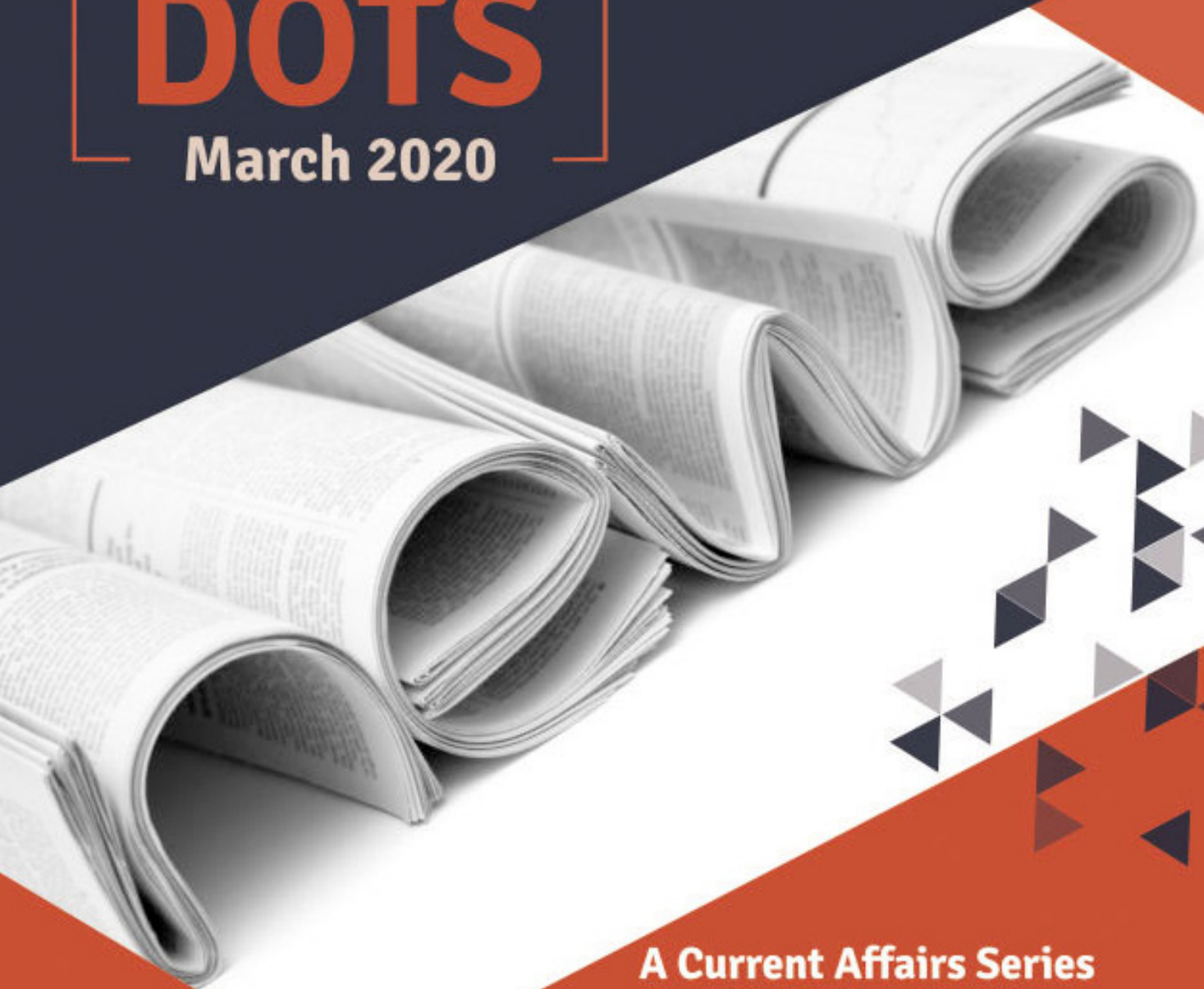


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Compendium – March 2020

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! MARCH 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! MARCH 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.

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Team CL

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Prelims Perspicuous Pointers

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Defence: Indian Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Varad commissioned

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Varad)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Varad has been commissioned

Know! more about it

- The ship Varad will be based at Paradip in Odisha, under the operational control of the Coast Guard North Eastern Region. The 98 meter long vessel has been designed and built by the L&T at its yard at Kattupalli near Chennai, as per the specifications of the Coast Guard.
- The ship is fitted with modern navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery.
- It is equipped with 30 mm and 12.7 mm guns. It has special onboard features like the Integrated Bridge System, Platform Management System, Automated Power Management System and High Power External Fire-Fighting system. The ship Varad can carry a twin engine helicopter and four high speed boats for swift boarding operations, search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol.
- The ship is also capable of carrying pollution response equipment for oil spill response at sea.
- The ship will be deployed extensively for the surveillance of India's Exclusive Economic Zone and to safeguard the maritime interests of the country.



Infrastructure Development: Infrastructure Projects on PMG Portal reviewed by the Commerce Ministry

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PMG Portal + Invest India)

What's the NEWS

- Minister of Commerce & Industry, chaired a meeting for the review of 17 large-size infrastructure projects in Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Project Monitoring Group (PMG).

Know! about PMG

- Project Monitoring Group (PMG) is an institutional mechanism of DPIIT to expedite resolution of issues and removal of regulatory bottlenecks in projects, with investments upward of ₹ 500 crores in India.
- Invest India provides implementational support to PMG in identifying and following up on issues with the States.
- PMG enlists unresolved project issues of all Public, Private and 'Public-Private Partnership' (PPP) projects and undertakes fast-tracking of approvals, sectoral policy issues and removal of bottlenecks for expeditious commissioning.
- It has till date resolved more than 3500 issues in 809 projects and has unlocked anticipated financial investment of more than ₹ 32 lakh crores.
- At the moment, PMG and Invest India are handling 588 issues in 260 projects, with total anticipated investment of ₹10 lakh crore.

INVEST INDIA

- National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India and act as the first point of reference for investors in India.
- Invest India, set up in 2009, is a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

Government Schemes: 80,000 Micro Enterprises to be Assisted in Current Financial year under PMEGP

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PMEGP + about CGTMSE)

What's the NEWS

- Some of the key schemes of Ministry of MSME which generate large number of jobs with low capital investment were reviewed recently in a meeting
- The focus of the meeting was on the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), a flagship scheme of the Ministry of MSME, and Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

Know! about PMEGP

- PMEGP is a credit linked subsidy scheme launched by the Ministry of MSME which promotes self-employment through setting up of micro enterprises, where subsidy up to 35 percent is provided by the Government through Ministry of MSME for loans up to Rs. 25 lakhs in manufacturing and Rs 10 lakhs in service sector.
- Self Help Groups, Institutions registered under Societies Registration Act 1860, Production Co-operative Societies, Charitable Trusts and any individual above 18 years of age are eligible.
- The Scheme is implemented through Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) at the national level and at the State level it is implemented through State Khadi and Village Industries Commission

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

- Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India launched Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) to make available collateral-free credit to the micro and small enterprise sector.
- Both the existing and the new enterprises are eligible to be covered under the scheme.
- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, GoI and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), established a Trust named Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) to implement the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises.
- CGTMSE has introduced a new "Hybrid Security" product allowing guarantee cover for the portion of credit facility not covered by collateral security.

Infrastructure Development: Energy; 11 'REMCs' to be commissioned

Relevance IN – Prelims (about REMCs)

What's the NEWS

- Eleven 'Renewable Energy Management Centres' (REMC) inaugurated by Union Power Minister

Know! about REMC

- These REMCs, built at a cost of 409 crore, will make it possible for the country to have more of renewable energy, particularly wind.
- Without these, absorption of large packets of intermittent electricity from wind and solar plants would not be possible.
- Public sector major Power Grid Corporation of India is overseeing the setting up of these REMCs on behalf of the Ministry of Power.
- One REMC will come up in the National Load Dispatch Centre, three in as many Regional Load Dispatch Centres and seven in the State Load Dispatch Centres

Load dispatch centres

- Load dispatch centres are like the control room that oversees how much and where the electricity is coming from and whom it should go to.

Know! the working of REMCs

- REMCs are a unit of load dispatch centres that keep an eye on renewable energy plants.
- These centres will essentially perform three functions: forecasting of renewable energy from each plant
- scheduling of renewable energy to customers
- tracking of generation from the RE plants

What's the need of REMCs

- The problem with wind and solar energy is its intermittency.
- Energy flows when wind blows and stops when wind stops; likewise, when a cloud passes over the sun, electricity from the solar plants dips.
- This ebb-and-tide of power through the cables is a headache for the grid manager who has to keep a steady supply of electricity at the consumers' end.
- REMC is a "hub for all information regarding renewable energy power generation", which would have a "dedicated team for managing forecast RE generation, dispatch and real-time monitoring to ensure safe, secure and optimal operation of the grid"

Science and Technology: RaIDER-X New explosive detection device, developed by DRDO & IISc Bangalore

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RaIDER-X)

What's the NEWS

- RaIDER-X, a new explosive detection device, was unveiled at the National Workshop on Explosive Detection (NWED-2020).
- RaIDER-X has the capability to detect explosives from a stand-off distance.
- RaIDER-X has been co-developed by High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) Pune and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Know! more about NWED and HEMRL

- The NWED-2020 was inaugurated by DRDO. The two-day workshop has been organised by HEMRL Pune on its diamond jubilee celebration.
- HEMRL Pune is a premier laboratory of DRDO. It provides a platform to scientists, technocrats and users to share knowledge, experience and updated information on the technological advancements made in the recent past.
- The workshop will help in the further development of explosive detection devices and keep abreast on the recent development and advancements in the field of explosive detection.



Prelims Factoids: Kudumbashree to bring products to houses

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Kudumbashree Mission or SPEM)

What's the NEWS

- Kudumbashree will organise the 'Veetiloru Kudumbashree Ulpannam' campaign.
- The State-level one-day campaign on March 15 is aimed at taking Kudumbashree products to each household in the State to increase their popularity and ensure a steady local market for them.

- The campaign is being held against the backdrop of observance of the 2019-20 financial year as the 'Year of Livelihood' by Kudumbashree and International Women's Day celebrations.

Know! more about Kudumbashree Mission

- The State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM), popularly known as Kudumbashree Mission is the State government's arm for poverty eradication under the Local Self-Government Department.
- The Mission has a Governing Body chaired by the Minister for Local Self-Government and an Executive Committee chaired by the Principal Secretary, Local Self-Government Department.
- The Mission is the agency that promoted and supports the community network.
- It supports programmes in economic and social empowerment and works as an agency for enhancing women's citizenship.
- The Mission provides policy support for the programmes and ensures convergence of the community network and local government institutions. It facilitated partnerships at the district and State levels.

Infrastructure Development: Odisha is going to be the nerve centre of Mission Purvodaya

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Mission Purvodaya)

What's the NEWS

- With Japan as the partner country, the government is looking forward to make Odisha the nerve centre of Purvodaya in steel sector.
- It was stated by the Ministry of Steel in the workshop on "Enabling Procedures for Increase of Steel Usage for the Growth of Economy" in Bhubaneswar.
- This workshop was organised by ministry of steel in partnership with the ministry of economy, trade and industry, Government of Japan and industry body Confederation of Indian Industries (CII).

Know! about PURVODAYA: Accelerated development of eastern India through integrated steel hub

- Purvodaya in steel sector is aimed at driving accelerated development of Eastern India through establishment of integrated steel hub.
- Eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal) and Northern part of Andhra Pradesh collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.
- 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.

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

Miscellaneous: 19th World Productivity Congress

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WPC and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- World Productivity Congress, the world's largest convention for productivity development, is back in India after a gap of 45 years.
- The 19th edition of World Productivity Congress (WPC) will be held on May 6 to May 8, 2020 at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre, Bangalore.



Know! all about WPC

- The foremost future-shaping productivity deliberation event will be a key platform to deliberate on innovation and world-class practices that shape future productivity growth.
- WPC brings together a distinguished group of leading businessmen, industrialists, scholars, politicians, administrators and productivity experts from around the globe and from all sectors of industry, commerce and public services.
- Montreal headquartered World Confederation of Productivity Science (WCPS) has been organising this mega future-shaping convention since 1969. Last time, WPC was held in India was in the year 1974.
- WPC takes a broad, inclusive and holistic view of productivity, recognising that to be sustainable, businesses, governments and other organisations have to address social, environmental and economic productivities.
- The Congress is co-organised by PDA ventures Pvt Ltd, a group company of Trade Fairs Pvt Ltd, one of India's largest home-grown Trade fair organising companies.
- The takeaways from the 19th edition of the World Productivity Congress aims to be a catalyst for shaping future government approaches to enhance productivity for shaping future organisational strategies.
- Theme: The 19th World Productivity Congress themed "Industry 4.0 - Innovation and Productivity" which represents the Fourth Industrial Revolution that amalgamates the capabilities of humans and machines.
- I-4.0 uses innovations based on artificial intelligence, IoT and connectivity in industry, advanced manufacturing and the service sectors to increase productivity in a sustainable manner.
- The congress will focus on topics Digital Transformation, Technologies for I-4.0, Innovation in Service Industries, Implications for Global Challenges and Smart Manufacturing.

About World Confederation of Productivity Science(WCPS)

- It is an international association of industry, government, research centres, universities and scientists with an interest in progressing their economies and industries by the application of best practices in productivity science.
- Members of WCPS firmly believe that improving productivity increases wealth, and if that wealth is shared appropriately, conditions are created to enable a fairer society and a more peaceful world.
- Established in 1969, WCPS has hosted World Congress events, approximately every two or three years, usually involving the most senior leaders in government and industry, striving to enhance their economic and productivity strategies utilising the global knowledge and reach of WCPS.

There are two branches within WCPS:

- The World Academy of Productivity Science (WAPS) comprising over 500 recognised world leaders in productivity.
- The World Network of Productivity Organisations (WNPO) comprising approximately 23 countries that have established National Productivity Centers or National Productivity Organisations, usually in Private-Public partnerships, to make best practices in productivity more readily available to small to medium sized entities and government departments.

Prelims Factoids: Araku Utsav 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Araku Utsav)

What's the NEWS

- The two-day annual festival -- Araku Utsav 2020 begins at Araku Valley in Visakhapatnam district
- It is organised by the Andhra Pradesh Government

Know! about the fest

- The aim of organising such festivals was to spread the tribal tradition and culture to other regions. Such utsavs would also put Araku on global map
- People in large numbers from Araku and surrounding mandals thronged the utsav venue.

Prelims Factoids: Nomination dossiers of 'Dholavira'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Dholavira)

What's the NEWS

- Government of India has submitted two nomination dossiers namely '**Dholavira: A Harappan City**' and '**Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate**' for inclusion in the World Heritage List for the year 2020.
- Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has submitted the proposal of '**Group of Monuments at Mandu**' in the year 2019.

Know! about Dholavira

- Dholavira is an archaeological site of Kutch District, in the state of Gujarat in western India,
- Also known locally as Kotada timba, the site contains ruins of an ancient Indus Valley Civilization/Harappan city.
- It consisted of a bipartite 'citadel', a 'middle town' and a 'lower town', two 'stadia', an 'annexe', a series of reservoirs all set within a fortification running on all four sides.
- Dholavira's location is on the Tropic of Cancer. It is one of the five largest Harappan sites and most prominent archaeological sites in India belonging to the Indus Valley Civilization.
- It is also considered as having been the grandest of cities of its time. It is located on Khadir bet island in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in the Great Rann of Kutch.

Prelims Factoids: 8-day Vasantotsav begins in Gandhinagar

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Vasantotsav)

What's the NEWS

- The Eight day cultural fair called Vasantotsav was inaugurated at Sanskruti Kunj in Gandhinagar.

Know! more about the fest

- The annual festival is organised by the department of Youth and cultural Affairs, Government of to celebrate the rich diverse heritage of the country. This year the theme of the festival is Ek Bhaart Shreshth Bharat. Artists from across India have come to Gujarat to participate in the festival.
- Chhattisgarh being the pair state of Gujarat, the festival was kicked off with the performance Panthi dance, which is a folk dance form of the of Chhattisgarh.
- Along with dance performances, several stalls have been set up to showcase and sale various local traditional handicraft of different states.



International: Scotland may become the first country in the world to end 'period poverty'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about period poverty)

What's the NEWS

- The Scottish Parliament passed the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill that aims to make sanitary products free for women of all age groups.
- The Bill has only passed the first hurdle to become a law. It still needs to be considered by a parliamentary committee, following which it will require approval from the parliament. It will finally need the Royal Assent of the Queen.

Know! about period poverty

- As of now, in Scotland, the provision of free sanitary products is already available in schools, universities and colleges.
- Referring to “period dignity”, the legislation aims to develop a universal system in Scotland, which will provide free sanitary products for “anyone who needs them”.
- One of the primary aims of the Bill is to ensure that those who menstruate have “reasonably convenient” access to period products free of charge.

Svalbard Global Seed Vault

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Svalbard Global Seed Vault)

What's the NEWS

- The Svalbard Global Seed Vault — referred to as the earth's ‘doomsday vault’ — now contains about 1.05 million seeds.
- The aim of the vault is to preserve a vast variety of crop seeds in the case of a doomsday event, calamity, climate change or national emergency.

Know! more about it

- A fresh stock of 60,000 new seed samples from 36 different institutions worldwide was deposited to the reserve vault of seeds in February 2020.
- On February 25, 30 gene banks deposited seeds, including samples from India, Mali and Peru
- The vault — in the island of Spitsbergen, midway between Norway and the North Pole — opened in 2008 and preserves seeds for several food varieties.
- The vault is artificially cooled at temperatures of below 18 degrees Celsius. The Arctic's climate keeps it cold in case of a power failure. It serves as a backup for plant breeders to develop new varieties of crops.



Know! the benefits

- There is a need to preserve this biodiversity to provide healthy diets and for providing farmers with sustainable livelihoods so that they can adapt to new conditions
- The Seed Vault and seed banks around the world play a vital role in this critically important mission
- A withdrawal was made from the vault in 2015 after Syria's civil war damaged a seed bank near Aleppo.
- A year-long upgrade to the vault — at a cost of \$11 million — was made in October, 2019 by Norway.

Government Schemes: Om Birla launches “Suposhit Maa Abhiyan” in Kota

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Suposhit Maa Abhiyaan)

What's the NEWS

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launched the “Suposhit Maa Abhiyan” with the aim to create a malnutrition-free India (by 2022) and to support pregnant women and adolescent girls.

Know! more about the campaign

- In the first phase of the campaign, 1,000 kits of 17 kg balanced diet each were provided to 1,000 pregnant women.
- It includes millet flour, wheat, maize, gram, jaggery, large soybean, groundnut, ghee, dates, roasted gram, lentil, oatmeal and rice.
- Suposhit Maa Abhiyan is a campaign to preserve and maintain the health of our future generations.
- A pledge has been taken to provide nutrition to every pregnant woman of the region.

- Under this Abhiyan, 1,000 women would be given food items for one month.
- At the same time, the health of the child, including medical examination, blood tests, medicines, delivery, would be covered.
- The identified women would be required to register on a website for adoption. Only one pregnant woman would be adopted from a family.

National: 8th Foundation Day of Land Ports Authority of India

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Land Ports Authority of India)

What's the NEWS

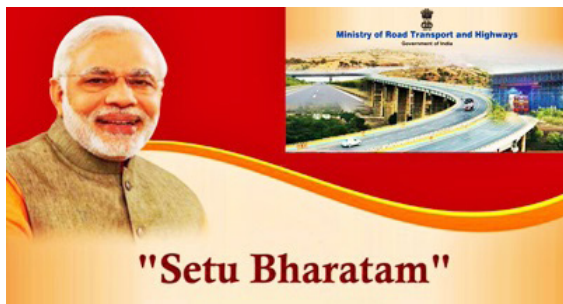
- The 8th Foundation Day of the Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), celebrated in New Delhi
- The occasion discussed diverse elements of land ports including cargo operations at Integrated Check Ports and other border infrastructure.

Know! about LPAI

- The Land Port Authority of India is responsible for handling border infrastructure. It creates, upgrades and maintains the integrated check posts and also border infrastructure.
- The Inland Custom Ports and Kartarpur Sahib Corridor had been also constructed by Land Port Authority of India.
- The Authority works to offer stable and efficient systems of shipment and passenger movements across worldwide borders.
- It also works to lessen the reside time and trade transaction time and costs. It promotes humans-to-human beings contact.
- The Land Ports Authority of India or LPAI is a statutory body (created through the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010) working under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing border infrastructure in India.
- It manages several Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) all across Borders of India.



Prelims Factoids: Setu Bharatam scheme



Relevance IN – Prelims (about Setu Bharatam and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- Government has envisaged replacement of all the level crossings on National Highways by Road Over Bridges or Road Under Bridges under the Setu Bharatam scheme.

Know! more about it

- The programme is being implemented by Road Transport and Highways Ministry to ensure safe and smooth flow of traffic and reduced road fatalities by 50 percent by 2020. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Setu Bharatam scheme on 4th March in 2016 for building rail over-bridges or underpasses for safe and seamless travel on National Highways.

- Setu Bharatam programme was launched to make all National Highways free of railway level crossings in order to prevent the frequent accidents and loss of lives at level crossings.
- Ministry of Road Transport Highways and Ministry of Railways have signed an MoU to replace all level crossings by Road Over Bridges or Road Under Bridges.
- Unmanned railway crossings are one of the chief causes of rail accidents in India, with such accidents being more frequent in rural areas. With the elimination of all such crossings targeted for this year, such mishaps can be avoided.

Prelims Factoids: Luxembourg becomes first country to make public transport free

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Luxembourg)

What's the NEWS

- Luxembourg abolished fares for trains, trams and buses in what the government said was a bid to tackle road congestion and pollution, as well as supporting low earners.
- All standard-class journeys on public transport in the tiny and wealthy European country are now free of charge, compared to an annual pass worth 440 euros (\$485) before. Travellers can still pay for first class, at a cost of 660 euros a year.
- The main reason is to have a better quality of mobility, and then the side reason is clearly also environmental issues.
- Luxembourg has just over 600,000 inhabitants, but 214,000 more travel in for work every day from neighbouring Germany, Belgium and France, causing heavy traffic jams as the majority of workers commute by car. More than half of Luxembourg's greenhouse gas emissions come from transport.



Prelims Factoids: Chapchar Kut, the biggest and most joyful festival of Mizos

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Chapchar Kut festival)

What's the NEWS

- In Mizoram, the biggest and most joyful festival of Mizos, Chapchar Kut is being celebrated across.

Know! more about the fest

- The Chapchar Kut is also regarded as the most popular spring festival to the people of the state.
- The gaiety and fervour of Chapchar Kut shines through with plenty of dancing and music to keep everyone in good spirits. This festival is a public holiday in the state.
- Traditional bamboo dance - Cheraw and other dances were performed at the main event, attracting thousands of people. Almost similar festive events are being held throughout the state



Prelims Factoids: Blissful Hygiene Offering to God (BHOG) certificates

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BHOG and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- The Tamil Nadu Food Safety and Drug Administration Department has asked the administrations of Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam and Mariamman Temple in Samayapuram to get Blissful Hygiene Offering to God (BHOG) certificates issued by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in order to ensure the quality of food served to devotees and offering to deities
- As a precautionary measure and to maintain a high level of hygiene, the temple administrations have been asked to get BHOG certificates through the department.



Centres with registration

Total worship centres: 15,000

Centres registered: 1,652

Ernakulam: 200 registered

T'Puram: 320 registered

Blissful Hygienic Offering to God

Bhog is an initiative by FSSAI to encourage places of worship to adopt and maintain food safety and hygiene

FSSAI introduced the project after 13 people died after consuming 'prasadam' from a temple in Karnataka

Religious centres in Ernakulam and T'Puram have taken the move positively

Know! more about BHOG

- BHOG (Blissful Hygienic Offering to God) launched in 2018 by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is a part of the Eat Right initiative to encourage Places of Worship (PoW) to adopt and maintain food safety and hygiene while preparing prasadam/food and includes training the food handlers and vendors in and around the premises of the PoW.
- Implementation of BHOG would help to ensure that safe and wholesome prasadam is received by the devotees along with the blessings of God.
- Implementation of BHOG would help to ensure that safe and wholesome prasadam is received by the devotees along with the blessings of God.

Prelims Factoids: Annual festival of St Antony's Shrine in Katchatheevu Island held

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the annual festival + about Katchatheevu island)

What's the NEWS

- The annual festival of St Antony's Shrine in Katchatheevu Island, Sri Lanka begins

Know! more about it

- More than 3,000 devotees from India are being transported in country boats from today morning. In all, 75 boats as well as 22 country boats are being used to ferry the devotees.
- The citizens of India are not required to possess an Indian passport or Sri Lankan visa for visiting Kachchatheevu, according to an agreement between the two governments.
- The mass and car procession in connection with the festival are conducted by priests from both India and Sri Lanka.
- St Antony is worshiped as the patron saint of sea farers. The shrine is the only structure on the island and was built in the early years of the last century.



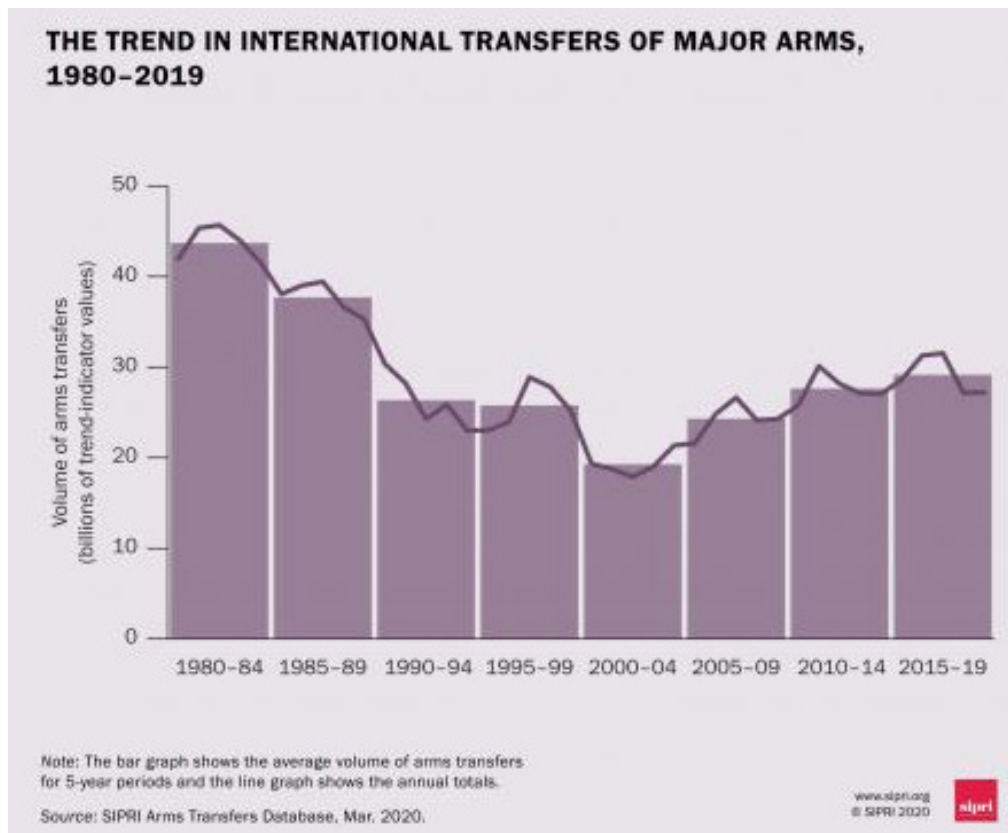
Miscellaneous: Govt to make sanitary napkin disposal bags mandatory from January 2021

Relevance IN – Prelims (about swachhta sevak + about the decision taken by the environment ministry)

What's the NEWS

- Union Environment Minister said that Sanitary napkin makers will be asked to supply a biodegradable bag with each napkin from January 2021.
- The possibility of getting infected because of handling used Sanitary Napkins thrown in the garbage was brought to notice by many of the women garbage collectors.
- The Minister interacted with the members of the women garbage collectors organization who he said should be referred to as “**swachhta sevak**”.
- Environment Ministry has taken the decision to ask Makers of Sanitary Napkins to provide biodegradable bags so that Napkins can be wrapped in these bags before being thrown in the garbage.
- The Environment Minister announced that the sanitation **and cleanliness norms** for Corporations and municipalities will now be applied to villages with a population of more than three thousand.

Miscellaneous: USA and France dramatically increase major arms exports; Saudi Arabia is largest arms importer, says SIPRI



Relevance IN – Prelims (about SPIRI and its report findings)

What's the NEWS

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released the annual “Trends in international arms transfers 2019” report
- The largest exporters of arms during the past five years were the United States, Russia, France, Germany and China.

- The new data shows that the flow of arms to the Middle East has increased, with Saudi Arabia clearly being the world's largest importer.
- India retained its position as the world's second largest arms importers during 2015-19, with Russia remaining the largest supplier even though its share of Indian weapons purchases declined from 72% to 56%

Know! about the findings of the report

- The five largest arms importers during the five-year period were Saudi Arabia, India, Egypt, Australia and China, which together accounted for 36% of all arms imports.
- The report listed India in the 23rd slot among the world's 25 largest arms exporters, with its main clients being Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.
- The report said India's arms imports from both Russia and the US fell during the five-year period, though the decline was more pronounced in the case of Russian arms deals. India accounted for 25% of total Russian arms exports.
- Russia was the largest supplier to India in 2010-14 and 2015-19, but deliveries fell by 47 per cent and its share of total Indian arms imports went from 72 to 56 per cent
- Arms imports from Israel and France increased, by 175% and 715% respectively, making them the second- and third-largest suppliers during 2015-19.

Know! about SIPRI

- SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public. Based in Stockholm, SIPRI is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide.

Environment Conservation: Gaur back in Valmiki Reserve thanks to increase in grassland cover



Relevance IN – Prelims (about gaur + about Valmiki reserve)

What's the NEWS

- Gaur (*Bos Gaurus*), the largest extant bovine in the world, have not only returned to Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR), but are also breeding there due to an increase in grassland cover

Know! more about it (VTR and Gaur)

- A large numbers of gaur had been spotted in camera traps — a sign of improving biodiversity and a positive development for VTR
- Gaur have been attracted to VTR due to the increase in grassland cover. Gaur are grassland specialists and their main food is grass
- VTR was set up in the early 1990s. It is spread over 899 square kilometres in Bihar's West Champaran district, bordering Nepal's Chitwan National Park to its north and Uttar Pradesh to its west.

- Gaur, which are native to south and southeast Asia, had shifted to Chitwan a few years back due to grassland destruction in VTR.
- The species is listed as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species since 1986. They are heavily built, with body weight varying between 400 and 1,200 kilogram.
- In the last one decade, VTR had increased its grassland cover to 15 per cent from four per cent and had created 22 water holes to provide easy sources of water for wild animals within the reserve area

Prelims Factoids: Wings India 2020 launched in Hyderabad

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Wings India)

What's the NEWS

- Wings India 2020, the biennial civil aviation and aerospace event was launched at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad on the theme of 'Flying For All'.

Know! more about it

- The event is being organised by Ministry of Civil Aviation along with Airports Authority of India and FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry).
- More than 100 exhibitors, over 20 states and over 500 delegates are participating in the flagship event of Civil Aviation.
- Wings India 2020 is a platform for all stakeholders to come together to work towards ensuring the growth of Civil Aviation

e-governance: BhoomiRashi potral

Relevance IN – Prelims (about BhoomiRashi Portal)

Know! about BhoomiRashi Portal

- The BhoomiRashi Portal launched on 01.04.2018 as a major e-Governance initiative of the Ministry of the Road Transport & Highways, has expedited significantly the process of land acquisition for National Highways, making it error-free & more transparent with notifications at every stage being processed on real time basis.
- The processing time using this portal has been reduced to less than two weeks in a majority of cases and even a few days in some cases.
- The portal has been integrated with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) for depositing the compensation in the account of affected/ interested persons on real-time basis.
- This integration has resulted in avoiding the parking of huge public funds in the account of Competent Authority for Land Acquisition
- The BhoomiRashi portal model is replicable and can be used by state governments as well as by Ministries which directly acquire land under their relevant legal provisions.

Prelims Factoids: Sepsis

Relevance IN – Prelims (about sepsis)

What's the NEWS

- Many coronavirus patients have died of sepsis — when the body's immune system goes into overdrive.

Know! more about sepsis

- Sepsis is a life-threatening organ dysfunction caused by the body's immune system overreacting in response to an infection.
- This overactive, toxic response can lead to tissue damage, multiple organ failure and death.
- Despite the high incidence of sepsis, knowledge about sepsis prevention and early detection is significantly low

How does sepsis occur

- Viruses, bacteria, fungi or parasites — sepsis can be triggered by a variety of pathogens. The causes of sepsis are usually pneumonia, wound infections, urinary tract infections or infections in the abdominal cavity.

- In addition to the known seasonal influenza viruses, other viruses that are highly infectious, such as coronaviruses, Ebola and yellow fever viruses, dengue, swine flu or bird flu viruses can also cause sepsis.

Prelims Factoids: Pyramid of Djoser reopened

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the pyramid of Djoser and its geographical location)

What's the NEWS

- Egypt reopened the Pyramid of Djoser, the first pyramid ever built, after a 14-year restoration costing nearly \$6.6 million.
- The pyramid had sustained serious damage during an earthquake in 1992, and was on the verge of collapse when renovations started in 2006.
- The structure is believed to be designed by Imhotep, described by some as the first architect of the world.



Know! more about The Pyramid of Djoser

- The 4,700-year-old pyramid is located at the Saqqara archaeological site, 24 km southwest of Cairo, outside the royal capital of Memphis.
- The Djoser pyramid is the world's oldest monumental stone building.
- It is a UNESCO world heritage site
- The pyramid was constructed during the era of Pharaoh Djoser, the second king of Ancient Egypt's Third Dynasty (2650 BC– 2575 BC). The Pharaoh's 19-year reign saw significant technical innovations in stone architecture.
- Restoration work for the pyramid, which began in 2006, was stopped in 2011 after a popular uprising in Egypt led to the ouster of longtime President Hosni Mubarak. The work resumed at the end of 2013.



Prelims Factoids: Sir Creek dispute between India and Pakistan

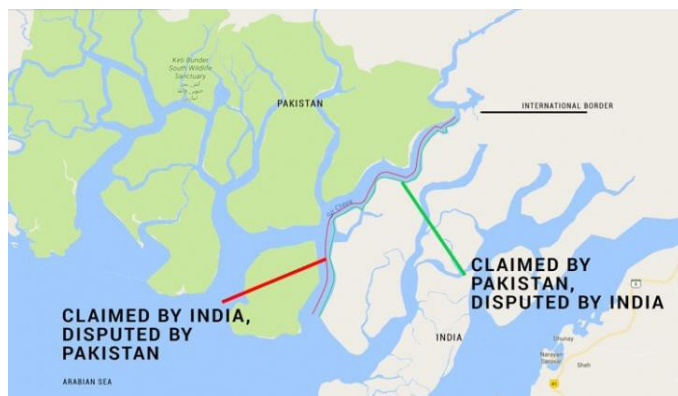
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Sir-creek dispute)

Know! about Sir Creek

- Sir Creek is a 96-km strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands.
- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan.

Know! about the dispute

- The dispute lies in the interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh.



- Pakistan claims the entire creek as per Bombay Government Resolution of 1914 signed between then the Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.
- Before India's independence, the provincial region was a part of the Bombay Presidency of British India. But after India's independence in 1947, Sindh became a part of Pakistan while Kutch remained a part of India.
- India claims that the boundary lies mid-channel as depicted in another map drawn in 1925 and implemented by the installation of mid-channel pillars back in 1924.

Prelims Factoids: Chaitra Jatra festival

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Chaitra jatra festival)

What's the NEWS

- The famous annual Chaitra Jatra festival scheduled to be held on March 17 at Odisha's Tara Tarini hill shrine was cancelled as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 infection.

Know! more about the festival

- This festival is celebrated at Tara Tarini hill shrine on Tuesdays of the Hindu month of Chaitra.
- The largest gatherings occur on second and third Tuesdays. March 17 happens to be second Tuesday.
- Tara Tarini hill shrine, located at Kumari hill on banks of the Rushikulya river, is a major centre of Shakti worship in Odisha.
- Indian Navy's sailboat INSV Tarini was named after Tara Tarini hill shrine.
- The first Indian all-woman crew had circumnavigated the globe in INSV Tarini.



Prelims Factoids: ROPAX Service

Relevance IN – Prelims (about ROPAX SERVICE)

What's the NEWS

- The ROPAX Service from Bhaucha Dhakka to Mandwa commences
- ROPAX service is a 'Water Transport Service Project', under Eastern Waterfront Development.
- The benefits of this service include reduction in the travel time, vehicular emission and traffic on the road.
- The road distance from Mumbai to Mandwa is about 110 kilometres, whereas by waterway it is about 18 kilometre and journey of just an hour.
- Mumbai Port Trust and Maharashtra Maritime Board recognised the importance of this waterway, and with Government support decided to start ROPAX service from Bhaucha Dhakka (Ferry Wharf), i.e. Mumbai to Mandwa.

Prelims Factoids: India declares Covid-19 a 'Notified Disaster'

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the provisions of notified disaster and the role of SDRF)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Home Affairs decided to treat COVID-19 as a notified disaster for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

Know! about State Disaster Response Fund

- The SDRF is constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and is the primary fund available with state governments for responses to notified disasters.

- The Central government contributes 75 per cent towards the SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs, and over 90 per cent for special category states/UTs. For SDRF, the Centre releases funds in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
- On the other hand, the National Disaster Response Fund, which is also constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 supplements the SDRF of a state, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.
- The disasters covered under the SDRF include cyclones, droughts, tsunamis, hailstorms, landslides, avalanches and pest attacks among others.

Know! the conditions to declare a national calamity

- As of now, there is no executive or legal provision to declare a national calamity.
- In 2001, the National Committee on Disaster Management under then Prime Minister was mandated to look into the parameters that should define a national calamity. However, the committee did not suggest any fixed criterion.
- In the past, there have been demands from states to declare certain events as natural disasters, such as the Uttarakhand flood in 2013, Cyclone Hudhud in Andhra Pradesh in 2014, and the Assam floods of 2015.

Defence: Defence Ministry signs contract for 16,479 Light Machine Guns with Israel

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG)

What's the NEWS

- The defence ministry has signed a major contract for procuring more than 16,000 light machine guns from an Israeli firm for frontline troops.

Know! more about the deal

- The Indian Armed Forces' long- standing requirement of a modern state-of- the-art Light Machine Gun (LMG) has finally fructified.
- The Acquisition Wing of Ministry of Defence has signed the capital acquisition contract with Israel Weapons Industries for procurement of 16,479 LMGs at a cost of Rs 880 crore with the approval of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh



Know! about Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG`

- The contracted Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG is a combat proven weapon and currently used by several countries around the globe.
- The weapon has semi-automatic mode to provide accurate, controlled fire in close quarter battle
- The LMG, will enhance the lethality and range of a soldier in comparison with presently used weapon, the INSAS LMG that has a calibre of 5.56x45mm.
- These guns are being procured under the Fast Track Procedure (FTP)
- The FTP is to ensure expeditious procurement for urgent operational requirements of the regular and special forces.
- It is applied for cases where there has been an unforeseen delay, which is adversely affecting the capacity of the forces.
- The Defence Acquisition Council had cleared the procurement of these LMGs for the army, air force and navy in February 2018.



Relevance IN – Prelims (about World cities summit and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been invited by the Singapore government to the World Cities Summit - 2020 (WCS) to be held from 5 to 9 July this year.

Know! more about WCS

- The WCS is an exclusive platform held biennially in Singapore and brings together government leaders and industry experts from around the world to address pressing challenges, share practical solutions and forge valuable partnerships between cities.
- The theme of WCS - 2020 is "Liveable and Sustainable Cities: Adapting to a Disrupted World" in which there will be discussions about how cities can cope with climate change, social shifts and technological disruptions with confidence.
- The WCS is being organised alongside the Singapore International Water Week and the CleanEnviro Summit as part of the Singapore Sustainability Week.
- The previous event in 2018 was attended by 44 ministers, 133 mayors and city leaders from all over the world.
- In addition, 1100 companies and over 24,000 participants from all over the world participated in the event and business deals worth \$26 billion were announced.

Bilateral Relations: Cabinet approves signing and ratifying of the Extradition Treaty between India and Belgium

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

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved the signing and ratifying of the Extradition Treaty between the Republic of India and the Kingdom of Belgium.

KNOW! the Salient Features

- Each Party agrees to extradite to the other any person found in its territory, who is accused or convicted of an extraditable offence in the territory of the other Party.
- The Treaty would provide a legal framework for seeking extradition of terrorists, economic offenders, and other criminals from and to Belgium.
- After ratification, the Treaty will enter into force from the date of exchange of instruments of ratification between India and Belgium.

Background

- The new Extradition Treaty will replace the pre-Independence Extradition Treaty between Great Britain and Belgium of 1901 that was made applicable to India through the exchange of Letters in 1958 and is currently in force between the Republic of India and the Kingdom of Belgium.
- Due to the present procedural requirements and the fact that only limited number of offences are listed under the pre-Independence Treaty, the same has become obsolete in today's context.

Prelims Factoids: Invest India Business Immunity Platform

Relevance IN- Prelims (about the Invest India Business Immunity Platform + about Invest India)

What's the NEWS

- Invest India, India's national Investment Promotion & Facilitation Agency, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched **The Invest India Business Immunity Platform**.

Know! more about the platform

- The platform, hosted on the Invest India website, is designed as a comprehensive resource to help businesses and investors get real-time updates on India's active response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus).
- The Business Immunity Platform (BIP) is the active platform for business issue redressal, operating 24/7, with a team of dedicated sector experts and responding to queries at the earliest.
- Invest India has also announced a partnership with SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) for responding and resolving queries for MSMEs.

Know! about Invest India

- Invest India is India's official agency dedicated to investment promotion and facilitation.
- It is a single window facilitator, set up in 2010 for prospective overseas investors and to those aspiring Indian investors desiring to invest in foreign locations, and acts as a structured mechanism to attract investment.
- Invest India is essentially an Investment Promotion Agency in India.
- It is a non-profit venture under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India



Prelims Factoids: Over 900 Yakshagana scripts go digital

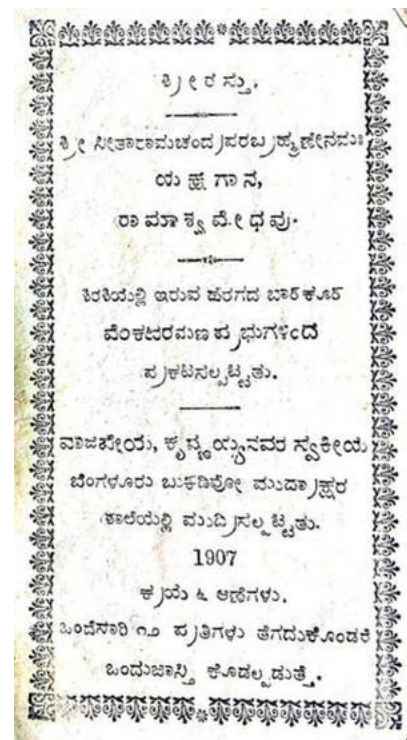
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Yakshagana)

What's the NEWS

- More than 900 Yakshagana scripts, including the ones printed in 1905 and 1907, have now been digitised and made available online for free,
- The 'Prahlada Charitre' printed in 1905 and 'Ramashwamedha' printed of 1907, 'Putrakamesti' published of 1913, 'Kanakangi Kalyana' of 1929, Kumudhwati Kalyana of 1931 and Sampoorana Ramayana printed in 1938 are among the ones digitised.

Know! more about Yakshagana

- It is a traditional Indian theatre form, developed in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Shimoga and western parts of Chikmagalur districts, in the state of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district in Kerala that combines dance, music, dialogue, costume, make-up, and stage techniques with a unique style and form.
- It is believed to have evolved from pre-classical music and theatre during the period of the Bhakti movement.
- This theatre style is mainly found in coastal regions of Karnataka in various forms.



Prelims Factoids: Beginning of a traditional new year

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Chaitra Sukladi, Sajibu Cheiraoba, Navreh and Cheti Chand)

What's the NEWS

- The Vice President of India, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu conveyed his best wishes to people on the auspicious occasion of Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Chaitra Sukladi, Sajibu Cheiraoba, Navreh and Cheti Chand which mark the beginning of a new year in different parts of India.

Know! more about the traditional fest

- Ugadi is the New Year's Day for the Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana states in India. It is festively observed in these regions on the first day of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month of Chaitra. This typically falls in March or April of the Gregorian calendar
- Gudhi Padwa is a spring-time festival that marks the traditional new year for Marathi and Konkani Hindus. It is celebrated in and near Maharashtra and Goa on the first day of the Chaitra month to mark the beginning of the New year according to the lunisolar Hindu calendar
- Chaitra Sukladi is the New Year in traditional Hindu calendar based on the beginning of the new moon.
- Shukladi method is followed in the calendars followed in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- In northern parts of India this day is celebrated as Chaitra Sukhladi. In Andhra and Karnataka it is celebrated as Ugadi: Yuga + aadi means start of new era.
- In Maharashtra and Goa it is celebrated as Gudi Padwa: Padwa means crop; it marks the end of Rabi crop and time for a new 'Vasant'/spring season.
- Sindhis celebrate the new year as Cheti Chand
- In Kashmir the new year is celebrated as Navreh:
- In Manipur this day is celebrated as Sajibu Cheiraoba

Hantavirus

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Hantavirus)

What's the NEWS

A man from China's Yunnan province died from Hantavirus while on a bus to the Shandong province.

Know! more about Hantavirus

- The Centre for Disease Control says that the virus is spread mainly from rodents.
- Hantaviruses are a family of rodent-borne viruses, with each strain tied to a specific host species. It is spread when people come into contact with infected droppings, saliva, urine or nesting materials, but is extremely rare, and rarely passed from person to person.
- Infection with any of the hantavirus can cause hantavirus disease in people.
- Hantaviruses in the Americas are known as "New World" hantaviruses and may cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS).
- Other hantaviruses, known as "Old World" hantaviruses, are found mostly in Europe and Asia and may cause hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS),
- Hantavirus is not a new virus and has been infecting humans for decades

Prelims Factoids: #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiative

Relevance IN – Prelims (about #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiative + about NBT)

What's the NEWS

- To encourage people to #StayIn and #StayHome, the National Book Trust of HRD Ministry, in its efforts to encourage people to read books while at home, is providing its select and best-selling titles for FREE Download as part of its initiative of #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks!

- The 100+ books, in PDF format, can be downloaded from the NBT's website <https://nbtindia.gov.in>.

Know! about NBT

- National Book Trust (NBT) is an Indian publishing house, founded in 1957 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Education of the Government of India. NBT now functions under aegis of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

A Covid tracker app

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the app and its working mechanism + objective)

What's the NEWS

- The government is likely to launch a smartphone application to help users check if they crossed paths with patients who tested positive for coronavirus.

Know! about the upcoming app

- The contours of the app, is currently being examined by a committee, after separate efforts by the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) and the Niti Aayog (the government's policy think-tank)
- Both apps – the one developed by MeitY, and the other, by the Niti Aayog, were being beta-tested and examined in detail
- This app, is likely to be launched in “one or two days”. It is likely to be rolled out in all Indian languages.

Know! the working mechanism

- Over the last few days, MeitY had been testing an Android-based app called ‘Corona Kavach’, which would help users check if they crossed paths with patients who tested positive for coronavirus.
- The app, will use the phone number of the user, along with the location data of the smartphone, and match his/her movements with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) data on the backend.
- The ICMR data already has the movements of patients who have tested positive for the virus.
- For nearby tracking, Kavach uses Bluetooth technology, which is similar to the open-source, TraceTogether app developed by the Singapore government.



Prelims Factoids: IDEathon

Relevance IN – Prelims (about IDEathon)

What's the NEWS

- IDEathon is a 2-day online ideathon, jointly organised by MHRD Innovation Cell, AICTE, MEITY Startup Hub, InnovatioCuris and other institutions

Know! about IDEathon

- The objective is to get accessible and affordable technological solutions that can contain the rapid spread of infection, ease the mounting pressure and ensure a quick return to normalcy.

Know! the curated set of problem

- Problem statements of high magnitude soliciting innovative technological solutions like the design of reusable/washable masks, a system that can disinfect currency notes/coins, mobile applications with an ability



to provide right, reliable and authentic information to curb infection and the spread of panic, a non-invasive diagnostic kit, alternate solutions for ventilators to treat patients who face chronic breathing problems, Storage Kits to collect test samples from homes and transport them to laboratories, etc. are put forth for student innovators, educators, researchers, professionals and startups to ideate and innovate feasible products.

Know! more about IDEathon

- During the 2-day IDEathon, Startups and innovators shall be guided by Domain experts, Healthcare providers and professionals, Innovation experts, etc. from across the country through a virtual platform in their pursuit of ideating and innovating technically feasible and economically viable solutions to the curated set of problems.
- Online webinars, masterclasses and live one-one mentoring sessions are organized to support innovators with a focus to guide in technical design, innovation acceleration and rapid development of their prototypes.

Prelims Factoids: Scientists of ARI, Pune develop biofortified, high protein wheat variety MACS 4028

Relevance IN – Prelims (about MACS 4028)

What's the NEWS

- Scientists from Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, have developed a biofortified durum wheat variety MACS 4028, which shows high protein content.

Know! more about MACS 4028

- The wheat variety developed by the ARI scientists group on Wheat improvement, shown high protein content of about 14.7%, better nutritional quality
- The MACS 4028 variety is also included by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) programme for United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to alleviate malnutrition in a sustainable way and can boost the Vision 2022 "Kuposhan Mukh Bharat", the National Nutrition Strategy.
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has also tagged this variety under the Biofortified category during the year 2019.
- Wheat crop in India is grown under six diverse agroclimatic zones. In the peninsular zone of India (Maharashtra and Karnataka states), wheat cultivation is majorly done under rainfed and limited irrigation conditions.
- Under such conditions, the crop experiences moisture stress. Hence, there is a high demand for drought-tolerant varieties.

Know! about Biofortification

- Biofortification is the idea of breeding crops to increase their nutritional value. This can be done either through conventional selective breeding, or through genetic engineering. Biofortification differs from ordinary fortification because it focuses on making plant foods more nutritious as the plants are growing, rather than having nutrients added to the foods when they are being processed

COVID-19: UN Chief launches \$2 bn humanitarian response plan to fight COVID-19

Relevance IN – Prelims (about global humanitarian response plan)

What's the NEWS

- UN chief Antonio Guterres launched a \$2 billion global humanitarian response plan for the world's poorest countries.

Know! more about it

- The response fund is coordinated by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
- The plan includes existing appeals from the World Health Organization and other UN partners, along with new needs for funds.
- The plan also includes additional measures to support host communities opening their homes and towns to refugees and displaced persons.
- The UN plan is designed to function from April to December, hinting that the overall crisis might last through the year.

Prelims Factoids: World Water Development Report

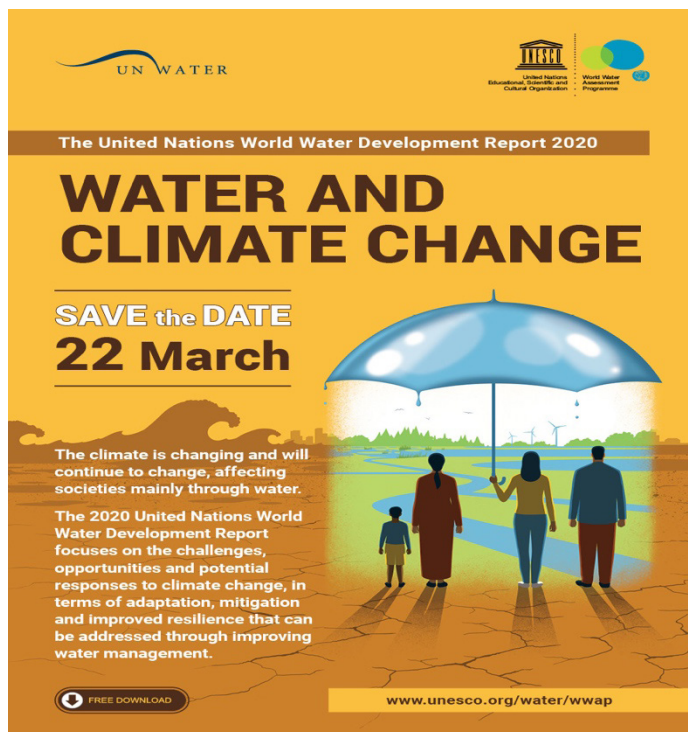
Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Water Development Report and its factual findings)

What's the NEWS

- The United Nation's **2020 edition of the World Water Development Report (WWDR 2020)** entitled 'Water and Climate Change' aims at helping the water community to tackle the challenges of climate change and informing the climate change community about the opportunities that improved water management offers in terms of adaptation and mitigation.

Know! the important takeaways

- Global food production patterns would be fundamentally altered by climate change, causing food insecurity because of small shifts in seasonality and water availability
- Major agricultural systems the world-over — including the semi-arid Indian subcontinent and the Mediterranean region in north Africa — were highly vulnerable to climate impacts.
- Increased rainfall, drought and flooding coupled with higher temperatures were the climate change drivers that the monsoonal Indian subcontinent would witness.
- The climate change drivers include 20 years of increasing flows, followed by substantial reductions in surface water and groundwater recharge, changed seasonality of runoff and peak flows, increased peak flows and flooding, increased salinity and declining productivity.



Prelims Factoids: EPCH cancels 49th Edition Of IHGF-Delhi Fair Spring - 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EPCH and about IHGF)

What's the NEWS

- The Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) has cancelled the 49th edition of IHGF – Delhi Fair Spring-2020 in view of present status of COVID-19 in India and abroad.

Know! more about it

- Over 10,000 visitors, including 7000 overseas buyers and their representatives, were expected to turn up for the show which was to host over 3200 exhibitors displaying best of the Indian handicrafts from all across the country.
- The 50th edition of IHGF-Delhi Fair Autumn will be organized from 14-18 October 2020 at India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida in Delhi NCR.

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)

- EPCH was established under Companies Act in the year 1986-87 and is a non-profit organisation, with an object to promote, support, protect, maintain and increase the export of handicrafts.

49th IHGF DELHI FAIR (SPRING) 2020
SCHEDULED TO BE HELD FROM 15 - 19 April 2020,
DELHI NCR – POSTPONEMENT REG.

Due to the Corona Virus - Covid 19 threat,
the 49th IHGF Delhi Fair (Spring) 2020 which was scheduled to be
held from 15-19 April, 2020 at the
India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR, India
has been postponed.

Please keep watch on our website www.epch.in
or you can make a query on email at visitors@epch.com
for further development & updates.

Best Regards,
(Rakesh Kumar)
Director General, EPCH

- It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for promotion of exports of Handicrafts from country and projected India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality of handicrafts goods & services and ensured various measures keeping in view of observance of international standards and specification.

Indian Handicrafts & Gifts Fair

- IHGF is amongst Asia's largest gifts & handicrafts fair, held biannually (Spring & Autumn edition) and is organised by Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH).

COVID-19: CII sets up relief pool funds to help MSMEs

Relevance IN – Prelims (about CII COVID-19 CODE and CII COVID - 19 rehabilitation and relief pool fund)

What's the NEWS

- Apex industry body Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has set up CII COVID-19 CODE and CII COVID-19 rehabilitation and relief pool fund to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) and society from the impact of disruptions caused by coronavirus.

Know! more about it

- CII has developed and advocated a COVID-19 CODE to its members to help its workers and society at large from the impact of disruptions caused by COVID-19
- CII members will dedicate their plant facilities to help scale up manufacture and availability of essential goods and equipment needed to deal with the medical emergency like ventilators, sanitisers, essential drugs, medical services, etc., on a no-profit basis, and build a cadre of volunteers for public service the CII CODE advocates.
- The COVID Rehabilitation Fund is important for the micro and small industry, who will need special hand holding and help to rehabilitate their business.
- The CII COVID Rehabilitation and Relief Fund (CRR) will be an industry led initiative to work with the MSME sector

Other recommendations suggested by CII

- Setting up of a special MSME Factoring Fund to enable MSMEs to discount their bills to approved retailers in 15 days and permit retailers to pay in 120 days would help in faster realisation
- Creating a corpus by the government to help MSMEs tide over the crisis would help them pay wages.
- Extension of non-performing asset norms cases to 150 days from the present 90 days and if required by industry, ad-hoc limits to an extent of 25 per cent of sanctioned limits may be allowed by banks on SOS basis to overcome temporary liquidity crunch
- The Confederation has proposed that the government should draw up contingency plans for three periods – till March 31; for next two months till May 31 and then for next 2 months till July 31.

Government announcements

Booster dose Main features of the economic relief package announced by the Finance Minister on Thursday

- Insurance cover of ₹50 lakh per person for doctors and medical workers fighting COVID-19**
- 80 crore poor people will receive 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for free every month for the next three months. Free grains can be availed of in two installments**
- Increase in MGNREGA wage to ₹202 a day from ₹182 for 13.62 crore families**
- 20.4 crore Jan Dhan women account holders to get ₹500 per month for next three months**
- Ex-gratia of ₹1,000 to 3 crore senior citizens, disabled and widows among the poor**
- Government to front-load ₹2,000 to 8.7 crore farmers in the first week of April under the existing PM Kisan Yojana**
- 8.3 crore below the poverty line families to receive free cylinders for the next three months**
- Wage-earners below ₹15,000 per month in businesses having less than 100 workers to receive 24% of their monthly wages into their PF accounts for the next three months**
- The Centre has directed the State governments to use the Construction Workers Welfare Fund to give relief to 3.5 crore registered workers**

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing the measures in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ PTI

Know! about CII

- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government, and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.
- CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization, playing a proactive role in India's development process.
- Founded in 1895 and celebrating 125 years in 2020, India's premier business association has more than 9100 members, from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 300,000 enterprises from 291 national and regional sectoral industry bodies.

Human Resource Development: Corona Studies Series books

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Corona Studies Series and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- **National Book Trust, India**, the national body for book publishing and book promotion **under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India**, is launching a publishing series titled '**Corona Studies Series**' to document and to provide relevant reading materials for all age-groups for the post-Corona readership needs.

Know! about Corona Studies Series

- The 'Corona Studies Series' seeks to prepare and engage readers with the various aspects of the Corona times by bringing out affordable books in various Indian languages in the identified subject areas.
- It will also provide suitable platform to authors and researchers willing to contribute in this genre
- The NBT has already started #StayHomeIndiaWithBooks initiatives by uploading pdfs of some bestselling titles for free downloads
- The NBT has set-up a Study Group comprising of some experienced and young psychologists/counsellors to prepare books on the sub-series on 'Psycho-Social Impact of Corona Pandemic and the Ways to Cope'.
- NBT hope to bring out both e-editions and printed editions of these books soon enough as support materials for the readers

Defence: Daporijo bridge



Relevance IN – Prelims (about project Arunank + about Daporijo bridge + about BRO)

What's the NEWS

- Braving the threat of COVID-19, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) personnel **under the Project Arunank** are working relentlessly to completely replace Daporijo bridge over **Subansiri River** (430 feet Multi Span Bailey Bridge), the only lifeline of Upper Subansiri district, **Arunachal Pradesh** to restore Lines of Communication for all 451 villages and Security Forces located along the China border.

- The personnel of 23 BRTF/**Project Arunank**, on special request from Local Administration, is working in full swing in spite of the dilapidated state of existing bridge.

Know! about BRO

- The Border Roads Organisation, an important arm of the Ministry of Defence, plays pivotal role in constructing and maintaining operational road infrastructure in inhospitable and far flung border areas to support the armed forces meet their strategic needs.

Know! about Subansiri River

- The Subansiri River is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River in the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh
- The Subansiri is 442 kilometres long and it is the largest tributary of the Brahmaputra.
- The Subansiri River originates in the Himalayas, in China.

Prelims Factoids: Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PM CARES fund)

What's the NEWS

- A dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide relief to the affected, a public charitable trust under the name of '**Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund)**' has been set up.



DONATE TO PM CARES FUND
Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance & Relief in Emergency Situations Fund

ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Name of the Account	: PM CARES
Account Number	: 2121PM20202
IFSC Code	: SBIN000691
SWIFT Code	: SBININBB104
Name of Bank & Branch	: State Bank of India, New Delhi Main Branch
UPI ID	: pmcares@sbi

Citizens & organisations can also donate on pmindia.gov.in using following methods
RTGS/NEFT | Debit Cards & Credit Cards | Internet Banking UPI (BHIM, PhonePe, Amazon Pay, Google Pay, PayTm, Mobikwik, etc.)

Know! more about the fund

- Prime Minister is the Chairman of this trust and its Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.
- This fund will enable micro-donations as a result of which a large number of people will be able to contribute with smallest of denominations.
- Funds being donated to the PM-CARES trust is to be exempted from tax under Section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act.

Prelims Factoids: Army Launches 'Operation Namaste' To Combat Coronavirus

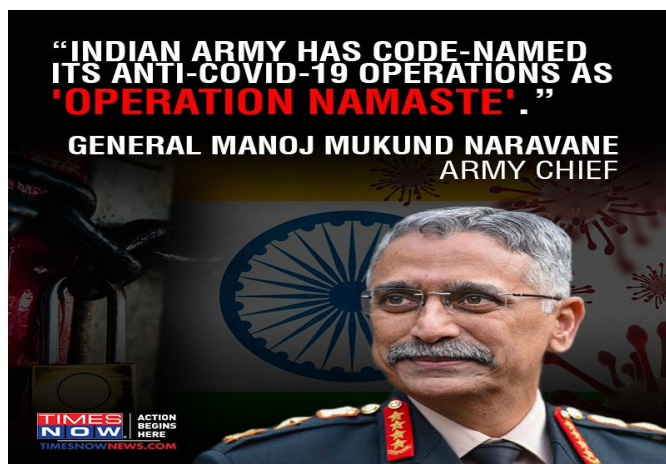
Relevance IN – Prelims (about Operation Namaste)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian army has named its battle against Corona Virus 'Operation Namaste'.

Know! more about it

- This operation has been launched by the Indian army to help the Indian government in dealing with the outbreak.
- The army has successfully carried out all the operations of the past and will also successfully carry out Operation Namaste.
- A helpline number has also been issued by the army.
- The army has set up a total of eight quarantine centres to fight the coronavirus in the country.



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GENERAL STUDIES II

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



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

What's the NEWS

- Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment inaugurate the week long Exhibition-cum-Fair “EKAM Fest” organised by National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation (NHFDC) under M/o Social Justice & Empowerment

Know! about EKAM (Entrepreneurship, Knowledge, Awareness, Marketing) Fest

- EKAM Fest is an effort for promoting entrepreneurship and knowledge among Divyangjan community, generating awareness among society about potentialities of PwDs & providing a major marketing opportunity to PwDs entrepreneurs.
- NHFDC Foundation is making efforts for development of a brand and platform for marketing of products of these determined entrepreneurs.
- The word Ekam represents the inclusiveness, oneness and unity which appropriately describe the efforts being put in by NHFDC to develop the marketing platform and aggregation of the products through promotion of entrepreneurship, knowledge sharing, Awareness creation and marketing initiatives amongst the Divyangjan.
- In the first Ekam Fest, Divyang Entrepreneur and Artisans from all over the country have been invited with representation from J&K to Puducherry and from Nagaland to Gujarat.

National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation

- NHFDC is an Apex corporation under the aegis of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and is working since 1997.
- It is registered as a company not for profit and provides financial assistance to the Divyangjan/Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan/PwDs) for their economic rehabilitation and provides number of skill development programmes to empower them to grow & sustain their enterprises.

Agriculture: 11th National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference

Relevance IN – Prelims (about KVK) + 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 11th National Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Conference -2020 inaugurated by the Ministry for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare

Know! about KVK

- A Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) is an agricultural extension centre in India created by ICAR (Indian Council for Agricultural Research) and its affiliated institutions at district level to provide various types of farm support to the agricultural sector.
- These centres serve as the ultimate link between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and farmers, and aim to apply agricultural research in a practical, localized setting.
- As per the mandate of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, K.V.K. will operate under the administrative control of State Agricultural University (SAU) or Central Institute situated in a particular area.
- Different scientists from different disciplines as per the specific requirement of that particular area are posted in the Krishi Vigyan Kendra
- At present there are 713 KVKs, out of which 498 are under State Agricultural Universities (SAU) and Central Agricultural University (CAU), 63 under ICAR Institutes, 101 under NGOs, 38 under State Governments, and the remaining under other educational institutions.
- The mandate of KVK is Technology Assessment and Demonstration for its Application and Capacity Development. *To implement the mandate effectively, the following activities are envisaged for each KVK.*
 - On-farm testing to assess the location specificity of agricultural technologies under various farming systems.
 - Frontline demonstrations to establish production potential of technologies on the farmers' fields
 - Capacity development of farmers and extension personnel to update their knowledge and skills on modern agricultural technologies
 - To work as Knowledge and Resource Centre of agricultural technologies for supporting initiatives of public, private and voluntary sectors in improving the agricultural economy of the district.
 - Provide farm advisories using ICT
- In addition, KVK would produce quality technological products (seed, planting material, bio-agents, livestock) and make it available to farmers, organize frontline extension activities, identify and document selected farm innovations and converge with ongoing schemes and programmes within the mandate of KVK.



Prime Minister launched 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) all over the country

Relevance IN – Prelims (about FPO + about SFAC + PM-KISAN) + 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

- Prime Minister launched a campaign to set up 10,000 new farmer producer organisations (FPOs) across the country in the next five years.

Know! about FPO

- A new FPO will be set up to increase the income of the farmers and to empower them. This will enable the farmers to market and process the crops along with producing them.
- Farmers Producer Organisations FPOs will help small, marginal and landless farmers in order to give them access to technology, quality seed, fertilizers and pesticides including helping them in marketing of their products. The Centre will provide fund of Rs 15 lakh to each FPO.

What's the need and benefits of FPO

- Nearly 86% of farmers are small and marginal with average land holdings in the country being less than 1.1 hectare.
- These small, marginal and landless farmers face tremendous challenges during agriculture production phase such as for access to technology, quality seed, fertilizers and pesticides including requisite finances.
- They also face tremendous challenges in marketing their produce due to lack of economic strength.
- FPOs help in collectivization of such small, marginal and landless farmers in order to give them the collective strength to deal with such issues.
- Members of the FPO will manage their activities together in the organization to get better access to technology, input, finance and market for faster enhancement of their income.

Completion of One Year of PM-KISAN

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme
- It is an income support scheme for farmers to enable them to take care of expenses related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs.
- Under the Scheme, benefit is provided to the eligible beneficiary to the tune of Rs.6000/- per year.
- It is payable in three 4-monthly instalments of Rs.2000/- each. The payment is made online directly into the bank accounts of the eligible beneficiaries under Direct Benefit Transfer mode.
- The Scheme was launched on 24th February, 2019 and has successfully completed one year of implementation on 24th February, 2020.
- In a historic decision in its first cabinet meeting Modi 2.0 Government has decided to extend the PM-KISAN scheme to all the farmers.

Special drive to saturate PM-KISAN beneficiaries with Kisan Credit Cards (KCC)

- The Prime Minister also launched a saturation drive for distribution of Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) to all the beneficiaries under the PM-KISAN Scheme, on the 29th February 2020.
- Over 6.5 Crore of the approximately 8.5 Crore beneficiaries under PM-KISAN Scheme, possess the Kisan Credit Cards.
- The saturation drive shall ensure that the remaining about 2 Crore PM-KISAN beneficiaries are also distributed the Kisan Credit Cards.

Know! about Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO)

- FPO is one type of PO where the members are farmers. Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is providing support for the promotion of FPOs
- It can be a producer company, a cooperative society or any other legal form which provides for sharing of profits/benefits among the members.
- A Farmer Producer Company is a hybrid between cooperative societies and private limited companies.
- The objective of the concept of FPC is to organize farmers into a collective to improve their bargaining strength in the market.
- It is a legal entity formed by primary producers, viz. farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans, craftsmen.

Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)

- Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is an Autonomous Society promoted by Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India.
- It was registered under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 on 18th January, 1994

- Society is pioneer in organising small and marginal farmers as Farmers Interest Groups, Farmers Producers Organisation and Farmers Producers Company for endowing them with bargaining power and economies of scale.
- It provides a platform for increased accessibility and cheaper availability of agricultural inputs to small and marginal farmers and in establishing forward and backward linkages in supply chain management.
- To support farmers in various aspects ranging from input procurement to market linkages, Government of India through Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), a registered society under Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, is promoting Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) by mobilizing the farmers and helping them in registering as companies.

Social Justice: PM Modi Distributes Assistive Aids, Devices to Divyangjan & Senior Citizens In Prayagraj

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

What's the NEWS

- The PM dispensed assistive aids and devices to senior citizens and people with disabilities under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana and Assistance to Disabled persons for purchasing/ fitting of aids/appliances (ADIP) scheme.
- This is the biggest ever distribution camp being conducted in the country in terms of the number of beneficiaries covered, number of appliances distributed and value of aids and appliances distributed.
- The objective is to provide assistance through these aids and devices to the daily living and socio – economic development of the Divyangjan and the Senior Citizens.



Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment)

- Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) is a scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to the BPL category.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme which is fully funded by the Central Government.

ADIP Scheme (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment)

- The main objective of the ADIP scheme is to assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation, by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential.
- AIDP scheme is implemented through National Institutes under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, ALIMCO (a PSU that manufactures artificial limbs) and various NGOs

A person with disabilities fulfilling following conditions would be eligible for assistance under ADIP Scheme through authorized agencies:

- He/she should be an Indian citizen of any age.
- Should be certified by a Registered Medical Practitioner that he/she is disabled and fit to use prescribed aid/appliance. Holds a 40% Disablement Certificate.
- Person who is employed/self-employed or getting pension and whose monthly income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 20,000/- per month.
- In case of dependents, the income of parents/guardians should not exceed Rs. 20,000/- per month.

- Persons who have not received assistance from the Government, local bodies and Non-Official Organisations during the last 3 years for the same purpose. However, for children below 12 years of age this limit would be 1 year.

Agriculture & Farmers Welfare: Completion of five years of Soil Health Card Scheme

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

Know! about Soil Health Card

- Soil Health Card (SHC) is a Government of India's scheme promoted by the Department of Agriculture & Co-operation under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- It is being implemented through the Department of Agriculture of all the State and Union Territory Governments.
- A SHC is meant to give each farmer soil nutrient status of his/her holding and advice him/her on the dosage of fertilizers and also the needed soil amendments, that s/he should apply to maintain soil health in the long run.
- SHC is a printed report that a farmer will be handed over for each of his holdings.
- Soil Health Card provides two sets of fertilizer recommendations for six crops including recommendations of organic manures.
- Farmers can also get recommendations for additional crops on demand.
- It will contain the status of his soil with respect to 12 parameters, namely N,P,K (Macro-nutrients) ; S (Secondary-nutrient); Zn, Fe, Cu, Mn, Bo (Micro-nutrients); and pH, EC, OC (Physical parameters).
- Based on this, the SHC will also indicate fertilizer recommendations and soil amendment required for the farm.
- The card will contain an advisory based on the soil nutrient status of a farmer's holding.
- It will show recommendations on dosage of different nutrients needed.
- Further, it will advise the farmer on the fertilizers and their quantities he should apply, and also the soil amendments that he should undertake, so as to realize optimal yields.
- Under this scheme Soil Health Cards are provided to all farmers at an interval of 2 years.

Achievements so far

- A 2017 study by the National Productivity Council (NPC) found that the SHC scheme has promoted sustainable farming and led to a decrease of use of chemical fertilizer application in the range of 8-10%.
- Besides, overall increase in the yield of crops to the tune of 5-6% was reported due to application of fertilizer and micro nutrients as per recommendations available in the Soil Health Cards.

Bilateral Relations: India outshines Russia, Poland to bag USD 40 million defence deal in Armenia

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the defence deal + about Swathi weapon) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- In a big boost to Make in India' defence goals, India has managed to secure a deal in Armenia to supply four weapon locating radars beating the competing bids from Russia and Poland.

Know! more about it (swathi weapon)

- The contract worth over USD 40 million to supply four Swathi weapon locating radars has been signed with Armenia and supplies have also started.
- The contract is for four Swathi weapon locating radars which provide fast, automatic and accurate location of enemy weapons like mortars, shells and rockets in a 50 km range.
- The radar can simultaneously handle multiple projectiles fired from different weapons at different locations.
- The Indian Army is also using the same radars for its operations along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir where this system is used to trace the source of attack by Pakistani positions.

- The system was handed to the Indian Army on a trial basis in 2018.

Government Schemes: Cabinet approves Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II

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

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet, has approved the Phase II of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM (G)] till 2024-25, which will focus on Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF Plus), which includes ODF sustainability and Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM).
- SBM (G) Phase-II will also be implemented from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in a mission mode with a total outlay of Rs. 1,40,881 crores.

This different verticals of financing

- from the budget of D/o Drinking Water and Sanitation
- funds being released under 15th Finance Commission
- MGNREGS and revenue generation models particularly for solid and liquid waste management.

Know! more about the programme

- Under the program, provision for incentive of Rs.12,000/- for construction of Individual Household Toilet (IHHL) to the newly emerging eligible households as per the existing norms will continue.
- Funding norms for Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) have been rationalized and changed to per capita basis in place of no. of households.
- The programme will be implemented by the States/UTs as per the operational guidelines which will be issued to the States.
- The fund sharing pattern between Centre and States will be 90:10 for North-Eastern States and Himalayan States and UT of J&K; 60:40 for other States; and 100:0 for other Union Territories, for all the components.

The SLWM component of ODF Plus will be monitored on the basis of output-outcome indicators for four key areas:

- plastic waste management,
- bio-degradable solid waste management (including animal waste management),
- greywater management and
- fecal sludge management.

Statics of Rural Sanitation

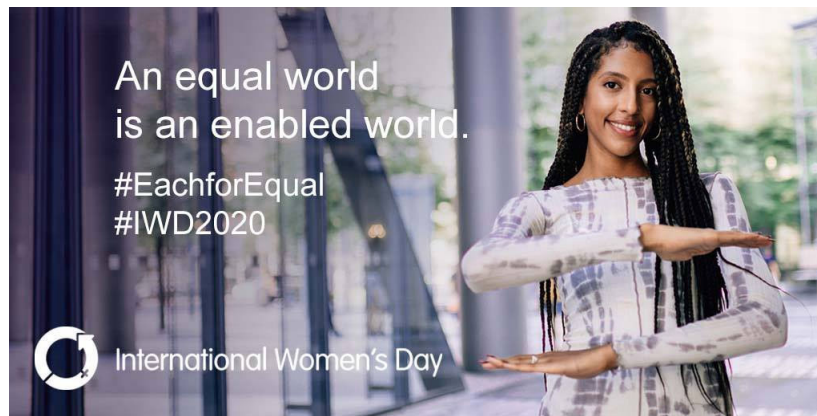
- The rural sanitation coverage in the country at the time of launch of SBM (G) on 02.10.2014 was reported as 38.7%.
- More than 10 crore individual toilets have been constructed since the launch of the mission; as a result, rural areas in all the States have declared themselves ODF as on 2nd October, 2019.
- The approval by the Cabinet to SBM Phase II will help the rural India effectively handle the challenge of solid and liquid waste management and will help in substantial improvement in the health of the villagers in the country.

Social Issues: International Women's Day

Relevance IN – Prelims (about International women's day and steps taken by the government for the welfare of women) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of HRD will celebrate the International Women's Day (IWD) in schools and colleges across the country.
- The Government has launched a special theme-based focused campaign from 1st-7th March in the run up to the International Women's Day on 8th March this year with Education being the theme on 1st March.



- The seven themes that are being observed by the Government of India include Education, Health and nutrition, Empowerment of women, Skills & entrepreneurship, Participation in sports, Rural women agriculture and Urban women.

Government initiatives for the education of the girl child

- The Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls across all levels of education is now higher than boys.
- At elementary level, GER is 94.32 % as against 89.28% for boys. At Secondary level, it is 81.32 % as compared to 78 %.
- The Ministry has decided to designate a girl student as class monitor **“Main Hoon Monitor”** for at least half of the academic school session of the year 2020-21 and beyond.
- A **Self-Defence Olympiad** will be organised for girls at school level on the lines of Yoga Olympiad.
- To ensure safety and security of girls, Self defence training is imparted to girls of class VI to XII belonging to Government Schools.

Steps taken by the Ministry of HRD to promote education among girls.

- Integrated Scheme of School Education-Samagra Shiksha
- Provision has been made to upgrade the existing Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) from upper primary level upto senior secondary level in convergence with the erstwhile Girls Hostel Scheme.
- KGBVs are residential schools for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line (BPL).
- For supporting single girl child in higher education , Swami Vivekananda Single Girl Child Scholarship for Research in Social Science was started in 2014-15.
- UGC has provided support for eight exclusive women universities.
- The All India Council for Technical Education is implementing the PRAGATI scholarship scheme for assistance of girls pursuing technical education.
- The Government has decided to increase female enrolment in various Programmes by creating supernumerary seats.

About International Women’s Day

- International Women’s Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on March 8.
- International Women’s Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity.
- The day has occurred for well over a century, with the first IWD gathering in 1911.
- The day is not country, group or organization specific - and belongs to all groups collectively everywhere.
- No one government, NGO, charity, corporation, academic institution, women’s network or media hub is solely responsible for International Women’s Day.
- The theme for 2020 is #EachforEqual- An equal world is an enabled world.

Health Sector: Celebration of Janaushadhi Week from 1st to 7th March



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

What's the NEWS

- Janaushadhi week is being celebrated across the country from 1st March to 7th March 2020.

Know! about PMBJP

- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.
- PMBJP stores have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- It was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in November 2008 under the name Jan Aushadi Campaign. Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementation agency for PMBJP.
- BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs for co-coordinating procurement, supply and marketing of generic drugs through the Jan Aushadhi Stores
- State Governments or any organization / reputed NGOs / Trusts / Private hospitals / Charitable institutions / Doctors / Unemployed pharmacist/ individual entrepreneurs are eligible to apply for new Jan Aushadhi stores. The applicants shall have to employ one B Pharma / D Pharma degree holder as Pharmacist in their proposed store.
- The number of Kendras has grown to more than 6200 and 700 districts are covered under the scheme at present.

NITI Aayog: Fourth Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards 2019

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WTI and WEP)

What's the NEWS

- NITI Aayog organized the Fourth Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards

Know! about WTI awards (WTI 2019)

- NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform organised the Fourth Edition of the Women Transforming India Awards (WTI) on International Women's Day, Sunday, 8 March 2020.
- It is NITI Aayog's initiative in collaboration with the United Nations since 2016 to highlight the commendable and ground-breaking endeavours of India's women leaders and changemakers.
- The Women Transforming India Awards, instituted four years ago, is NITI Aayog's endeavour to recognise and celebrate stories of exceptional women changemakers from across India.
- Since 2018, the Women Transforming India Awards have been hosted under the aegis of NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform on the theme of 'Women and Entrepreneurship'.



Know! about Women Entrepreneurship Platform(WEP)

- Launched on International Women's Day, two years ago, the Women Entrepreneurship Platform has become a forum dedicated to educating, enabling and empowering women entrepreneurs.
- The Women Entrepreneurship Platform seeks to transform the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women by bringing together stakeholders to offer information and services that will resolve the existing information asymmetry.
- It was formulated on three pillars: *Ichha Shakti*, *Gyan Shakti* and *Karma Shakti*.
- It is an aggregator platform for established as well as aspiring entrepreneurs and provides incubator support, mentorship, funding avenues, compliance and taxation support and peer learning.

International Organisations: India joins Indian Ocean Commission as observer

Relevance IN – Prelims (about IOC and its objective) + Mains (GS II regional grouping)

What's the NEWS

- India has joined as an observer of the Indian Ocean Commission — the inter-governmental organisation that coordinates maritime governance in the south-western Indian Ocean.

Know! the importance/benefits of getting the observer status

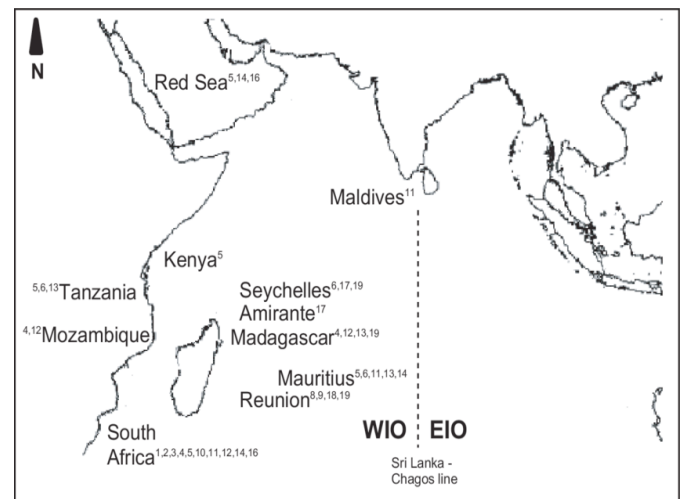
- This move has strategic importance as the Commission is an important regional institution in the Western Indian Ocean.
- It facilitates collective engagement with the islands in Western Indian Ocean that are becoming strategically significant.
- It boosts cooperation with France that has strong presence in the Western Indian Ocean and lends depth to India's SAGAR policy of PM Narendra Modi 2015.
- The move also strengthens western flank of the Indo-Pacific and is a stepping stone to security cooperation with East Africa.
- The move also strengthens western flank of the Indo-Pacific and is a stepping stone to security cooperation with East Africa.

Know! about Western Indian Ocean (WIO)

- The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) is a strategic sub-theatre of the Indian Ocean linking the Southeastern coast of Africa to the wider Indian Ocean and beyond.
- It is home to one of the key chokepoints in the Indian Ocean- the Mozambique Channel.

Know! about Indian Ocean Commission

- The Indian Ocean Commission is an intergovernmental organization that was created in 1982 at Port Louis, Mauritius and institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Agreement in Seychelles.
- The IOC is composed of five African Indian Ocean nations: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.
- The Commission has four observers — China, EU, Malta and International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF).



The IOC works on four pillars which have been adopted in 2005 by the Summit of Heads of States:

- Political and diplomatic cooperation,
- Economic and commercial cooperation
- Sustainable development in a globalisation context, cooperation in the field of agriculture, maritime fishing, and the conservation of resources and ecosystems
- Strengthening of the regional cultural identity, cooperation in cultural, scientific, technical, educational and judicial fields.

Defence: HAL eyes bases in four nations to push 'made-in-India' defence products

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of logistic bases + about tejas + about the geographical location of logisti bases) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) is looking at setting up logistics bases in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Sri Lanka as part of initiatives to woo the countries to buy India's light combat aircraft Tejas and military helicopters.



Know! more about it

- HAL is considering to build logistics bases in the four countries as they use a number of Russian-origin military aircraft and choppers whose serviceability is "very poor".
- HAL is focusing on boosting exports in sync with the government's priority and identified South East Asia, West Asia and North Africa to sell key platforms like Tejas, attack helicopter Rudra and advanced light helicopter Dhruv.
- HAL is looking at setting up maintenance facilities in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka as having logistics bases is key to sell the products and ensure after-sales services.

Know! about Tejas

- HAL Tejas is an Indian single-engine, delta wing, multirole light fighter designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.
- It came from the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters. In 2003, the LCA was officially named "Tejas"
- Tejas has a "very good" export potential as it is a four-and-half generation fighter jet which can compete with some of the famous military jets in its class.
- The Tejas has been Developed by Aeronautical Development Agency and the HAL. The lifespan of the jet would be a minimum of 30 years just like any other frontline combat aircraft.
- The combat jets are classified under various generations depending on their avionics, capability and weapons systems. The current fleet of fighter jets with the IAF range from three-and-half generation to the fourth generation.
- The Indian Air Force has already placed an order for 40 Tejas and is likely to seal a contract "very soon" with HAL for another 83 aircraft at a cost of around Rs 38,000 crore.

Why this move?

- India is one of the largest importers of arms and military platforms globally. The government has been focusing significantly on promoting defence indigenisation by taking a slew of reform initiatives including liberalising FDI in defence sector.
- Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set an ambitious defence export target of \$5 billion dollars in the next five

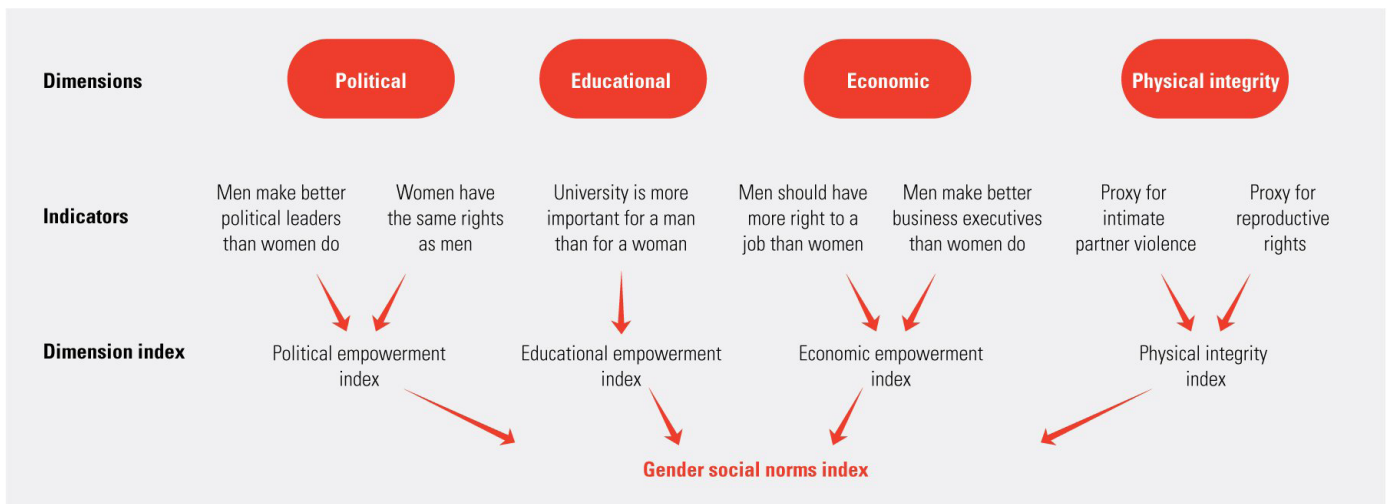
Social Issues: No country in the world with gender equality : UNDP report

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the findings of the gender social norm report) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- Ninety per cent of people hold some bias against females, a new report by the United Nations revealed

Know! about UN's report on the "Gender Social Norms"



- UN's report on the "Gender Social Norms" index analyzed gender-based prejudices in areas including politics and education in 75 countries, covering over 80 percent of the world's population.
- The report discloses that around 50 per cent of men believed that they had more right to a job than women.
- While almost a third of respondents felt that it was acceptable for men to hit their partners.
- The report maintained that "there is no country in the world with gender equality."

Know! about the findings of the report

- About half of the world's men and women felt that men were better at politics.
- In China, 55% of people thought men were better suited to be political leaders.
- In the US, a country that is yet to choose a female president, around 39% of people felt that men were better at leading.
- Women not preferred for senior positions
- Women are paid less than men and are much less likely to be in senior positions.
- Globally, 40% of people thought men made better business executives.
- In India, 69 per cent of men felt that they could play the role of business executives better than women.
- The number of female heads of government is lower today than five years ago, with only ten women in such positions in 193 countries. In 2014, it stood at 25.

Written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha: Ministry of Development of North-East Region

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NEVF + about NEDFI)

Know! about NEVF

- The North East Venture Fund (NEVF) was formally launched on 9th September, 2017 with joint efforts from Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) to encourage entrepreneurs and Start-ups and to empower entrepreneurs from the North Eastern Region (NER).
- It is a close ended fund with capital commitment of Rs 100 crore. The investment is ranging between Rs. 25 lakh and Rs.10.00 crore per venture, which is long term in nature with investment horizon of 4-5 years.
- The NEVF team has vigorously been participating in various events, seminars, conclaves etc across NER, and interacted with start-ups both on one to one and group basis to promote the fund.
- The NEVF has till date made a disbursement of Rs.18.16 crore to 12 start-ups.

Know! about NEDFI

- The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) is a Public Limited Company registered under the Companies Act

- It is notified as a Public Financial Institution under Section 4A of the said Act and was registered as an NBFC in 2002 with RBI.
- The shareholders of the Corporation are IDBI, SBI, LIC, SIDBI, ICICI, IFCI, SUUTI, GIC and its subsidiaries.
- NEDFi provides financial assistance to micro, small, medium and large enterprises for setting up industrial, infrastructure and agri-allied projects in the North Eastern Region of India and also Microfinance through MFI/NGOs.

Social Issues: Female Labour-force Participation in India Dropped from 34% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the findings of the report) + Mains (GS II Social issues)

What's the NEWS

- Female labour-force participation in India has declined from 34% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2020, according to a new study.
- According to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) India study, India is the only country among the 153 surveyed countries where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gap.

Know! more about the report findings

- The study found that raising women's participation in the labour force to the same level as men can boost India's GDP by 27%. The female labour-force participation in India has declined from 34% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2020
- Globally, 38.7% of employed women are working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, but only 13.8% of landholders are women

Know! the reasons and suggestive measures

- Gender stereotypes and lack of infrastructure has traditionally sidelined women from core manufacturing functions.
- Companies need to ensure policies and procedures are made to adapt to various life changes in their employees, including maternity, changing care needs, dual career couples and continuity
- The public policy and corporate policies should incorporate various gender related barriers in India to ensure effective solutions
- Developing separate women's projects within work programmes or women's components within existing activities in the work programmes.

Agreements: Integrated Project for Source Sustainability and Climate Resilient Rain-Fed Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh

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

What's the NEWS

- The Government of India, Government of Himachal Pradesh and the World Bank signed a US\$80 million loan agreement to improve water management practices and increase agricultural productivity in selected *Gram Panchayats* (Village Councils) in Himachal Pradesh

Know! about the integrated project (objective and benefits)

- The Integrated Project for Source Sustainability and Climate Resilient Rain-Fed Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh will benefit over 400,000 smallholder farmers, women and pastoral communities.
- The project will improve upstream water sources in forests, pastures and grasslands and ensure sufficient water is available for sustainable agriculture both in Himachal Pradesh and in downstream states.
- Enhancing the climate resilience of agriculture and its allied activities is a key component of the project for which efficient use of water is the focal point.

- The project will set up hydrological monitoring stations to monitor the water quality and quantity.
- This will not only help lay the foundation for future water budgeting through better land use and agricultural investments, but also ensure more holistic catchment area treatment (CAT) plans that are based on source sustainability, carbon sequestration, and water quality.
- Climate adaptation and mitigation measures under the project will help the state plan land-based resource management in the upper catchments of targeted micro-watersheds in Himachal Pradesh and enhance agriculture and water productivity in the downstream areas
- Ultimately, such an effort will help improve forest cover, increase water quality and quantity, reduce erosion, and enhance community participation, including that of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups.

Defence: Defence Corridors

Relevance IN – Prelims (about defence corridors)

Know! about Defence Corridors

- In last year's Central budget it has been decided to set up two Defence Industrial Corridors in the Country, one in Uttar Pradesh and another in Tamil Nadu.
- Investments of approximately Rs 3,700 crore were announced by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB/Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) & Private Industries for Uttar Pradesh Defence Corridors and investment of approx Rs 3,100 crore were announced by OFB/DPSUs & private industries for Tamil Nadu Defence Corridor.

Know! the benefits of Defence Corridors

- Setting up of Defence Industrial Corridors would catalyse indigenous production of defence and aerospace related items, thereby reducing our reliance on imports and promoting export of these items to other countries.
- This will lead to achieve India's goal of self-reliance in defence, generation of direct/indirect employment opportunities and growth of private domestic manufacturers, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and Star-ups.

India-US Military Cooperation Group (MCG) dialogue

Relevance IN – Prelims (about MCG and its objective) + Mains (GS II bilateral relations)

What's the NEWS

- In view of the rapid spread of Coronavirus globally, the visit of the Defense Secretary Mark Esper to India has been put off as well as the India-US Military Cooperation Group (MCG) dialogue.
- The India-US Military Cooperation Group (MCG) dialogue slated for the end of the month in Washington DC has been cancelled.
- Both these meetings were a follow up to the recently concluded visit of the US President Donald Trump and the inking of \$ 3 billion defence deal.

Know! about MCG

- The MCG is a forum to review the progress of defence cooperation between India's Integrated Defence Staff and the USINDOPACOM at the strategic and operational levels.
- The Integrated Defence Staff was responsible for coordination among the armed forces before the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff.
- The agenda was a request from the US side for posting liaison officers at the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)
- As part of improving defence cooperation and interoperability, India is considering a U.S. request for posting liaison officers at the USINDOPACOM and the USSOCOM.
- This is an outcome of the agreement reached at the last 2+2 dialogue in December last, which also "noted their [India and the U.S.] intent to explore further military liaison relationships.
- The liaison officer at the USINDOPACOM is likely to be a Navy officer, while the one at the USSOCOM will probably be an Army officer.

Focus Article: Landmark Verdict of The Supreme Court for Gender Equality In Army

Two Issues Addressed by the Supreme Court

1. *SSC Women officers can opt for Permanent Commission*

Know! the history (when women were allowed in the army?)

- In the year 1992 Centre notified that women eligible for appointment as officers for five years in services like Army Postal Service, Judge Advocate General Department, Army Education Corps etc.
- After that Short Service Commission (SSC) came with an appointment for 10 years (expandable upto 14 years) and the first batch under this entered in 2008.
- Short Service Commission officers are for the maximum period of 14 years

What is the Practice till now

- Men who entered Short Service Commission officers could opt for Permanent Commission at the end of 10-years of service but this facility was not available to Women officers
 - Now The Supreme Court said that all Women officers just like Men officers should be considered for Permanent Commission and there should not be any discrimination with men.
 - The Supreme Court directed the Government to implement policy decisions to grant Permanent Commission to women in the army in the next three months.
2. *Command Postings Are Allowed*
 - Till now Women officers are not eligible for command or criteria appointments

Ranks in Indian Army

General
Lieutenant General
Major General
Colonel
Lieutenant Colonel
Captain
Lieutenant

- **Command appointments is from Colonel and above rank**

For the Male officers these positions(command appointments) are filled based of four criteria

1. Leadership
 2. Performance
 3. Qualification
 4. Medical fitness
- Now Supreme Court said that there should not be any discrimination with regard to Command Posting and they should be at par with male officers. These four criteria for the command based appointments should be applicable for Women also
 - Hence in future, Women officers can be full Colonels and above in Army Service Corps, Ordnance, Education Corps etc.

No Women appointments in Combat Roles

- This Supreme Court ruling does not grant women the right to serve in combat units. At Present there is No Women appointments in the Combat Roles
- Combat roles (engaging and fighting the enemy either in person or by using specialized equipment) but they can become Colonels and above in certain services like Army Service Corps, Ordnance, Education Corps, Judge Advocate General, Engineers, Signals, Intelligence etc.

Combat roles performing by Women in Air Force and Navy

- Women already serve in combat roles in the air force, which last year qualified its first women fighter pilots.
- Women naval officers already perform combat tasks, such as firing torpedoes and missiles at enemy warships

Women officers also serve on board naval warships in combat, albeit discharging non-combat roles.

Women Personnel in

- Army 3.89%
- Navy 6.7%
- Air Force 13.28%

Government Schemes: Silk Samagra Scheme for Development of Sericulture

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

What's the NEWS

- The Government of India through Central Silk Board has been implementing a Central Sector Scheme “Silk Samagra” an Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry (ISDSI) during the year (2017-20) with an aims & objective to scale up production by improving the quality and productivity and to empower downtrodden, poor & backward families through various activities of sericulture in the country.

The scheme comprises four (4) major Components viz.

- (i) Research & Development, Training, Transfer of Technology and I.T. Initiatives,
- (ii) Seed Organizations,
- (iii) Coordination and Market Development and
- (iv) Quality Certification Systems (QCS) / Export Brand Promotion and Technology Up-gradation.

Know! about Sericulture

- Sericulture is an agro-based cottage industry having huge employment and income generating potential in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Silkworm rearing is mainly practiced in rural areas of the country providing livelihood to weaker section of the society.

Know! about CSB

- Established in 1948, by an Act of Parliament the Central Silk Board is a statutory body, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India.

The CSB has been entrusted with the overall responsibility of

- Formation of policies
- Governing Import & Export of silk.



- Undertaking, assisting and encouraging scientific, technological and economic research in the Silk Sector

Government Policies: Govt. declared masks, hand sanitisers ‘essential’ commodities

2	THE GAZETTE OF INDIA : EXTRAORDINARY	[PART II—SEC. 3(ii)]
<p align="center">MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (Department of Consumer Affairs) NOTIFICATION New Delhi, the 13th March, 2020</p> <p>S.O. 1087(E).—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 2A, of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (10 of 1955), the Central Government, hereby makes the following Order, to regulate the production, quality, distribution, logistics of masks (2ply & 3ply surgical masks, N95 masks) & hand sanitizers (for COVID 19 management) namely :—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) This order may be called the Essential Commodities Order, 2020. (2) It shall come into force from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette. In the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, in the Schedule, after serial No. (7), the following item shall be added, namely:— “(8) masks (2ply & 3ply surgical masks, N95 masks) & hand sanitizers”. This Notification shall remain in force for a period up to 30th June, 2020 from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette. <p align="right">[F. No. 26(1)/2020-ECR&E] A. K. CHOUDHARY, Economic Adviser</p>		

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the essential commodities act and its provisions)

What’s the NEWS

- Following reports of shortage and irrational pricing of hand sanitisers and masks, the central government on Friday (March 13) declared these items “essential commodities” until the end of June.

Know! more about it

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has notified an Order under the Essential Commodities Act to declare these items as Essential Commodities up to 30th June, 2020 by amending the Schedule of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.”
- The Essential Commodities Act provides, “in the interest of the general public, for the control of the production, supply and distribution of, and trade and commerce, in certain commodities
- The law, which was passed in 1955 to essentially protect consumers from unreasonable and exploitative increases in prices of commodities in times of shortage
- Under the Act, the government can also fix the maximum retail price (MRP) of any packaged product that it declares an “essential commodity”.

Know! the provisions of the act

- The Act defines an “essential commodity” as simply “a commodity specified in the Schedule”.
- The Act empowers the central government to add new commodities to the list of Essential Commodities as and when the need arises, and to remove them from the list once the crisis is over or the situation improves.
- Over the years, a long list of items have been designated as essential commodities, including various drugs, fertilisers, cereals, pulses, sugar, edible oils, petroleum and petroleum products, and certain crops.
- The purpose of designating any commodity as “essential” is to prevent profiteering at a time of extraordinary demand.
- Violators are, therefore, termed as illegal hoarders or black-marketeers who can be prosecuted. Besides penalties, the violation may lead to imprisonment for a maximum period of seven years.
- Agencies of state governments and Union Territory administrations are empowered to conduct raids to catch violators.
- The government can confiscate excess stock hoarded by retailers/traders/manufacturers, and either auction it or sell it through fair-price shops.

WHO declares coronavirus a pandemic

Relevance IN – Prelims (difference between pandemic, endemic, epidemic and outbreak)

What's the NEWS

- The World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the coronavirus outbreak could now be characterised as a “pandemic”.
- The declaration came as the coronavirus cases are sharply increasing around the world.

Know! what is a pandemic

- According to the WHO, a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease.
- The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention defines a pandemic as “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.
- The term pandemic is associated with the geographic spread and not any characteristic changes in the infection itself.
- The WHO no longer has a category for declaring a pandemic, except for influenza. The novel coronavirus is not the flu.
- Declaring the disease a pandemic won't mean the WHO gets more funds or more powers to fight it.
- The declaration is a formal announcement that the WHO assesses the impact of COVID 19 to have reached a new level.
- A pandemic is when a disease rapidly starts spreading across the world and is no longer restricted to a community or region.
- The world has seen a number of pandemics in the past involving diseases such as plague, influenza, yellow fever and others.

An outbreak, an epidemic and a Pandemic (know the difference)

- Epidemic comparatively affects fewer number of people and is confined to a certain region.
- An outbreak is usually the first stages of an epidemic.
- An epidemic affects a region or a country and starts infecting a large part of the population.
- The ebola spread was an epidemic that affected western Africa and resulted in the deaths of thousands over some years.
- The SARS outbreak in China was also an epidemic that killed over 800 people.
- The WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern, its “highest level of alarm”, on January 30 when there were fewer than 100 cases of COVID-19 outside China.

Epidemic Disease Act

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the epidemic disease act) + Mains (GS II Centre-state relations)

What's the NEWS

- The Centre has invoked a 123-year-old Epidemic Diseases Act, which has been historically used to contain the spread of various diseases -- swine flu, cholera, malaria and dengue.

Know! more about the act and its provisions

- Epidemic Disease Act was introduced by the British in 1897 to tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague that broke out in the then state of Bombay.
- It has been decided that all States/Union Territories should be advised to invoke provisions of Section 2 of the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 so that all advisories being issued from time to time by the Ministry/State/UTs are enforceable.
- Section 2 of the Act empowers state governments/UTs to take special measures and formulate regulations to contain any outbreak.
- Section 3 provides penalties for disobeying any regulation or order made under the Act. These are according to section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).
- Section 4 gives legal protection to the implementing officers acting under the Act.

Social Issues: Conference on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the objective of the conference + about MSME Sambandh + Udyam Sakhi Portal) + 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 inaugural session of 'Conference on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs' has been addressed by the Union Minister for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)
- The three-day conference has been organised by the Ministry of MSME in collaboration with various industry associations like Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO), Confederation Indian Industries (CII) and India SME Forum.

Steps taken by the government to increase the number of women entrepreneurs and empowering women entrepreneurs in the country.

- There are around 80 lakh women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector and there has been an increase of about 38% in enterprises under Prime Minister's Employment Generation Program (PMEGP) being established by women entrepreneurs in last 5 years.
- Central Ministries & PSUs are procuring 25% from MSMEs and it has been directed that 4% of purchases should be from SC/ST entrepreneurs and 3 % from women entrepreneurs.
- Female entrepreneurs are being given a 25% subsidy in urban areas while 35% subsidy is being given in rural areas.
- The work on a marketing website to sell honey products in the global market is in progress. Women are also being given 'solar charkhas'.

MSME Sambandh

- In order to make the Public Procurement Policy more effective, a Public Procurement Portal "MSME SAMBANDH" was launched in 2017
- The Portal tracks the procurement made by CPSEs from MSEs including SC-ST MSEs on a quarterly basis and contains the necessary information relating to the requirement of CPSEs in terms of items required, quantity, specifications, last purchase price etc.
- Therefore, the portal helps in effective monitoring while also enabling MSEs to build their capacities and participate in Public Procurement market.

Udyam Sakhi Portal

- Udyam Sakhi is the project which is designed to give women entrepreneurship the right information to go for self-employment on one single portal. This portal is meant for female entrepreneurs.

Prelims Factoids: Herd immunity

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Herd immunity)

What's the NEWS

- The UK government, said authorities would contain the spread of the virus but would not suppress it completely and 60 per cent infection rate would help build up a degree of 'herd immunity'

Know! about herd immunity

- Herd immunity is when a large number of people are vaccinated against a disease, lowering the chances of others being infected by it.
- When a sufficient percentage of a population is vaccinated, it slows the spread of disease. It is also referred to as community immunity or herd protection.



- Herd protection of the unvaccinated occurs when a sufficient proportion of the group is immune.
- The decline of disease incidence is greater than the proportion of individuals immunized because vaccination reduces the spread of an infectious agent by reducing the amount and/or duration of pathogen shedding by vaccines, retarding transmission.

Know! what happens in the case of coronavirus where there is no vaccine?

- The approach would require those exposed to the virus to build natural immunity and stop the human-to-human transmission. This will, it is believed, subsequently halt its spread.

Government Policies: NMCG concludes Ganga Amantran Abhiyan

Relevance IN – Prelims (about ganga amantran abhiyaan + about NMCG) + 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

- National Mission for Clean Ganga or NMCG recently organized a grand event to mark the conclusion of “Ganga Amantran Abhiyan”, a flagship programme of the NMCG.

Know! more about the Ganga Amantran Abhiyan

- Ganga Amantran Abhiyan was a pioneering exploratory open-water rafting and kayaking expedition on the Ganga river from Devprayag (Alakananda and Bhagirathi meet) to Ganga Sagar(Sundarbans)
- In this mission, the emphasis is also laid upon strengthening the community connect with Ganga river, and encouraging students and youth to become torchbearers of the cause.
- Ganga Amantran Abhiyan was a major part of these programmes that allowed people to connect with river Ganga by undertaking various courageous river games

National Mission for Clean Ganga(NMCG)

- National Mission for Clean Ganga(NMCG) was registered as a society on 12th August 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It acted as implementation arm of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council)
- It has a two tier management structure and comprises of Governing Council and Executive Committee
- In October 2016, National Ganga Council has replaced National Ganga River Basin Authority(NGRBA) which was constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986. The mission is now being operated under Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Regional Grouping: PM Modi proposes Covid-19 emergency fund to SAARC leaders, offers \$10 mn

Relevance IN – Prelims (highlights of the virtual SAARC conference + about SAARC) + Mains (GS II regional grouping)

What's the NEWS

- India's PM Narendra Modi, leaders and representatives from SAARC nations participate in video conference meet to chalk out strategy to fight coronavirus

Know! the highlights of the meeting

- Modi proposed to the SAARC leaders of creating a Covid-19 emergency fund, which could be based on voluntary contributions from all the SAARC countries.



- India will set up disease surveillance portal to better trace possible virus carriers and can share disease surveillance software with SAARC.
- India is assembling Rapid Response Team of doctors, specialists in India, along with testing kits, they will be ready for deployment.
- Afghan president Ashraf Ghani proposed common framework for tele-medicine to combat coronavirus.
- Sri Lanka President Gotabaya Rajapaksa proposed setting up of SAARC ministerial-level group to deal with issues related to coronavirus

Know! about SAARC

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of states in South Asia.
- Its member states are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- SAARC was founded in Dhaka on 8 December 1985. Its secretariat is based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Health: One Health concept

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

What's the NEWS

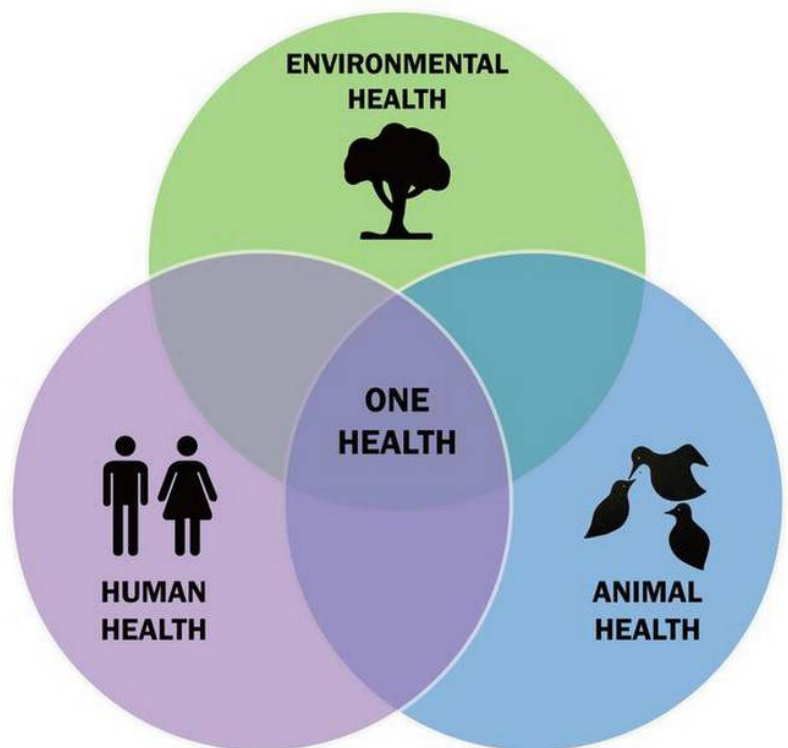
- The concept of 'One Health', which recognises that health of human beings is connected to health of animals and environment, is gaining importance as most of the contagious diseases affecting humans are zoonotic (animal to man origin) in nature.
- The concept of One Health can be effectively implemented for reducing incidence of emerging zoonotic threats like COVID-19.

Know! more about One Health

- One Health is the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment
- Of the contagious diseases affecting humans, more than 65% are of zoonotic or animal to man origin.
- One Health model is a globally accepted model for research on epidemiology, diagnosis and control of zoonotic diseases
- One Health model facilitates interdisciplinary approach in disease control so as to control emerging and existing zoonotic threats.

Know! the present scenario

- All the developing countries are in the process of promoting One Health research for developing a sustainable disease control system. They are using health analytics and data management tools for accurate results
- The KVASU has launched One Health centre to address the emerging zoonotic threats like avian influenza, swine flu, monkey fever, coronavirus infection, etc.
- Need of the hour is to scale up such a model across the country and to establish meaningful research collaborations across the world.





शिक्षित भारत- स्वस्थ भारत- स्वच्छ भारत- स्वावलम्बी भारत- संपन्न भारत
Invitation to participate/contribute in national/rural development
सभी गाँवों के विकास के लिए
Convergence of Knowledge/ Experience/ Resources for Rural Development

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), a flagship programme of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Govt of India, is an opportunity to enable faculty and students of higher educational institutions to work with the people of rural india in identifying development challenges and evolving appropriate solutions for accelerating sustainable growth of village.



AKTU College Code: 290
Redefining Education, Transforming Lives

ABES Institute of Technology is part of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and has adopted five villages under this programme.

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

Know! about Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan

- The UBA is transforming the living conditions in villages-HRD Minister

The main objectives of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) are as under:

- To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in identifying development issues in rural areas and finding sustainable solutions for the same.
- Identify & select existing innovative technologies, enable customisation of technologies, or devise implementation method for innovative solutions, as required by the people.
- To allow HEIs to contribute to devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government programmes.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 is the upgraded version of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 1.0.
- The scheme is extended to all educational institutes; however under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 Participating institutes are selected based on the fulfillment of certain criteria.

Know! more about Unnat Bharat Abhiyaan

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions to help build the architecture of an Inclusive India.
- The technology interventions under the scheme Unnat Bharat Abhiyan has been able to transform the living conditions in villages.
- The technological interventions under the UBA cover different subjects broadly categorized like in the area of sustainable agriculture; water resource management; artisans, industries and livelihood; basic amenities (infrastructure & services) and rural energy system.

Social Justice & Empowerment: Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Beggars

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the a comprehensive scheme for persons engaged in the Act of begging + about NBCFDC + about NISD) + Mains (GS II Social justice Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. Issues relating to poverty and hunger.)

What's the NEWS

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has proposed to restructure & formulate a scheme namely "Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Beggars".

Know! More about the scheme

- It will be a comprehensive scheme for persons engaged in the Act of begging which would cover identification, rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, education, skill development with the support of State Governments/UTs/Local Urban Bodies and Voluntary Organizations, institutions etc.
- The scheme will be implemented in the selected cities having large concentration of Beggar community during the financial year 2020-2021.
- The government is working in a mission mode with complete commitment to 'Har Ek Kaam, Desh Ke Naam'.

Other steps taken by the Ministry

- Last year the Ministry has released an amount of Rs. One crore and Rs. 50.00 lakh for 2018-19 to National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) for skill development programmes for beggars on pilot basis.
- The Corporation has so far conducted skill development training programme for 400 members of beggar's community
- The Ministry has also released an amount of Rs. One Crore to National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)

Know! about National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC)

- National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) was incorporated 13 January 1992 as a non profit company under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India to improve and develop the economic activities for the members of Backward Classes who are living below double the poverty line.
- The Corporation can assist loan for their self-employment ventures in the sectors like agriculture, transport and service etc.
- NBCFDC also provides Micro Financing through SCAs/ Self Help Groups (SHGs).
- The Corporation can assist a wide range of income generating activities to assist the poorer section of these classes in skill development and self-employment ventures

Know! about National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)

- The National Institute of Social Defence was set up originally as Central Bureau of Correctional Services in 1961, under the Ministry of Home Affairs
- In 1964, the Bureau was transferred to the then Department of Social Security. Since 1975 the Institute was a subordinate office under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- The National Institute of Social Defence has become an Autonomous Body vide Government of India and is registered under Societies Act The National Institute of Social Defence is the nodal training and research institute in the field of social defence.
- This Institute is currently focusing on human resource development in the areas of drug abuse prevention, welfare of senior citizens, beggary prevention, transgender and other social defence issues.

National Institute of Social Defence is:

- A Central Advisory Body for Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.
- A Centre of Excellence on research and training in the field of social defence.

- Coordinates and liaises between the Government and the Non-Government. organizations at State, National and International level.
- Develops preventive, curative and rehabilitative tools, programmes and policies in the field of social defence, Undertakes research, training, consultancy, documentation and publication in the field of social defence.

Know! about Har Kaam Desh Ke Naam

- The Centre has launched a new campaign to “spread the word” about its public welfare efforts.
- Through this campaign the Ministries are required to publicise their work through TV, newspapers, outdoor ads, and the digital medium.
- From February 15, 2020 to March 31, 2020, it is required to publicise the public welfare works of this government through television, newspapers, outdoor (advertisements) and through the digital medium.

Implementation of Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RVY scheme) + Mains (GS II Social justice)

Know! about RVY

- The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a Central Sector Scheme namely “Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana” (RVY) on 1st April, 2017 with the objective to provide the senior citizens, living below poverty line and suffering from any of the age related disability/ infirmity, with such assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/ infirmity manifested.
- The Scheme is implemented through the ‘Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)’, (a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment) as the sole implementing Agency.
- The Scheme of RVY is entirely funded from Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund (SCWF). So far, total 138 distribution camps have been organised across the country under RVY.



- ◆ Implemented through ‘Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO) (PSU under M/o SJ&E)
- ◆ First of its kind in the country
- ◆ To address disabilities like low vision, hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability
- ◆ Beneficiaries will get walkers, crutches, hearing aids, tripods, wheelchair, Artificial Dentures & Spectacles
- ◆ Devices are of high quality and conforming to BIS standards



Agriculture: APEDA signs MoU with SFAC

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

Know! the objective of the MoU

- APEDA has been focusing on collaborative approach to bring synergy with FPOs (farmers producer organisations) and has been engaged with them for mutually working together in the development of agriculture and allied sectors and its exports for bringing better value to the stakeholders.
- APEDA has been in dialog with SFAC for linking of Farmer Producer organizations, farmers’ cooperatives to the export value chain through capacity building, production of the quality produce as per the requirement of importing countries, creation of infrastructure, facilitating primary and secondary processing in the clusters and also by linking them to the exporters.
- FPOs (farmers producer organisations) are an institutional innovation to help small holders to reduce cost of produce by procuring necessary inputs in bulk at wholesale rates, aggregation of produce and bulk transport reducing marketing cost etc. and extend their reach to modern technology and distant markets.

- The policy also aims at addressing the obstacles faced by FPOs through organisation like Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) and State level organizations to expand FPO network.

Know! the Areas of cooperation:

1. APEDA and SFAC to jointly work together to link up the FPOs/FPCs with the exporters to achieve the goal and doubling the farmers income as well.
2. To work towards capacity development, outreach programs, awareness programs and workshops of various stakeholders.
3. APEDA to facilitate certification of organic produce /areas by the FPCs assisted or identified by SFAC.
4. To take-up an Agri Business Promotion Unit in the North East and to mentor and handhold the FPOs in North East.

Know! about APEDA

- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), is an authority established under an act of parliament and under the administrative control of Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- It has been mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the scheduled products
- APEDA has also been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor import of sugar.

Know! about Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC):

- It is pioneer in organising small and marginal farmers as Farmers Interest Groups, Farmers Producers Organisation and Farmers Producers Company for endowing them with bargaining power and economies of scale.
- It provides a platform for increased accessibility and cheaper availability of agricultural inputs to small and marginal farmers and in establishing forward and backward linkages in supply chain management.
- This initiative has triggered mobilization of farmers for aggregation across the country with ultimate aim of sustainable business model and augmented incomes.
- The Society has been entrusted with the task of implementation of the critically important Delhi Kisan Mandi and National Agriculture Market Scheme on e-platform to progressively free agricultural trade and offer price discovery to farmers. Currently there around 1000 FPOs/FPCs registered with SFAC.

Social Justice: Microsoft, NASSCOM Foundation announced the launch of the Innovate for Accessible India campaign

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Innovate for Accessible India campaign + about NASSCOM)

What's the NEWS

- Microsoft India and NASSCOM Foundation announced the launch of the Innovate for Accessible India campaign in partnership with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Science & Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology and ERNET (National Research and Education Network under MeitY).

Know! more about it

- Innovate for Accessible India is a nation-wide innovation challenge aimed at empowering people with disabilities with the technology and tools required for better integration into society and access to equal opportunities.



- The campaign will be an aggregator of workable technology solutions developed using Microsoft Cloud, Artificial Intelligence and other technologies that address gaps faced by people with disabilities, especially in acquiring services and support in education, skill building, employment, mobility, rehabilitation and other government services.
- The campaign will invite applications from students, citizens and social impact organizations to build customized solutions that address challenges faced by people with disabilities across the 21 officially recognized disabilities.
- The key areas of focus that developers are encouraged to address include mobility, e-governance and access, education, skilling and livelihood and health.

Know! about NASSCOM

- The National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry
- Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.
- NASSCOM gives a platform to the developing companies to network and present their product.

Human Resource Development: Comprehensive School Health Programme (SHP)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SHP 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

- Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resources Development and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have jointly developed comprehensive School Health Programme (SHP) under Ayushman Bharat to foster the growth, development and educational achievement of school going children by promoting their health and wellbeing.

Know! more about it

- A total of eleven themes have been identified under the SHP which include Reproductive Health and HIV Prevention. These modules create awareness on the subject among adolescents.
- In pursuance of the National Curriculum Framework, 2005, the Department of School & Literacy is implementing the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) as part of the National Population Education Project (NPEP).
- One of the learning outcomes of AEP is to make the learners aware of the concerns of adolescence, i.e. process of growing up during adolescence, HIV/AIDS and Substance (Drug) Abuse and to inculcate in them positive attitude regarding these concerns.

Polity: In rare move, SC removes Manipur minister from state Cabinet

Relevance IN – Prelims (factual info about the SC verdict + about art 142 and 212) + Mains (GS II Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government

What's the NEWS

- In a rare move, the Supreme Court invoked its plenary powers and ordered forthwith removal of BJP lawmaker and Manipur Forest Cabinet Minister TH Shyamkumar, restraining him from entering the Assembly till further orders.

Know! about the background

- Shyamkumar had won the Assembly polls in 2017 as a Congress candidate but later joined the BJP government. The plea of his disqualification is still pending with the Speaker.
- The SC had on January 21 taken note of inordinate delays in deciding 13 pleas for disqualification of lawmakers pending since April 2017 and had asked the Manipur Assembly Speaker to decide within four weeks the plea of a Congress leader seeking disqualification of Shyamkumar.
- The polls for 60 seats of the Manipur Legislative Assembly were conducted in March 2017 in which Congress Party emerged as the single largest party with 28 seats and BJP came second with 21 seats.

- However, a BJP led government was sworn in and Shyamkumar, a Congress MLA, switched side and became a minister in the state government leading to filing of several pleas in April 2017 with Speaker seeking his disqualification under the anti-defection law.

Know! about article 142

- The top court rarely invokes its plenary power under Article 142 of the Constitution to remove a cabinet minister from any government.
- The SC said given the extraordinary facts in the present case, “we are constrained to use our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India”.
- Article 142(1) states that “The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe
- Article 142(1) states that the Supreme Court shall have the power to make any order for the purpose of securing the attendance of any person, the discovery or production of any documents or the investigation or punishment of any contempt of itself.

Know! about Article 212

- Courts not to inquire into proceedings of the Legislature
- The validity of any proceedings in the Legislature of a State shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure
- If we talk about this particular case the due to the inaction of the Speaker the court invoked Article 142, which allows the Supreme Court to pass any order necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter.

Know! about the tenth Schedule

- The Tenth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution in 1985.
- It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.
- A legislator is deemed to have defected if he either *voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or disobeys the directives of the party leadership on a vote*. This implies that a legislator defying (abstaining or voting against) the party whip on any issue can lose his membership of the House.
- The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.
- The legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances.
- The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
- In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.
- Various expert committees have recommended that rather than the Presiding Officer, the decision to disqualify a member should be made by the President (in case of MPs) or the Governor (in case of MLAs) on the advice of the Election Commission.

Social Justice: Tech For Tribals

Relevance IN – Prelims (about tech for tribals + about TRIFED + about VDVK) + Mains (GS II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes)

What’s the NEWS

- An unique project aimed to transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs under the name “Tech for Tribal” has been launched by TRIFED.

Objective

- To infuse best in class training and capacity building for Tribals to start their enterprise.



TRIBAL COOPERATIVE
MARKETING DEVELOPMENT
FEDERATION OF
INDIA LIMITED -
TRIFED



MSME
MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
सूक्ष्म, लघु एवं मध्यम उद्यम
OUR STRENGTH • हमारी शक्ति

Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India



IIT KANPUR



INCUBATION AND INNOVATION

**STARTUP
INCUBATION AND
INNOVATION
CENTRE
IIT KANPUR**

- It was launched by TRIFED and IIT-Kanpur along with IIT-Roorkee, IIM Indore, Kalinga Institute of Social Science, Bhubaneswar and SRIJAN.

Know! about Tech for Tribal and about VDVK

- Tech for Tribals, an initiative of TRIFED supported by Ministry of MSME, aims at capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under the Pradhan Mantri VanDhan Yojana(PMVDY).
- The trainees will undergo a 30 days program over six weeks comprising 120 sessions.
- TRIFED has drawn out a Five Year strategy for 10X impact in Tribal development.
- TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs is establishing 1,200 “Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK)”, across 28 States engaging 3.6 Lakhs Tribal Forest Produce gatherers.
- One typical VDVK comprises of 15 Self Help Groups, each consisting of 20 Tribal gatherers.
- The program aims at providing skill upgradation and capacity building of VDVK lead members.
- Under the Tech for Tribals program, the Partners will develop course contents relevant to Entrepreneurship in Value Addition and Processing of Forest Produces.
- The Tech for tribals capacity building program will ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and empowering them to run their business with marketable products with quality certifications.

Know! about TRIFED

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) came into existence in 1987.
- It is a national-level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India.
- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) is engaged in marketing development of tribal products and provides marketing support to the products made by tribals through a network of retail outlets.

Know! about Van Dhan Scheme

- The Van Dhan Scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED. It was launched on 14th April, 2018 and seeks to improve tribal incomes through value addition of tribal products.
- The scheme will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal Department at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal Agency at the National Level.
- At State level, the State Nodal Agency for Minor Forest Produce(MFPs) and the District collectors are envisaged to play a pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.
- Locally the Kendras are proposed to be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in the cluster.

Health: ICMR recommends hydroxychloroquine for high-risk population

Relevance IN – Prelims(about hydroxy-chloroquine)

What's the NEWS

- Amid rising coronavirus cases in the country, the national task force for COVID-19 constituted by Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) has recommended hydroxy-chloroquine as a preventive medication for high-risk population.
- This procedure has been okayed by Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for “restricted use in emergency situations”.

Know! more about Hydroxy-chloroquine

- Hydroxy-chloroquine is recommended only for preventive treatment of healthcare workers and individuals in close contact of coronavirus patients
- Researchers at a US lab work with coronavirus samples as a trial begins to see whether malaria treatment hydroxychloroquine can prevent or reduce the severity of COVID-19.
- Hydroxy-chloroquine is found to be effective against coronavirus in laboratory studies and in-vivo studies.
- Its use in prophylaxis is derived from the available evidence of benefit as treatment and supported by preclinical data
- The drug is usually prescribed to malaria patients
- The drug is not recommended for prophylaxis in children under 15 years of age.

Prelims Factoids: World Tuberculosis Day 2020

Relevance IN -Prelims(World Tuberculosis (TB) Day + about TB)

What's the NEWS

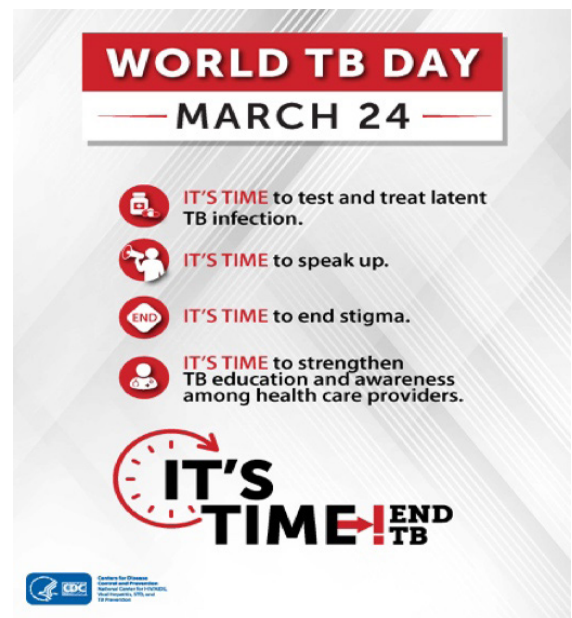
- Each year, World Health Organisation commemorate World Tuberculosis (TB) Day on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

Know! more about it

- The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.
- TB remains the world's deadliest infectious killer. Each day, over 4000 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.
- The theme of World TB Day 2020 - 'It's time'
- The “It's Time” theme highlights that now is the time to scale up access to prevention and treatment, to ensure sustainable resources are dedicated to TB research, and to ramp up an equitable global strategy to control an infectious disease that is responsible for immense social burdens.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a joint initiative “Find. Treat. All. #EndTB” with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership, with the aim of accelerating the TB response and ensuring access to care, in line with WHO's overall drive towards Universal Health Coverage.

Know! about Tuberculosis (TB)

- TB is caused by bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that most often affect the lungs. Tuberculosis is curable and preventable.
- TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air. A person needs to inhale only a few of these germs to become infected.



Know! about MDR and XDR TB

- 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. However, second-line treatment options are limited and require extensive chemotherapy (up to 2 years of treatment) with medicines that are expensive and toxic.
- In some cases, more severe drug resistance can develop. 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.

Health Sector: National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NCDC)

What's the NEWS

- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare visited National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) Control Room and the Testing Laboratories, and reviewed the current status

Know! about NCDC

- NCDC is taking a lead role in undertaking investigations of disease outbreaks all over the country employing epidemiological and diagnostic tools.
- National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC; previously known as National Institute of Communicable Diseases) is an institute under the Indian Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It was established in July 1963 for research in epidemiology and control of communicable diseases and to reorganize the activities of the Malaria Institute of India (MII).

International: Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit

Relevance IN – Prelims (about G20 + Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit takeaways) + Mains (GS II international organisations)

What's the NEWS

- An Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit chaired by Saudi Arabia was convened on 26 March 2020 to discuss the challenges posed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and to forge a global coordinated response. Saudi Arabia coordinated the video summit.

Know! more about the summit highlights

- The extraordinary G20 Summit was a culmination of the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting and G20 Sherpas Meeting on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- G20 countries committed to inject over USD 5 trillion into the global economy to counter the social and economic impact of COVID-19.
- Leaders also agreed to contribute to the WHO led COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund on a voluntary basis.
- G20 members were joined by leaders from the invited countries - Spain, Jordan, Singapore, and Switzerland, as well as international organizations - United Nations, World Bank, IMF, World Health Organization and World Trade Organization.

Know! more about G20

- The G20 is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.



- The 2019 G20 Osaka summit was the fourteenth meeting of the G20, a forum of 19 countries and the EU that together represent most of the world economy. It was the first G20 summit to be hosted by Japan.
- 90% of the COVID-19 cases and 88% of deaths were in G20 countries even as they share 80% of world GDP and 60% of world population.

Government Schemes: Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

Relevance IN – Prelims (factual takeaways about the relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana)

What's the NEWS

- **The Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman announced** Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus.
- The government will offer cash transfer through DBT (direct benefit transfer) in eight parts: Farmers, MNREGA, widows, poor pensioners, divyang, women under Jan Dhan Yojana, women and households under Ujjwala scheme, self-help groups for women including those under the livelihood mission, organised sector workers under EPFO, construction workers and district mineral funds.

Know! about the components of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package:—

Insurance scheme for health workers

- Insurance scheme for health workers fighting COVID-19 in Government Hospitals and Health Care Centres.
- Insurance cover of Rs 50 Lakh per health worker fighting COVID-19 to be provided under Insurance Scheme.

PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana

- 80 crore poor people will get 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses for free every month for the next three months.
- Each one of them would be provided double of their current entitlement over next three months.

Benefit to farmers:

- The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the PM KISAN Yojana.
- It would cover 8.7 crore farmers

Cash transfers Under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana:

- 20 crore women Jan Dhan account holders to get Rs 500 per month for next three months
- Under **PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, gas cylinders, free of cost**, would be provided to 8 crore poor families for the next three months.

District Mineral Fund

- The State Government will be asked to utilise the funds available under District Mineral Fund (DMF) for supplementing and augmenting facilities of medical testing, screening and other requirements in connection with preventing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic as well as treating the patients affected with this pandemic.

MNREGA

- Increase in MNREGA wage to Rs 202 a day from Rs 182 to benefit 13.62 crore families.

Senior Citizens

- An ex-gratia of Rs 1,000 to 3 crore poor senior citizen, poor widows and poor disabled.

Organised Sector

- Employees' Provident Fund Regulations will be amended to include Pandemic as the reason to allow non-refundable advance of 75 percent of the amount or three months of the wages, whichever is lower, from their accounts. Families of four crore workers registered under EPF can take benefit of this window.
- Welfare Fund for Building and Other Construction Workers has been created under a Central Government Act.
- There are around 3.5 Crore registered workers in the Fund.

Building and other construction Workers Welfare Fund

- State Governments will be given directions to utilise this fund to provide assistance and support to these workers to protect them against economic disruptions.

Know! about Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)

- It is an amnesty scheme launched by the Government of India in December 2016 on the lines of the Income declaration scheme, 2016 (IDS) launched earlier in the year.
- A part of the Taxation Laws (Second Amendment) Act, 2016, the scheme provides an opportunity to declare unaccounted wealth and black money in a confidential manner and avoid prosecution after paying a fine of 50% on the undisclosed income.
- An additional 25% of the undisclosed income is invested in the scheme which can be refunded after four years, without any interest.
- Valid from December 16, 2016 to March 31, 2017, the scheme can only be availed to declare income in the form of cash or bank deposits in Indian bank accounts and not in the form of jewellery, stock, immovable property, or deposits in overseas accounts.

Social Issues: Team Trifed Van Dhan India shows the way ‘Work From Home’

Relevance IN – Prelims (about TRIFED Vandhan and its objective + about Tech for Tribals + Mains (GS II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

What's the NEWS

- A group of over 500 officials from TRIFED, an organisation under the M/o Tribal Affairs, have unleashed the power of Webinars to keep in touch with each other continue working from home, located in 27 States of the country.

Know! more about it (the genesis)

- Braving all odds, “The Tech for Tribals”, a project to train tribal entrepreneurs at 16 premier IITs & IIMs of the country, was launched on line on 19 March 2020.
- This scheme will link almost 3.5 lakh tribal entrepreneurs living in villages to the premier institutions of the world.
- The Trifed VanDhan GIS based website, the future medium of communication for 50 lakh tribal gatherers was launched on line for testing with 27 State teams participating, on 27 March 2020.
- Trifed completed setting up 1205 VANDhan Centers across 22 states of the country, employing 3 lakh 70 thousand Tribals in ventures to promote entrepreneurship

Health: National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC) + 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 Minister of Health & Family Welfare launched the National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC).

Know! more about CoNTeC

- The project CoNTeC, an acronym for COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre, has been conceptualised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and has been implemented by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.
- CoNTeC has been made operational at AIIMS with a view to connect the Doctors across the country to AIIMS in real time for treatment of the COVID-19 patients.
- The doctors world over are using different protocols to treat COVID-19 patients and the goal of the facility is to at least connect the doctors in the country together to discuss amongst themselves the protocols undertaken and provide the best treatment accordingly.



- The CoNTeC is a Telemedicine Hub established by AIIMS, New Delhi, wherein expert doctors from various clinical domains will be available 24x7 to answer the multifaceted questions from specialists from all over the country.
- It is a multi-modal telecommunications hub through which 2 way audio-video and text communications can be undertaken from any part of the country as well as the world at large.
- The modes of communication will include simple mobile telephony as well as two way video communications, using WhatsApp, Skype and Google Duo.
- The CoNTeC is also fully integrated with the National Medical College Network (NMCN) to conduct a full fledged Video Conference (VC) between the 50 Medical Colleges connected through the NMCN with its National Resource Centre located at SGPGI, Lucknow.

COVID-19: India to participate in WHO solidarity trial for developing potential drugs for COVID-19

Relevance IN – Prelims (about WHO solidarity trail+ about potential drugs)

What's the NEWS

- India will soon participate in WHO solidarity trial for developing potential drugs for COVID-19.
- India has indicated willingness to go for vaccine trials for country's population.
- Currently there are around 30 groups which are working on developing vaccines of which 5 are already going for animal toxicity studies.

Know! more about the Solidarity trail

- Solidarity Trial was announced by the WHO last week as an international trial, which will compare the safety and effectiveness of four different drugs or drug combinations against COVID-19
- WHO is going to focus four most promising therapies as the part of the International trial. These include
 1. An experimental antiviral compound called remidasvir
 2. The malaria medications chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine;
 3. A combination of two HIV drugs, lopinavir and ritonavir;
 4. and that same combination as 3 plus interferon-beta, an immune system messenger that can help cripple viruses.
- The ICMR had approved the use of hydroxychloroquine for prophylactic use in certain cases, the DCGI has also given its nod to combination of two HIV drugs, lopinavir and ritonavir; to be used in certain cases.
- WHO's Solidarity trial is expected to witness participation from many countries including Thailand, Argentina, Canada, France, Iran, and Spain.
- The trial will not only test different drugs but will also compare their effectiveness.



Human Resource Development: National Online Education Platform SWAYAM

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

What's the NEWS

- The access to the National Online Education Platform SWAYAM and other Digital Initiatives has tripled in the last one week.



- The growth has been seen after provision of free access to best teaching learning resources at SWAYAM while earlier the courses of SWAYAM were time bound for which registration needed to be done in advance.
- Now to utilise this lock down period productively and to promote online learning, it can be viewed by any learner free of cost without any registration.

Know! all about SWAYAM

- SWAYAM has a repository of 1900 courses which are now being accessed by people from over 60 countries.
- The significant majority is from India and the other countries include USA, UAE, Germany, Nepal, Singapore, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia.
- The videos of the SWAYAM Prabha DTH TV channels are viewed by around 50,000 people every day.

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

- MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) platforms are fast gaining popularity in India.
- Many Indian students and working professionals have now started embracing MOOC platforms to develop deeper knowledge in their respective subjects.
- Considering the popularity and relevance of MOOCs, Government of India has also launched an indigenous platform, SWAYAM.
- SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) is basically an integrated MOOCs platform for distance education that is aimed at offering all the courses from school level (Class IX) to post-graduation level. These courses are offered by the faculties of leading colleges and universities in India.
- The Categories of courses include - Engineering, Science, Humanities, Management, Language, Mathematics, Arts and Recreation, Commerce, General, Library, Education.
- The current SWAYAM platform is developed by Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and NPTEL, IIT Madras with the help of Google Inc. and Persistent Systems Ltd.

SWAYAM Prabha

- It may be noted that MHRD has also launched 32 DTH (Direct-To-Home) educational TV channels called SWAYAM Prabha. The DTH channels would broadcast education content (created on the MOOC platform, SWAYAM) to students 24 × 7.

Other online platforms

- The National Digital Library is now being accessed by about 43,000 people daily which is more than double of the usual number of persons accessing it.
- The Education portals of NCERT like Diksha, e-pathasala, NROER and NIOS and the other ICT initiatives like Robotics education (e-Yantra), Open Source Software for Education (FOSSEE), Virtual experiments (Virtual Labs) and Learning programming (Spoken tutorial) are also experiencing very large access rates.

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GENERAL STUDIES III

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

Science and Technology: Scientists discover animal that doesn't need oxygen to survive

Relevance IN – Prelims (about *Henneguya salminicol*)

What's the NEWS

- Researchers discovered a unique organism that doesn't need to breathe.
- Instead, the tiny parasite lives in salmon tissue and evolved so that it doesn't need oxygen to produce energy.

Know! more about the parasite called *Henneguya salminicol*

- The animal which is a relative of jellyfish and corals, gave up breathing and consuming oxygen -- or became anaerobic -- to produce energy.
- Aerobic respiration was thought to be ubiquitous in animals, but now we confirmed that this is not the case
- The discovery shows that evolution can go in strange directions.
- Aerobic respiration is a major source of energy, and yet we found an animal that gave up this critical pathway
- Some other organisms like fungi, amoebas or ciliate lineages in anaerobic environments have lost the ability to breathe over time
- The new study demonstrates that the same can happen to an animal -- possibly because the parasite happens to live in an anaerobic environment
- The researchers noted that the parasite's anaerobic nature was an accidental discovery.
- While assembling the *Henneguya* genome, the researchers found that it did not include a mitochondrial genome.
- The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell where oxygen is captured to make energy, so its absence indicated that the animal was not breathing oxygen.
- It's not yet clear to us how the parasite generates energy. It may be drawing it from the surrounding fish cells, or it may have a different type of respiration such as oxygen-free breathing, which typically characterises anaerobic non-animal organisms
- It is an animal whose evolutionary process is the opposite.
- Living in an oxygen-free environment, it has shed unnecessary genes responsible for aerobic respiration and become an even simpler organism

Environment: World Wildlife Day

Relevance IN – Prelims (about World Wildlife day + about CITES)

What's the NEWS

- On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in its resolution decided to proclaim 3 March, the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973, as World Wildlife Day, which was proposed by Thailand to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora.

Know! more about World Wildlife Day

- The UNGA resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.
- World Wildlife Day has now become the most important global annual event dedicated to wildlife.



Sustaining
All Life on Earth



- World Wildlife Day will be celebrated in 2020 under the theme “Sustaining all life on Earth”, encompassing all wild animal and plant species as key components of the world’s biodiversity.
- This aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals 1, 12, 14 and 15, and their wide-ranging commitments on alleviating poverty, ensuring sustainable use of resources, and on conserving life both on land and below water to halt biodiversity loss.

Know! about CITES

- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the Washington Convention) is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The convention was opened for signature in 1973 and CITES entered into force on 1 July 1975.
- Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild, and it accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants.
- States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention (‘joined’ CITES) are known as Parties.
- Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.
- The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals and plants to a vast array of wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, wooden musical instruments, timber, tourist curios and medicines.

Know! about CITES Appendices

- Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants.
- They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research.
- Appendix II lists species that are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless trade is closely controlled.
- Appendix III is a list of species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation
- International trade in specimens of species listed in this Appendix is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.
- Species may be added to or removed from Appendix I and II, or moved between them, only by the Conference of the Parties
- But species may be added to or removed from Appendix III at any time and by any Party unilaterally

Science & Technology: Discovery of Ink to Curb Fake Printing of Passports and Counterfeiting of Currency Notes

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the discovered ink and its objective)

What’s the NEWS

- CSIR-National Physical Laboratory has developed a bi-luminescent security ink which glows in red and green colours when illuminated by two different excitation sources at 254 nano meters (nm) and 365 nm, respectively.
- The ink was prepared in a batch of 1kg and given to Bank Note Press (BNP), Dewas, a unit of Security Printing Minting Corporation of India Ltd. (SPMCIL), New Delhi.
- The ink is found comparable to the standards that are in use. The formulation can be used to check the authenticity of passports, Government documents, tamper evident labels, identity cards, etc.

Energy Sector: Govt to star rate deep freezers and light commercial ACs

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the initiatives taken by BEE and its star labelling programme + about UDIT) + Mains (GS III Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc + steps taken by the government)

What's the NEWS

- On the occasion of 19th foundation day, BEE has expanded the coverage by including Energy Efficient “Deep Freezers” and “Light Commercial Air Conditioners (LCAC)”.
- Through launch of these two new appliances under voluntary regime, 26 appliances would now be covered under this programme.

Know! more about it

- Deep freezers and light commercial air conditioners which are used in commercial establishments will soon be star rated according to the efficiency of their power consumption.
- This will result in the saving of 900 crore units of power by the year 2030.
- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) rates electronic appliances on the basis of efficient power consumption.
- Deep freezers and light commercial air conditioners are some of the biggest energy guzzlers in the commercial space and their inclusion in the star-rated programme will reduce power consumption and Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere
- The program will be initially launched in voluntary mode from 2nd March, 2020 to 31st December, 2021. Thereafter, it will be made mandatory after reviewing the degree of market transformation in this particular segment of appliances

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) which comes under the Union ministry of Power, was founded in the year 2001.
- The star labelling programme was launched by BEE as part of its mandate under the Energy Conservation Act 2001.
- So far, more than 24 appliances have been star-rated by BEE under voluntary rating programme. After the inclusion of deep freezer and light commercial air conditioners, the number will become 26.
- Apart from the voluntary rating regime, the BEE also has a mandatory rating regime. A total of 10 appliances which consume very high energy have been put under this list.
- Domestic Air Conditioners, refrigerators, gyser and a host of electric appliances come under the rating regime of the BEE.
- More the number of stars, higher the efficiency of the appliances. The higher rated appliances consume less energy and save money and environment. The maximum star rating is 5 star while minimum rating is one star.

Urja Dakshata Information Tool (UDIT)

- A first ever initiative taken by BEE with World Resources Institute (WRI), to facilitate a database on energy efficiency was launched.
- UDIT is a user-friendly platform that explains the energy efficiency landscape of India across industry, appliances, building, transport, municipal and agriculture sectors.
- UDIT will also showcase the capacity building and new initiatives taken up by the Government across the sectors in the increase energy efficiency domain.



Know! about WRI

- World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research non-profit organization that was established in 1982 that spans more than 60 countries, with international offices in Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and the United States
- The organization's mission is to promote environmental sustainability, economic opportunity, and human health and well-being.
- WRI partners with local and national governments, private companies, publicly held corporations, and other non-profits, and offers services including global climate change issues, sustainable markets, ecosystem protection, and environmental responsible governance services

Environment Conservation: Centre declares National Chambal Sanctuary in MP as eco-sensitive zone

Relevance IN – Prelims (about eco-sensitive zone and about national Chambal sanctuary)

What's the NEWS

- The Centre declared the National Chambal Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, home to gangetic dolphins and 75 per cent population of critically endangered species gharial, as eco-sensitive zone (ESZ).
- The central government hereby notifies an area to an extent of zero to two kilometres around the boundary of National Chambal Sanctuary in the state of Madhya Pradesh as the National Chambal Sanctuary Eco-sensitive Zone

Know! more about National Chambal Sanctuary

- Spread over 435 square kilometres, the National Chambal Sanctuary lies across Sheopur, Morena and Bhind districts of Madhya Pradesh with a length of more than 400 kilometers.
- It is home to naturally living population of 75 per cent of gharial. The sanctuary also harbours national aquatic animal the fresh water gangetic dolphins, nine species of fresh water turtles and more the 180 species of migratory birds.
- In its notification, the government prohibited any new construction of hotels and resorts within one kilometre from the boundary of the wildlife sanctuary or up to the extent of the ESZ, whichever is nearer.
- The distance of one kilometre from the boundary of the wildlife sanctuary till the extent of the Eco-Sensitive Zone, the establishment of new hotels and resorts shall be allowed only in pre-defined and designated areas for ecotourism facilities as per Tourism Master Plan
- Forests, horticulture areas, agricultural areas, parks and open spaces earmarked for recreational purposes in the Eco-sensitive Zone shall not be used or converted into areas for commercial or residential or industrial activities.

Defence: Pragyan Conclave 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Pragyan Conclave)

What's the NEWS

- "PRAGYAN CONCLAVE 2020", a two-day Indian Army International Seminar being organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), commenced on 04 Mar 2020 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi.

Know! more about the event

- The event brings together a cross-domain national and international experts to deliberate on the complex subject of 'Changing Characteristics of Land Warfare and its Impact on the Military'.
- The seminar provided a platform for deliberations on emerging ideas, perspectives and narratives that define the 'New Age Warfare' which is increasingly witnessing a change in its character as well as battlespace with the usage of new 'means' to pursue the 'ends'.



- The Technological Revolution – Information Warfare in multi domain operations, cyber and space warfare and implications of AI and Robotics are some of the new domains of battlespace in fighting 21st century warfare.
- With the advent of technology, Armed Forces need to be agile and keep pace with the continuous change.

Economy: Cabinet approves Mega Consolidation in Public Sector Banks

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the consolidation of PSB and its benefits) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

The Union Cabinet, has approved the mega consolidation of ten PSBs into four which include the –

- Amalgamation of Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into Punjab National Bank
- Amalgamation of Syndicate Bank into Canara Bank
- Amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank into Union Bank of India
- Amalgamation of Allahabad Bank into Indian Bank

Know! more about the amalgamation and its benefits

- The amalgamation would be effective from 1.4.2020 and would result in creation of seven large PSBs
- The Mega consolidation would help create banks with scale comparable to global banks and capable of competing effectively in India and globally.
- Greater scale and synergy through consolidation would lead to cost benefits which should enable the PSBs enhance their competitiveness and positively impact the Indian banking system.
- Consolidation would also provide impetus to amalgamated entities by increasing their ability to support larger ticket-size lending and have competitive operations by virtue of greater financial capacity.
- The adoption of best practices across amalgamating entities would enable the banks improve their cost efficiency and risk management, and also boost the goal of financial inclusion through wider reach.

Science & Technology: KPIT Sparkle 2020

Relevance IN – Prelims (about KPIT sparkle and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- KPIT, a global leader in automotive software and mobility solutions, has announced the winners of KPIT Sparkle 2020 among 30 select teams who presented their ideas on transformative solutions in mobility and energy.

Know! about KPIT Sparkle

- KPIT Sparkle is an innovation platform that nurtures, mentors, and supports aspiring entrepreneurs and connects them with incubators in the ecosystem to transform their inventive ideas into viable products.
- KPIT Sparkle, an annual national-level contest, cultivates a culture of innovation by inspiring students from the STEM (science, technology, engineering, management) streams to identify and solve real-life problems in sustainability by designing new technology-enabled solutions. It also encourages and facilitates students to secure intellectual property for their solutions.
- The programme provided students of undergraduate, post-graduate, and Ph.D. courses from science, engineering, design, and management colleges and universities across India with an opportunity to develop smart, safe, and clean solutions for the energy and transportation sectors.

Know! more about KPIL (its association with different institutes)

- KPIT partnered with the Centre for Innovation Incubation & Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIM Ahmedabad; Incubation Cell, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai; Science and Technology Park, University of Pune;



Bhau Institute of Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Leadership, College of Engineering Pune; Aartech (AIC), one of the first corporate Atal Incubation Centres established under the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM); Sandip Incubators (AIC); and Forge to provide incubation opportunities to deserving ideas.

- KPIT Sparkle 2020 has been associated with DST; NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM); All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE); India Design Council; National Institute of Design; and ONGC Energy Centre as its knowledge partners.

Science & Technology: New test with quantum coins & computers for quantum sensing

Relevance IN – Prelims (about entanglement theory)

What's the NEWS

- Researchers from Raman Research Institute (RRI), an autonomous institution under the Department of Science & Technology, have devised a new test for fairness of quantum coin or 'qubit' (the basic unit of information in a quantum computer) using **entanglement theory**.

Know! about entanglement theory

- The new test uses entanglement to test the fairness of the quantum coin.
- Entanglement is a special type of correlation that exists in the quantum world with no classical counterpart.
- The researchers from RRI made use of this quantum resource to arrive at a test for fairness of a quantum coin (a qubit).
- Their strategy, which makes use of entanglement, enables better discrimination between quantum states. Such advantage is valuable in quantum sensors.

Quantum Information and Quantum Computing Technology

The domain of Quantum Information and Quantum Computing Technology is a growing area of research which is expected to influence Data Processing, which in turn, plays a central role in our lives in this Information Age. For instance, bank transactions, online shopping and so on crucially depend on the efficiency of information transfer. Thus the recent work on quantum state discrimination is expected to be valuable in people's lives in the current era.

Environment Conservation: Global Coalition for Biodiversity launched on World Wildlife Day

Relevance IN – Prelims (about United for Biodiversity coalition and its objective + about IPBES)

What's the NEWS

- The European Commission (EC) launched the 'United for Biodiversity' coalition made up of zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, national parks, and natural history and science museums from around the world, on World Wildlife Day 2020

Know! more about the coalition

- The coalition offered the opportunity for all such institutions to "join forces and boost public awareness about the nature crisis, ahead of the crucial COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China in October 2020," when nations will adopt a new global framework to protect and restore nature
- The coalition adopted a common pledge, citing the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment finding that one million species were already at risk of extinction, and appeals to visitors to each of their institutions to "raise their voice for nature."
- IPBES, formed by the United Nations Environment Programme, welcomed the formation of the coalition.

Know! the benefits of creating such organisations

- These organisations are vital not only for cataloguing and preserving the natural world, but are indispensable and invaluable centres for education and mobilisation — particularly for young leaders and decision-makers of the future.

Know! about IPBES

- The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent intergovernmental body established by States to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.
- IPBES was established to improve the interface between science and policy on issues of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- It is intended to serve a similar role to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
- In 2010 a resolution by the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly urged the United Nations Environment Programme to convene a plenary meeting to establish the IPBES.
- It was established in Panama City, on 21 April 2012 by 94 Governments.
- In 2013 an initial conceptual framework was adopted for the prospective IPBES plenary.
- It is not a United Nations body. However, at the request of the IPBES Plenary and with the authorization of the UNEP Governing Council in 2013, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides secretariat services to IPBES

Science & Technology: Female-specific Full Body Protector (प्रबला) and Septiflo™

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Prabla and about Septiflo™)

What's the NEWS

- Dr Shweta Rawat from Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences (DIPAS), DRDO, Timarpur, Delhi has developed a female-specific Full Body Protector (प्रबला) to safeguard the Female troops deployed in riot control actions.
- This gear has been developed in collaboration with the Rapid Action Force using the ergonomic design principle based on anthropometric dimensions specific for female troops.
- The full Body Protector has unique properties, including anti-stab, anti-puncture, flame retardant and acid resistance.
- It is designed to assure greater comfort and flexibility to the women forces while deployed in law and order maintenance duties.



Septiflo™

- Dr. Shalini Gupta, Department of Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, has successfully led the development of a technology Septiflo™, which offers fast and affordable assay for point-of-care diagnosis and treatment of bacterial septicemia, one of the biggest in-hospital killers worldwide.

Science & Technology: Scientists identify bacteria that can replace fertilizers & fungicides in tea plants

Relevance IN – Prelims (about endophytic actinobacteria)

What's the NEWS

- Researchers at Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) Guwahati, an autonomous institute under Department of Science & Technology, have found significant plant-growth-promoting and antifungal activities of endophytic actinobacteria associated with Tea plant and related genera, Eurya to find potent plant growth-promoting strains.

Know! more about endophytic Actinobacteria

- Application of endophytic Actinobacteria could reduce chemical inputs in Tea plantation.
- This research finding confirms that endophytic actinobacteria have the potential to exhibit multiple growth-promoting traits positively influence tea growth and production and can hence be used in the management and sustainability of Teacrop.
- Tea (*Camellia sinensis*) plays an important role in the Indian economy as a major portion of the tea produced is exported.
- However, in the recent years, due to higher demand of chemical residue-free made tea by the importing countries has led to a decline in the export of tea.
- The present study attempts the use of endophytic actinobacteria having plant beneficial characteristics to reduce and replace the use of chemical inputs in the tea industry.

Environment: Mass death of white-throated laughingthrush birds in Uttarakhand



Relevance IN – Prelims (about white-throated laughingthrush birds)

What's the NEWS

- Around 50 white-throated laughingthrush birds died mysteriously in the forests of Berinag sub-division of Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand.
- There are two possibilities behind the death of the birds in such large numbers. Either the group ate pesticide smeared food thrown about by people in the forest or they died of some infectious disease.

Know! about the White-throated laughingthrushes

- White-throated laughingthrushes are local species of sub Himalayan hill tracts and are mostly seen in groups of 50 to 100.
- These birds are partially white and partially orange coloured below their neck.
- It is found mainly in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent, primarily the Himalayas, and some adjoining and disjunct areas. It ranges across Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Tibet and Vietnam. Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist montane forests.
- IUCN Conservation Status – least Concern.



Prelims Factoids: SEBI launches app for lodging investor grievances (SCORES)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SCORES app and its objective)

What's the NEWS

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India launched a mobile application for lodging investor grievances.

Know! more about the app

- The app – Sebi SCORES – in an effort to improve the ease of doing business so that investors can conveniently lodge their grievances in Sebi Complaints Redress System (SCORES). SCORES mobile app will make it easier for investors to lodge their grievances with Sebi, as they can now access SCORES at their convenience of a smartphone.
- The App, will encourage investors to lodge their complaints on SCORES rather than sending letters to Sebi in physical mode
- SCORES is a platform designed to help investors to lodge their complaints online with Sebi, pertaining to securities market, against listed companies, Sebi registered intermediaries and Sebi recognized Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs).
- Since its launch in June 2011, Sebi on an average has received about 40,000 complaints every year. A total of 3,57,000 complaints has been resolved using SCORES platform, so far.



Economic Developments: The Union Cabinet has approved the Companies (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019 to amend the Companies Act, 2013

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the companies act 2013 amendments + about CSR) + Mains (GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation).

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet, approved as many as 72 amendments to the Companies Act, including decriminalising various offences, a move which would protect corporates in case of genuine commercial failures.

Know! about the amendments

- The Bill removes criminality under the Act in case of defaults which can be determined objectively and which, otherwise, lack the element of fraud or do not involve larger public interest.
- This Bill furthers ease of living for law-abiding corporates and de-clogs the criminal justice system in the country.
- The Bill amends the Companies Act to enable listing of Indian firms on foreign stock exchanges.
- With the amendments, as many as 23 offences would be recategorized out of 66 compoundable offences under the Act. Seven compoundable offences would also be omitted under the Act.

CABINET DECISIONS: 4 MARCH 2020

Good News for Law Abiding Corporates

Companies (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019

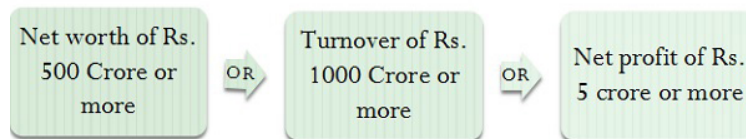


-  Govt approved Companies (2nd Amendment) Bill, 2019 to amend the Companies Act, 2013
-  Bill would **remove criminality** under the Act
-  To further de-clogging of the **criminal justice system**
-  Would also further **ease of living** for law abiding corporates

- Government has removed the imprisonment angle and reduced the punishment proposed under the act. Besides, the quantum of penalty will also be reduced
- Companies which have an obligation to spend Rs. 50 lakh per annum or less on corporate social responsibility(CSR) are no longer required to have a CSR committee.
- Companies can carry forward the CSR obligations for the next years if they spend over the obliged 2% CSR in a particular year
- Among others, the Cabinet has approved allowing Non-Residents Indians (NRIs) to own up to 100 per cent stake in disinvestment-bound Air India.
- Currently, NRIs can acquire only 49 per cent in Air India. The announcement comes at a time when the government is looking to sell 100 per cent stake in the national carrier.

Know! about Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

- The CSR activities of Indian companies are in line with the provisions of Section 135 with Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013.



- Company which has a net worth of Rs 500 crore or more or a turnover of Rs 1000 crore or more in any financial year or having more than Rs 5 crore in net profits to spend at least 2% of the net profit made by the company during the last 3 financial years as CSR under the Companies Act 2013

Environment: Amazon rainforest may collapse within decades if critical point is reached: Study



Relevance IN – Prelims (about amazon rain forest) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- Large ecosystems, such as the Amazon rain forest, may collapse and disappear alarmingly quickly, once a critical point in their destruction is reached, according to a study

Know! about the findings of the report

- the Researchers, revealed the speed at which ecosystems of different sizes will disappear, once they have reached a point beyond which they transform into an alternative habitat.
- The collapse of large vulnerable ecosystems, such as the Amazon rainforest and Caribbean coral reefs, may take only a few decades once triggered.
- Once the “point of no return” is reached, the iconic Amazon rainforest could shift to a savannah-type ecosystem with a mix of trees and grass within 50 years.

Know! about Amazon rainforest

- The Amazon rainforest is a moist broadleaf tropical rainforest in the Amazon biome that covers most of the Amazon basin of South America.
- This region includes territory belonging to nine nations.
- The majority of the forest is contained within Brazil, with 60% of the rainforest, followed by Peru with 13%, Colombia with 10%, and with minor amounts in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana.
- The Amazon represents over half of the planet's remaining rainforests, and comprises the largest and most biodiverse tract of tropical rainforest in the world, with an estimated 390 billion individual trees divided into 16,000 species

Economy: Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about RoDTEP and its benefits) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, has given its approval for introducing the Scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) under which a mechanism would be created for reimbursement of taxes/ duties/ levies, at the central, state and local level, which are currently not being refunded under any other mechanism, but which are incurred in the process of manufacture and distribution of exported products.

Know! more about the scheme

- This scheme is going to give a boost to the domestic industry and Indian exports providing a level playing field for Indian producers in the International market so that domestic taxes/ duties are not exported.
- Under the Scheme an inter-ministerial Committee will determine the rates and items for which the reimbursement of taxes and duties would be provided.
- In line with "Digital India", refund under the Scheme, in the form of transferable duty credit/electronic scrip will be issued to the exporters, which will be maintained in an electronic ledger. The Scheme will be implemented with end to end digitization.

Salient features

- At present, GST taxes and import/customs duties for inputs required to manufacture exported products are either exempted or refunded. However, certain taxes/duties/levies are outside GST, and are not refunded for exports, such as, VAT on fuel used in transportation, Mandi tax, Duty on electricity used during manufacturing etc. These would be covered for reimbursement under the RoDTEP Scheme.

Cyber Awareness: Crime Multi Agency Centre and National Cybercrime Training Centre

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

What's the NEWS

- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) celebrated its 35th Inception Day

The infographic is titled "Big Boost to Export" and describes the "Scheme of Remission of Duties & Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)". It features a background image of stacked shipping containers. The text is organized into four bullet points, each accompanied by a circular icon: a money bag for the first point, a person for the second, a computer monitor for the third, and a gear for the fourth. At the bottom right, a black box contains the text "CABINET DECISIONS: 13 MARCH 2020".

- Big Boost to Export**
Scheme of Remission of Duties & Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)
- Mechanism to be created for reimbursement of **taxes /duties/levies at central, state & local level**, currently not being refunded
- Will make Indian exports cost competitive in International Markets & **boost employment generation**
- Existing MEIS to be **shifted to RoDTEP with proper monitoring** & audit mechanism
- Scheme to be implemented with **end to end digitization**

CABINET DECISIONS: 13 MARCH 2020

Know! about Cri-MAC and NCTC

- The Home Ministry launched Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC) for sharing of information on heinous crime and other issues related to inter-state coordination.
- National Cybercrime Training Centre (NCTC) was also launched for professional quality eLearning services on cyber crime investigation on large scale to police officers, judges, prosecutors and other stakeholders.

Know! CCTNS project

- NCRB networked 15993 Police Stations and 8208 higher Police offices across the country under CCTNS project
- The huge database of CCTNS will help investigators in solving crime cases faster.
- The fingerprints were being used in the country from very early times and mentioned that National Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) being setup by NCRB will be a game changer for police.



Science & Technology: National Biopharma Mission

Relevance IN – Prelims (about NBM Mission)

Know! all about NBM

- The National Biopharma Mission (NBM) is an industry-Academia Collaborative Mission for accelerating biopharmaceutical development in the country.
- Under this Mission the Government has launched Innovate in India (i3) programme to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.
- The mission will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).
- The mission was approved in 2017 at a total cost of Rs 1500 crore and is 50% co-funded by World Bank loan.
- The program is promoting entrepreneurship by supporting small and medium enterprises for indigenous product development

Government Policies: National e-Commerce policy and the new Industrial Policy

Relevance IN – Prelims (about e-commerce and industrial policy + about data protection bill)

What's the NEWS

- The formulation of the National e-Commerce policy and the new Industrial Policy is under consideration of the Government.

Know! the present status of both policies

- The draft National e-commerce policy seeks to create a facilitative regulatory environment for growth of e-commerce sector.
- It is aimed at empowering domestic entrepreneurs and to encourage Make in India while safeguarding interests of the consumers and facilitating job creation.
- The proposed new Industrial policy seeks to boost competitiveness and growth of the manufacturing sector in India.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has introduced the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, which inter alia, seeks to specify the flow and usage of personal data, defines sensitive data and aims to create a framework for organisational and technical measures in processing of data, laying down norms for cross-border transfer and accountability of entities processing personal data.

Defence: DAC paves way for procurement of 83 indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft for IAF

Relevance IN – Prelims (about DAC and about Tejas)

What's the NEWS

- The first meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) under the chairmanship of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh was held with the Acquisition Wing being the Secretariat of the DAC.
- This would lead to better coordination and faster processing of cases with the Acquisition wing being in the overall charge of the Capital acquisition process.

Know! about Tejas

- The Light Combat Aircraft Tejas indigenously-designed by Aircraft Development Agency (ADA) under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is going to be the backbone of Indian Air Force in future.
- While orders of 40 Tejas aircraft had been placed with HAL in initial configurations, DAC paved the way for procurement of 83 of the more advanced Mk1A version of the aircraft from HAL
- The proposal will now be placed for consideration of Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).
- The Defence Acquisition Council also accorded approval for acquisition of indigenous Defence equipment for about Rs 1,300 crore.
- The proposals were for procurement of Aerial Fuses and Twin-Dome Simulators for Hawk Mk32 aircraft for the Indian Air Force.

Know! about DAC

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the chairmanship of the Defence Minister was constituted after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999). for overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process.
- The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air Force and the Indian Coast Guard) in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

Environment Conservation: GreenCo Rating System

Relevance IN – Prelims (about GreenCo Rating system) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- GreenCo Rating, developed by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), has been acknowledged in India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) document, submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015, as a proactive voluntary action of Indian industry / private sector towards combating climate change.

Know! more about GreenCo rating and its benefits

- It helps the industrial units in identifying and implementing various possible measures in terms of energy conservation, material conservation, recycling, utilisation of renewable energy, Green House Gases (GHG) reduction, water conservation, solid and liquid waste management, green cover etc.
- This system is beneficial for the environment as the GreenCo rating assesses the units on their environmental performance and thus aligns them to national priorities towards environment such as energy efficiency, water conservation, renewable energy, waste management, etc.



Know! about CII

- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is an industry association in India.
- CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization. Founded in 1895, it has over 9,000 members, from the private as well as public sectors.
- CII works with the Government on policy issues. CII has been a catalyst of change in India's economic policy reforms.
- CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

Space Awareness: ISRO's Assistance in finding Rich Fishing Areas

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) + about Oceansat-2 + about INCOIS) + Mains (GS III awareness in the field of space)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Hyderabad has reported that Oceansat Satellite data from Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) are used to prepare the Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories on the potential rich fishing areas and provide to the sea faring fishermen in all states.

Know! more about it

- ISRO has developed the methodology for the generation of fishery advisories and transfer to INCOIS since 2002 as an operational service for providing PFZ advisories.
- This service utilizes data on chlorophyll concentration (Chl) obtained from ISRO's Oceansat-2 satellite and the sea surface temperature from National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA / USA satellites).
- PFZ's are those regions where the fishes aggregate due to an abundance of food and they are demarcated by tracing those regions in the ocean.



Know! about Oceansat-2

- Oceansat-2 is an Indian satellite designed to provide service continuity for operational users of the Ocean Colour Monitor (OCM) instrument on Oceansat-1.
- The main objectives of OceanSat-2 are to study surface winds and ocean surface strata, observation of chlorophyll concentrations, monitoring of phytoplankton blooms, study of atmospheric aerosols and suspended sediments in the water.
- Oceansat-2 is second satellite in the series of Indian Remote Sensing satellites dedicated to ocean research, and will provide continuity to the applications of Oceansat-1 (launched in 1999).

Know! about INCOIS

- Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences
- ESSO-INCOIS was established as an autonomous body in 1999 under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and is a unit of the Earth System Science Organization (ESSO).
- ESSO- INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvements through systematic and focussed research.

Economy: RBI to infuse Rs 10,000 crore liquidity, likely to aid shorter term yields

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the RBI's OMO and its objective) + Mains (GS III Economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The Reserve Bank of India enhanced the market liquidity with an additional bond purchase for as much as Rs.10,000 crore
- The Reserve Bank has decided to conduct open market in the form of purchase of an aggregate amount of 10,000 crores,
- The liquidity injection will help rationalise shorter term yields in sync with the benchmark yield
- It will serve both the purposes of supplying liquidity into the system and realignment of yield spread (differential) between shorter end and 10 year benchmark.
- Earlier it had conducted a dollar swap auction where banks could exchange rupee with dollars stocking up reserves of the greenback, the world's most powerful currency.
- Similarly, it will again conduct a dollar swap auction for \$2 billion next Monday to cover dollar shortages in the wake of a global crisis.

Know! about Open Market Operation

- Open market operations is the sale and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by RBI or the central bank of the country.
- The objective of OMO is to regulate the money supply in the economy.
- When the RBI wants to increase the money supply in the economy, it purchases the government securities from the market and it sells government securities to suck out liquidity from the system.
- RBI carries out the OMO through commercial banks and does not directly deal with the public.
- OMO is one of the tools that RBI uses to smoothen the liquidity conditions through the year and minimise its impact on the interest rate and inflation rate levels.

Science and Technology: IUSSTF - Viterbi Program

Relevance IN – Prelims (about IUSSTF-Viterbi program)

What's the NEWS

- A total of 14 students will undertake a research internship at Viterbi School of Engineering, University of Southern California, LA, USA.
- The internship would commence from mid-May for a period of 8 weeks, and students would be working broadly in areas of Natural Language Processing, Machine Learning and Neural Networks, communication circuits, Analog and Digital Circuit Design, and so on.



The banner features the logos of IUSSTF (Indo-US Science and Technology Forum) and USC Viterbi School of Engineering at the top. Below them, the text 'IUSSTF-VITERBI PROGRAM' is written in large, bold, red letters. Underneath, a paragraph states: 'The Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) and The Viterbi School of Engineering, University of Southern California (USC) have partnered to support the IUSSTF-Viterbi Program. This program provides opportunities to Indian students to undertake research internship at the Viterbi School of Engineering in summer 2020 for a period of 8 weeks.' At the bottom, there is a collage image showing a handshake over a globe, with a computer keyboard and circuitry in the background, symbolizing international collaboration in technology.

Know! about the Viterbi Program of IUSSTF

- The Viterbi Program of IUSSTF was developed between IUSSTF and the Viterbi School of Engineering, University of Southern California (USC).
- This program is a part of the Government's endeavour to encourage research and development amongst the bright young Indian minds to create long-term, sustainable, and vibrant linkages between India and the US.

Know! about IUSSTF

- IUSSTF was established under an agreement between the Governments of India and the United States of America in March 2000.
- It is an autonomous bilateral organization jointly funded by both the Governments that promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Innovation through substantive interaction among government, academia, and industry.
- The Department of Science & Technology (DST), Governments of India, and the U.S. Department of State are respective nodal departments.
- IUSSTF has an evolving program portfolio that is largely conceived and driven by scientific communities of both the countries.
- The program provides an opportunity for Indian students pursuing a Bachelors's or Master's degree in Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering, and Computational Sciences at a recognized institution of higher education and learning in India to undertake a research internship at the Viterbi School of Engineering for a period of 8 weeks.

Defence: Bridge constructed by Border Roads Organisation over Teesta River in North Sikkim

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the bridge and about project Swastik + about BRO) + Mains (GS III Security challenges and their management in border areas)

What's the NEWS

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) opened the 360 feet long bailey suspension bridge over Teesta River in North Sikkim
- The 86 Road Construction Company (RCC) of 758 Border Roads Task Force (BRTF), under Project Swastik, commenced the construction of the bridge in October 2019 and completed it in January 2020.
- The bridge will give impetus to tourism and facilitate the movement of logistics for the Armed Forces deployed in forward areas.

Know! about BRO

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.
- The BRO operates and maintains over 32,885 kilometers of roads and about 12,200 meters of permanent bridges in the country.



- The BRO operates in 18 Projects namely: Arunank, Beacon, Brahman, Chetak, Deepak, Dantak, Himank, Hirak, Pushpak, Sampark, Setuk, Sewak, Shivalik, Swastik, Udayak, Vartak, Vijayak and Sela tunnel.

Know! about Teesta River

- Teesta River is a 315 km long river that rises in the eastern Himalayas, flows through the Indian states of Sikkim and West Bengal and enters the Bay of Bengal.
- It forms the border between Sikkim and West Bengal. It joins the Jamuna River at Fulchhari in Bangladesh.
- Teesta River is the fourth largest transboundary river shared between India and Bangladesh after Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna river systems.
- There is a dispute regarding water sharing of River Teesta between West Bengal and Bangladesh.



Infrastructure Development: Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme

Relevance IN – Prelims (about EMC2.0 its objective and benefits) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved financial assistance to the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC2.0) Scheme for development of world class infrastructure along with common facilities and amenities through Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs).

Know! more about EMC2.0

- The Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme would support setting up of both Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs) and Common Facility Centers (CFCs).
- The Scheme will create a robust infrastructure base for electronic industry to attract flow of investment in ESDM sector and lead to greater employment opportunities.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) Scheme to build and create requisite infrastructure ecosystem for electronics manufacturing;
- There is a need for continuation of such scheme in modified form for further strengthening the infrastructure base for electronics industry in the country and deepening the electronics value chain.
- India's share in global electronics manufacturing grew from 1.3% (2012) to 3.0% (2018). It accounts for 2.3% of India's GDP at present.

Scheme for Promotion of manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS)

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SPECS its objective and benefits) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved to offer financial incentive of 25% of capital expenditure for the manufacturing of goods that constitute the supply chain of an electronic product under the Scheme for Promotion of manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS).

Know! more about SPECS

- The scheme will help offset the disability for domestic manufacturing of electronic components and semiconductors in order to strengthen the electronic manufacturing ecosystem in the country.
- The proposal when implemented will lead to the development of electronic components manufacturing ecosystem in the country.

Know! about NPE 2019

- The vision of National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019) is to position India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) by encouraging and driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including, chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme

Relevance IN – Prelims (about PLI its objective and benefits) + Mains (GS III infrastructure development)

What's the NEWS

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Production Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing.

Know! more about the scheme

- The scheme proposes production linked incentive to boost domestic manufacturing and attract large investments in mobile phone manufacturing and specified electronic components including Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (ATMP) units.
- The Scheme shall extend an incentive of 4% to 6% on incremental sales (over base year) of goods manufactured in India and covered under target segments, to eligible companies, for a period of five (5) years subsequent to the base year as defined.
- The proposed scheme is likely to benefit 5-6 major global players and few domestic champions, in the field of mobile manufacturing and Specified Electronics Components and bring in large scale electronics manufacturing in India.

Know! the benefits

- The scheme has a direct employment generation potential of over 2,00,000 jobs over 5 years.
- The scheme would lead to large scale electronics manufacturing in the country and open tremendous employment opportunities.
- The production of mobile phones in the country has gone up significantly from around INR 18,900 crore (USD 3 Billion) in 2014-15 to INR 1,70,000 crore (USD 24 Billion) in 2018-19 and the domestic demand is almost completely being met out of domestic production.
- By integrating “Assemble in India for the world” into “Make in India”, India can significantly increase manufacturing output.

Government Policies: SIDBI to start Swavalamban Express on Jun 5 for budding entrepreneurs

Relevance IN – Prelims (about Swavalamban express + about SIDBI)

What's the NEWS

- The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will start Swavalamban Express on June 5 this year for budding entrepreneurs.

Know! about The Swavalamban Express

- The Swavalamban Express will start from June 5 and will travel to 11 enterprising cities starting from Lucknow and thereafter to Jammu, Delhi, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata and finally to Varanasi in a span of 15 days covering 7,000 km.



- The participating budding and aspiring entrepreneurs and start-ups will receive over 20 workshops and interactions which shall help to boost their growth in their entrepreneurial journey.
- The Swavalamban Express train is a part of umbrella mission Swavalamban which aims to induce entrepreneurship culture amongst youth.
- As part of the mission, youths will board the train with an idea, and after series of experiential learning will get down with ready business plan. Each enterprising city shall carry theme on enterprise setting up.
- Swavalamban Express is aimed towards enhancing the knowledge of participants about financial and non-financial aspects of enterprise running.
- This will be done through experts and mentors boarding the train in between, interaction with role models, brain storming and group discussions. SIDBI expects 500 youths to be a part of this journey

Know! about Small industrial Development Bank of India (SIDBI)

- It is a development financial institution in India. Its purpose is to provide refinance facilities and short term lending to industries, and serves as the principal financial institution in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.
- SIDBI also coordinates the functions of institutions engaged in similar activities. It was established on April 2, 1990, through an Act of Parliament. It is headquartered in Lucknow. SIDBI operates under the Department of Financial Services, Government of India.

Defence: India, France conduct joint patrols from Reunion Island

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the joint patrol between the two countries and its objective + about Reunion island)

What's the NEWS

- The Indian Navy conducted a joint patrol with the French Navy from the Reunion Island.

Know! more about the patrol

- The patrol was conducted by a P-8I aircraft with French Navy personnel onboard
- The surveillance was done in Southern Indian Ocean off Mauritius
- This joint patrols from the Reunion Island, signals New Delhi's intent to engage with friendly foreign partners in expanding its footprint in the Indian Ocean, focusing on the stretch between the East African coastline and the Malacca straits.
- India has so far carried out Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT) only with maritime neighbours and had rejected a similar offer by the US.

Know! about India-France relations

- France is also the first country to deploy a Liaison Officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) as part of efforts to improve Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).
- The Indian navy is currently inducting French Scorpene conventional submarines, being built in India under technology transfer, and the Indian Air Force will soon get the first batch of its 36 Rafale fighter jets.
- Currently, under the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and broader maritime cooperation, the Indian Navy undertakes joint EEZ surveillance with Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius and CORPATs with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia.

Know! about Reunion island

- Réunion is an overseas department and region of the French Republic and an island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar and 175 km southwest of Mauritius.



Disaster Management: SAARC Disaster Management Centre launches website for information related to COVID- 19

Relevance IN – Prelims (about SAARC disaster management centre and its objective) + Mains (GS III disaster management)

What's the NEWS

- The SAARC Disaster Management Centre has launched a website for information related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

Know! more about it

- The website shows the number of coronavirus cases in the member states while updating the numbers regularly. The website is www.covid19-sdmc.org. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed it during the recent video conference with leaders and representatives of the member states.
- The website shows that at least 960 coronavirus cases have been reported in the SAARC region. It says that at least five people have lost their lives in India, three in Pakistan, while two died in Bangladesh due to COVID-19.



Highlights and Situation Overview as on date 22.03.2020 at 11:00AM IST

COVID-19 cases in the SAARC Member States

SAARC Disaster Management Centre

- The South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) has been set up under the premise of Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM), Gujarat in November, 2016.
- Eight member countries, i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are required to be served by the SDMC (IU).
- The centre will provide policy advice, technical support on system development, capacity building services and training for holistic management of disaster risk in the SAARC region.
- The centre will facilitate exchange of information and expertise for effective and efficient management of disaster risk.

Agriculture: National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)

Relevance IN – Prelims(about NICRA +NMSA) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation+ GS II Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

What's the NEWS

- ICAR has launched a flagship network project National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA).

Know! about the project

- The NICRA aims at strategic research on adaptation and mitigation, demonstration of technologies on farmers' fields and creating awareness among farmers and other stakeholders to minimise the impacts of global warming on agriculture.
- Under this project, large number of indigenous genetic resources and improved crop varieties of pulses (black gram, green gram, pigeonpea, chickpea) and cereals (rice and wheat) are screened for major abiotic stresses like drought and heat to identify superior cultivars for large scale adoption in farmers' fields genetic materials for cultivation at farmers field.
- In the process number of genetic materials including improved varieties were identified, some of which are already in the farmers' fields.
- Besides, location specific natural resource management (NRM) technologies are being demonstrated under Technology Demonstration Component of NICRA in 151 climatically vulnerable districts to achieve climate resilient agriculture.

Know! about NICRA:

- National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) is a network project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) launched in February, 2011.
- The project aims to enhance resilience of Indian agriculture to climate change and climate vulnerability through strategic research and technology demonstration.
- The research on adaptation and mitigation covers crops, livestock, fisheries and natural resource management.
- The project consists of four components viz. Strategic Research, Technology Demonstration, Capacity Building and Sponsored/Competitive Grants.

Know! about National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)

- National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), one of the missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) aims to evolve and implement strategies to make Indian agriculture more resilient to the changing climate.
- National Food Security Mission (NFSM) programme is implemented in the identified districts across the country with the objective of increasing foodgrain production through area expansion and productivity enhancement, restoring soil fertility and productivity at individual farm level and enhancing farm level economy.

Know! about global warming and its impact on agriculture

- Global warming associated with the increase in concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is one of the reasons for the increase in extreme weather events.

- Due to global warming, agriculture sector is likely to be affected and climate change is expected to impact yields of agriculture crops.
- Climate change has become an important area of concern for India to ensure food and nutritional security for growing population.
- The impacts of climate change are global, but countries like India are more vulnerable in view of the high population depending on agriculture.

Environment Conservation: Hubballi-Ankola rail line

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Hubballi-Ankola railway line project + about state board for wildlife + National Board for Wildlife + Kali tiger reserve) + Mains (GS III Environment conservation)

What's the NEWS

- The Chief Minister of Karnataka cleared the controversial Hubballi-Ankola railway line project at the State Wildlife Board meeting despite opposition by several members of the State Board of Wildlife.

Know! more about the project

- The alignment of the tracks is between Kali Tiger Reserve and Bedthi Conservation Reserve and more than 80% of the line cuts through Western Ghats. It requires diversion of 727 hectares of pristine forests for a line which could become redundant owing to depletion in mining
- The railway line passes through different types of forests, including evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, and dry deciduous forests with a high canopy density.
- The forests along the proposed project zone is rich in fauna represented by 29 species of mammals, 256 species of birds, 8 species of reptiles, and 50 species of butterflies.
- The issue and the State Board's decision will now go before the National Board for Wildlife.



State Board for Wildlife

- The State Board for Wildlife has been formed under the Section 6 of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) (and its subsequent Amendment in 2002) in all states of the country.
- The main functions of this Board are conservation and protection of wildlife in Protected areas, selection and appraisal of areas to be declared as sanctuaries, etc.
- It also appraises proposals which affect Protected areas or buffer zones around Protected areas and only after the recommendation of the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL), is the proposal forwarded to the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife. Chief Minister is the Chairperson of the Board,

National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is constituted by the Central Government under Section 5 A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLP).A).
- The Government of India during 1952 had constituted an advisory body designated as the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL).
- The Indian Board for Wildlife was chaired by the Prime Minister.
- A comprehensive central legislation was enacted in 1972 called the Wildlife (Protection) Act for providing special legal protection to our wildlife and to the endangered species of fauna in particular.
- The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 was subsequently amended during 1991 and last during 2002.
- As per the amendment of the Act in 2002, a provision was incorporated for the constitution of the National Board for Wildlife, replacing the Indian Board for Wildlife.

- The National Board for Wildlife came into existence with the Gazette Notification dated 22nd September 2003.
- The National Board for Wildlife has 47 members with the Prime Minister in the Chair. The Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment & Forests in the Central Government is the Vice-Chairperson.
- The National Board may, at its discretion, constitute a Standing Committee under sub-section (1) of Section 5B.
- The Standing Committee shall consist of the Vice-Chairperson (Union Minister in charge of Forests and Wildlife) the Member Secretary and not more than ten members to be nominated by the Vice-Chairperson from amongst the members of the National Board.
- The WLPA mandates that without the approval/recommendation of the NBWL, construction of tourist lodges, alteration of the boundaries of PAs, destruction or diversion of wildlife habitat and de-notification of Tiger Reserves, cannot be done.

Kali Tiger Reserve

- Kali Tiger Reserve is a protected area and tiger reserve. It is located in Uttara Kannada district, in Karnataka, India.
- The park is a habitat of Bengal tigers, black panthers and Indian elephants, amongst other distinctive fauna.
- The Kali River flows through the tiger reserve and is the lifeline of the ecosystem and hence the name.

IMF has Launched a Tracker to Monitor the Policies Launched by the COVID-19 Governments

Relevance IN – Prelims (about the Policy Tracker and its objective + about IMF)

What's the NEWS

- The IMF is launching a policy tracker to help the member countries to be more aware of the experiences of others in combating the pandemic, and in adapting various policies and practices to their unique circumstances and needs.
- Sharing knowledge about COVID-19 enables us all to tackle the crisis more effectively

Know! more about the policy tracker

- This policy tracker summarizes the key economic responses
- The tracker is not meant for comparison across members, as policy responses vary depending on the nature of the shock and country-specific circumstances.
- The tracker focuses on discretionary actions that supplement existing social safety nets and insurance mechanisms.
- The initial policy tracker includes the G20 and European Institutions.
- More countries will be added soon, and information will be updated on a regular basis.

Know! about IMF

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization 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.
- Created in 1945, the IMF is governed by and accountable to the 189 countries that make up its near-global membership.
- The IMF's primary purpose is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system—the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries (and their citizens) to transact with each other.

Economy: Mega bank consolidation of state-run banks comes into force from April 1, says RBI

Relevance IN – Prelims (factual info related to the bank consolidation + its benefits) + Mains (GS III economic development)

What's the NEWS

- The schemes for the merger of ten state-run banks into four lenders are coming into force from April 1.

- The Reserve Bank of India announced that the branches of merging banks will operate as of the banks in which these have been amalgamated.
- The government on March 4 had notified the amalgamation schemes for 10 state owned banks into four as part of its consolidation plan to create bigger size stronger banks in the public sector.

As per the scheme

1. Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will be merged into Punjab National Bank making the proposed entity the second largest public sector bank.
 2. Syndicate Bank will merge into Canara Bank
 3. Allahabad Bank into Indian Bank; and
 4. Andhra and Corporation banks into Union Bank of India.
- Following the consolidation, there will be seven large public sector banks (PSBs), and five smaller ones. There were as many as 27 PSBs in 2017.

Know! the benefits of merger

- The merger will result in creation of seven large PSBs with scale and national reach
- It would help create banks with scale comparable to global banks and capable of competing effectively in India and globally.
- Consolidation would also provide impetus to amalgamated entities by increasing their ability to support larger ticket-size lending and have competitive operations by virtue of greater financial capacity.
- Last year, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank were merged with Bank of Baroda. Prior to this, the government had merged five associate banks of SBI and Bharatiya Mahila Bank with the PSB.

The Big Four




■ OBC and UBI will merge into Punjab National Bank




■ Allahabad Bank to merge into Indian Bank

Share swap announced for creation of four big State-owned lenders from April 1, 2020

■ Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank to amalgamate with Union Bank of India




■ Syndicate Bank to merge into Canara Bank

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