identification and Data Collection (AIDC) of Rolling Stock (RFID Project)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RFID Project) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development + awareness in the field of Science and technology)

Know! all about the RFID Project

- The RFID project has been taken up by the Indian railways which aims to automatically and accurately track and trace rolling stock as they move across the country with a special focus on improving their safety and reliability.
- For implementing this project over Indian Railways, the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS, the IT arm of the Indian Railways), GS1 India and the Indian Industry have come together in alignment creating a new segment in the AIDC (Automatic Identification and Data Collection) industry in India uniquely suited for the Indian Railways requirements.
- This project is being spearheaded by the Rolling Stock Department of the Indian Railways.
- GS1 India is deeply involved in ensuring the quality of the work and proper adoption of international standards.
- CRIS has been utilising the considerable expertise of GS1 in developing and validating solutions, based on GS1 Standards, for the Indian Railways.

- The project enables real time visibility of railway wagons through the National Rail Network using cutting edge technologies like RFID with GS1 global standards for unique & universal identification, in line with global best practices.



- The Indian Railways has aggressive implementation plans for RFID.
- All Rolling Stock, roughly 3,50,000 vehicles, are expected to be tagged by 2021.
- Till now approximately 22,000 wagons and 1200 coaches have been fitted with RFID tags.
- Automating information capture about assemblies and components is a key element in the Indian Railways implementation of Industry 4.0.

Industry 4.0 refers to a new phase in the Industrial Revolution that focuses heavily on interconnectivity, automation, machine learning, and real-time data. In essence, **industry 4.0** is the trend towards automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies and processes which include internet of things (IoT), industrial internet of things (IIOT), cloud computing, and artificial intelligence etc.

Environment Conservation: TERI's World Sustainable Development Summit 2020 on 'Energy Future Road Map'



Relevance IN – Prelims (about WSDS 2020 and about TERI) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Petroleum Minister addresses TERI's World Sustainable Development Summit 2020
- The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).
- WSDS 2020 Theme Towards 2030: Making the Decade Count

Know! more about WSDS

- It has in its journey of eighteen years (2001- 2019) become a focal point for global leaders and practitioners to congregate on a single platform to discuss and deliberate over climatic issues of universal importance.
- The Summit series has emerged as the premier international event on sustainability which focusses on the global future, but with an eye on the actions in the developing world which could bend our common future.
- The WSDS has continued the legacy of the erstwhile Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS) which was initiated in 2001 with the aim of making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.
- The Summit series has over the years brought together 47 heads of state and government, 13 Nobel laureates, ministers from 64 countries, 1700 business leaders, 1900+ speakers and over 13,000 delegates from across the world.

Know! about TERI

- ***The Energy and Resources Institute:*** is a not-for-profit, policy research organization - working in the fields of energy, environment, and sustainable development
- Established in 1974, it was formerly known as the Tata Energy Research Institute. As the scope of its activities widened, it was renamed The Energy and Resources Institute in 2003
- TERI has emerged as one of the world's pre-eminent think tanks and research institutions in the field of energy, climate change and sustainability.

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Tina Dabi
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