

CURRENT AFFAIRS

**Month of
July-2018**



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SOURCE: PIB, THE HINDU, FINANCIAL EXPRESS, ECONOMIC TIMES, HINDUSTAN TIMES, INDIAN EXPRESS, DD NEWS.

1st JULY : GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST) DAY

Why in News: The first year of GST has been an example to the world of the readiness of the taxpayers to be a partner in the unprecedented reform in Indian taxation. **The government will celebrate July 1, 2018, as 'GST Day' to mark the first anniversary of the new indirect tax regime.** Goods and Services Tax (GST) was rolled out in the intervening night of June 30 and July 1, last year, in a ceremony held in the Central Hall of Parliament.

About Goods and Services Tax (GST):

The GST is a single **indirect tax** that subsumes most of the Central and State taxes such as the **Value Added Tax (VAT), excise duty, service tax, central sales tax, additional customs duty and special additional duty of customs.** The Tax was notified through the **Constitution 122nd Amendment) (GST) Bill, 2014 and was enacted through Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016.** A special GST Network (GSTN) was created for GST implementation. Under this, section 25 private limited companies with Strategic Control under the Union Government were mandated to function as a common Pass-through portal for taxpayers. It facilitates the taxpayers by prescribing grant of refund within 60 days, and provisional release of 90 percent refund to exporters within 7 days. Under GST, the tax incidence is transparent, enabling full removal of tax burden on exports and full incidence of domestic taxes on imports.

Before implementation of GST, Indian taxation system was comprised of central, state and local area levies. Multiple taxes, multiple returns to be filed by assesseees, interface with multiple tax authorities, cascading effect of taxes, rising inflation, no free flow of goods across the country, fragmented markets across the country were some of the vague issues plaguing the indirect taxation system in India.

Resolution of these issues took some time and finally, the Constitution (122nd Amendment) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Parliament in December 2014 to replace the Indian taxation system with the GST and was enacted as Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016 with effect from September 16, 2016. **Four Laws namely CGST Act, UTGST Act, IGST Act and GST (Compensation to States) Act** were passed by the Parliament and were notified on April 12, 2017. **All the other States (except Jammu & Kashmir) and Union territories with legislature passed their respective SGST Acts.**

Important Points:

The total collection of the indirect tax for 9 month period in 2016-17, post the implementation of GST, is about Rs. 8.2 lakh crores, which for the whole year comes to about Rs 11 lakh crores, an 11.9 percent increase in indirect tax collections.

Further, the GST collection of Rs 1.03 lakh crores in April, Rs 94,016 crores in May, Rs 95,610 crores in June show that GST has settled in well.

There has been historic surge in the number of registered enterprises, 48 lakh enterprises were added in last one year.

Around 350 crore of invoices have been processed.

Over 11 crore of GST return have been filed.

Over 10 crore e-way bills have been generated.

More than Rs 45000 crore of GST refunds have been made till date.

E-way Bill System:

The GST council mandated the implementation of e-way (electronic way) bill system from April 1, 2018 for Interstate logistics of goods in all the states.

The e-way bill is a monumental shift from the earlier 'Departmental Policing Model' to a 'Self-Declaration Model'.

It envisages one e-way bill for movement of the goods throughout the country, thereby ensuring a hassle free movement of goods throughout the country.

For intra-State movement of goods, all States have notified e-way bill rules for intra-State supplies.

How GST regime has benefitted India so far?

The GST regime has resulted in '**ONE NATION, ONE TAX, ONE MARKET**', replacing multi-layered, complex indirect tax structure with a simple, transparent and technology-driven tax regime.

It has improved the '**Ease of Doing Business**' in India with the introduction of the common procedures for registration, duty payment, return filing and refund of taxes.

The GST has also been successful in promoting PM Narendra Modi's 'Digital India' initiative with the launch of the GST portal. From returns to refunds, everything happens online.

This reform has created a unified market; and the cascading of taxes has been eliminated.

The tax reform has also put an end to the illegal activities like tax evasion through the simplification of the tax administration and transformation in the culture among trade and industry.

The introduction of e-way bill has ensured hassle free movement of goods throughout the country. It has led to tremendous gains for logistic sector through abolition of toll collection at state borders, saving time for trucks.

The regime has benefitted the poor and middle class families as well, as the large number of daily use items are either exempted from the GST or fall under 5 percent tax slab. Moreover, 95 percent items fall in or below 18 percent GST slab.

It also augmented **opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)** as enterprises having a turnover of Rs. 20 lakhs are exempted from GST and those with a turnover up to Rs 1 crore have to pay only 1 percent tax. There is no GST on advance supply of goods for SME.

Challenges :

Many of the processes under the GST are new for small and medium enterprises in particular, who were not used to regular and online filing of returns and other formalities.

However, the government has put in place the IT grievance redressal mechanism to address the difficulties faced by taxpayers owing to technical glitches on the GST portal.

The implementation of the GST posed certain challenges for the government, business community, and tax administration and even for the citizens of the country.

Some of these challenges relate to the unfamiliarity with the new regime and IT systems, legal challenges, return filing and reconciliations, passing on transition credit.

NITI AAYOG RELEASES FIRST DELTA RANKING OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

Why in News: The NITI Aayog on June 29, 2018 launched the **first Delta Ranking (Incremental Progress) of the Aspirational Districts based on self-reported data of districts between March 31, 2018 to May 31, 2018**. The data was received on five **developmental areas- Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure**. These rankings were launched as a part of '**Transformation of Aspirational Districts**' programme of PM Narendra Modi.

Important Points:

The purpose of Delta Ranking of Aspirational Districts is to spur a sense of competition among the dynamic teams in the districts.

As these districts face **many challenges including legacy, weak resource base, deficit of manpower, etc**, the ranking is also a tool to identify sectors and indicator specific challenges so that '**Team India**' hub, which is driving this programme, can take immediate corrective measures.

Dahod district of Gujarat improved 19.8 points to rank 1st in the Delta ranking and was Ranked 17th in Baseline ranking.

Asifabad district of Telangana, which was ranked 100 in Baseline ranking released in March 2018, made significant improvements in past two months and stood at 15 in Delta ranking.

West Sikkim district of Sikkim stood second with 18.9 points, a huge improvement from being in the 30th position in Baseline ranking.

Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh also made significant improvement by gaining 14.7 points, fetching 6th position in Delta ranking. It ranked at 45th position in Baseline ranking.

Data entry by remaining four districts is also in progress, though they are not part of this ranking.

The delta ranking was computed in a transparent manner for combined improvements made during April and May 2018.

Some of the data points have been sourced from Financial Inclusion, Skill Development and 3 indicators of **Basic Infrastructure - Household Electricity Connections, Household Toilets and Rural Drinking Water.**

Most of the data points have been self-reported by the various districts themselves.

The Districts began entering data from April 1, 2018 in the Champions of Change Dashboard and a total of **108 districts out of total 112 participated** in this ranking.

This Delta ranking takes a step further and looks into specific aspects of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and analyses how districts have performed in last two months across important sectors.** This grouping and positioning would aid the District Magistrates/Collectors to focus more on these sectors and improve their ranking in future.

The knowledge partners of NITI Aayog - Tata Trusts, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (ID Insights) - are expected to provide data on 13 survey indicators and have validated values for 29 data-points. The next ranking will take into account these inputs and will be released soon thereafter.

Transformation of Aspirational Districts programme:

The programme launched in January 2018 aims to quickly and effectively transform some of most underdeveloped districts of the country. The programme envisages rapid development of selected districts on basis of composite index based on five parameters health and nutrition, education, financial inclusion, skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure. It focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in burgeoning economy. It seeks to bring these indicators in selected districts at par with the better performing districts in the country. Broad contours of the programme are Convergence of Central and State Schemes; Collaboration of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers and District Collectors and Competition among districts driven by Mass Movement or Jan Andolan.

PROJECT SASHAKT

Why in News: Finance Minister Piyush Goyal unveiled 'Project Sashakt', a **five-prong strategy to deal with non-performing assets. Sashakt aims to strengthen the credit capacity, credit culture and credit portfolio of public sector banks.** Explaining the project, Goyal shed light on the guiding principles of an Asset Management Company resolution approach, under which an independent AMC would be set up to focus on asset turn around, job creation and protection. The recommendations now await the approval of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Important Points:

The 'Sashakt' Report highlights nine guiding principles aimed at the operational turnaround of the banking sector in a manner that will create jobs and enhance the value of public sector banks.

Resolution of bad assets below Rs 50 crore within 90 days: Banks will be required to create a 'Focused Vertical' for bad assets below Rs 50 crore and set up a Steering Committee for resolution of such bad assets within 90 days.

Resolution of consortium loans between Rs 50-500 crore within 180 days: It suggested the Bank Led Resolution Approach (BLRA) for loans between Rs 50 and Rs 500 crore. It suggested constitution of an Independent Screening Committee to examine resolution of such loans within 180 days and if there is no resolution in 180 days, then these bad assets will be moved to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).

Resolution of loans above Rs 500 crore: The loans above Rs 500 crore will be dealt via AMC/AIF-led resolution process. The panel proposed creation of a national Asset Management Company (AMC) to take over such Non-Performing Assets from banks.

Recommendations included creating platforms where banks can trade in bunched loan assets.

Significance:

Project Sashakt (recommendations) will help retain the value of the asset through operational turnaround. **Sashakt aims to strengthen the credit capacity, credit culture and credit portfolio of public sector banks.** However, Sashakt does not require any regulatory forbearance.

Constitution of the Sunil Mehta Committee to set up Asset Reconstruction Company:

Finance Minister Piyush Goyal in June 2018 constituted the committee led by Punjab National Bank Chairman Sunil Mehta to look at the feasibility of a 'bad bank'-like structure and give recommendations on formation of an Asset Reconstruction Company in two weeks time.

The committee included State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar, Bank of Baroda managing director and chief executive officer P.S. Jayakumar and SBI deputy managing director C. Venkat Nageswar.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT YOJANA UNDER PMRSS MISSION TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN MP

Why in News: The Ayushman Bharat Yojana under the **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission will be implemented in Madhya Pradesh** from August 15 this year. **The state government has signed a MoU with the National Health Agency for the implementation of the scheme.**

Important Points:

Under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, an annual **health security cover worth Rs 5 lakh will be provided to each family.**

The benefit of the scheme will be given in **cashless form through government and private hospitals.**

Overall, a total of 84 lakh families of the state's deprived section have been included in the scheme on the basis of socio-economic caste census.

The scheme will help reduce out of pocket medical treatment expenses of citizens. The estimated expenditure for the implementation of the **yojana is over Rs 1600 crore at the rate of Rs 1200 per family.**

The expense will be **shared between the central and state government.**

While the central government will provide an amount worth Rs 600 crore in the form of a grant-in-aid, around Rs 400 crore will be provided by the state.

About Ayushman Bharat Yojana:

It is a **National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries)** providing coverage up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.

Key Points:

A defined transport allowance per hospitalization will also be paid to the beneficiary.

The scheme will also allow the beneficiary to take cashless benefits from any public or private empanelled hospitals across the country.

The scheme aims to target over 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census database.

The scheme will have a defined benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.

There will be no cap on family size and age under the scheme.

The cover will take care of almost all secondary care and tertiary care procedures.

The benefits cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses. All pre-existing conditions will be covered from day one of the policy.

'HAPPINESS CURRICULUM' FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

Why in News: The Delhi government launched **'Happiness Curriculum' for school students up to class 8 which includes meditation, moral values and mental exercises for its school students.** It was launched by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the presence of the Dalai Lama.

Important Points:

The Happiness Curriculum focuses on holistic education by including meditation, value education, and mental exercises in conventional education curriculum.

It was designed and prepared by a team of 40 Delhi government teachers, educators and volunteers over period of six months. ***It involves 'Happiness' period of 45 minutes for all students studying in nursery up to class VIII at all Delhi government schools.***

Each class will begin with 5 minute meditation practice. The curriculum focuses on meditation, moral teachings, and mental exercises, with the aim of turning students into good human being.

Delhi's Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed the ***'Happiness Curriculum' as the third stage of reforms in the education sector initiated by his government after infrastructure development and motivation of teachers at the government schools.*** He added that the new curriculum was a solid step towards creating good human beings.

The curriculum was conceived by Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister and education department in-charge Manish Sisodia.

The Dalai Lama called for revival of the ancient Indian knowledge in the country of its origin and its subsequent spread across the world including the countries following Buddhism.

Importance:

The move of including the ***'Happiness Curriculum' is expected to be a solution to modern day issues such as terrorism, corruption and pollution through human-centric education.***

It is expected to involve around ***10 lakh students and around 50000 teachers.***

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR BOUND BY 'AID AND ADVICE' OF ELECTED DELHI GOVERNMENT: SUPREME COURT

Why in News: A five-judge Supreme Court bench on July 4, 2018 unanimously held that the ***Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Delhi is bound by the "aid and advice"*** of the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government and both have to work harmoniously with each other. The bench noted that there is no room for anarchy or absolutism in a democracy. The real authority to take decisions lies in the elected government.

Important Points:

The bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A.K. Sikri, D.Y. Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and A.M. Khanwilkar held that except for issues of public order, police and land, the Lieutenant Governor is bound by the "aid and advice of the Delhi government, which has the public mandate."

There is no independent authority with the ***LG to take decisions except in matters under Article 239*** or those outside the purview of the National Capital Territory (NCT) government.

Every difference of opinion between the LG and the NCT government cannot be referred to the President for a decision. The issues referred should be of substantive or national importance.

Even in case of differences of opinion, the LG and the NCT government should act with constitutional morality and trust for each other. The LG cannot act without applying his mind and refer everything to the President.

The Delhi Government only needs to inform its well-deliberated decisions to the LG. The government need not obtain his approval in every issue.

Both the sides should work to avoid the Constitutional discord. There is a need for real discipline and wisdom.

The governance of the National Capital demands a "meaningful orchestration of democracy" and a "collaborative federal architecture."

Delhi not a 'State':

The CJI, however, stuck to the nine-judge Bench judgment of the Supreme Court in the NDMC versus State of Punjab to conclude that Delhi is not a 'State.' The judgment also held that the Lieutenant Governor is not a Governor but only an "administrator in a limited sense."

The real power lies with the elected representatives in a democracy. They owe responsibility to the legislature. There has to be a mixed balance as Delhi is the National Capital.

Background:

The Supreme Court judgment came on appeals filed by the Delhi Government against an August 4, 2016 judgment of the Delhi High Court which had held that LG was the "administrative head" of Delhi.

The court has declared that the LG had "complete control of all matters regarding National Capital Territory of Delhi and nothing will happen without the concurrence of the LG."

'cVIGIL' APP TO HELP VOTERS SHARE MALPRACTICE PROOF

Why in News: Chief Election Commissioner OP Rawat, along with the Election Commissioners Sunil Arora and Ashok Lavasa, on July 3, 2018 launched an **Android-based mobile application named 'cVigil' for citizens to report any violation of the model code of conduct during elections. It will help voters to share malpractice proof with the authorities. The app aims at empowering people across the country to share evidence of malpractice by political parties, their candidates and activists directly with ECI.**

Important Points:

The app will be operational only where the elections will be announced. cVIGIL will allow anyone in the election-bound state to report violations of **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** that comes into effect from the date of announcement of elections and goes on till a day after the polls.

The mobile application facilitates sharing of geo-tagged photographic and video evidence without disclosing the identity of the sender.

The vigilant citizen has to click a picture or record a **video of upto two minutes' duration of the scene of violations of the model code.** The photo or video then has to be uploaded on the app.

Once a voter shares the proof, the uploaded information will be transmitted to the control room, from where the field units or flying squads mapped

on a Geographic Information System will be immediately alerted for further action.

Each Field Unit will have a GIS-based mobile application called 'cVIGIL Dispatcher', which allows the unit to

directly reach the location through navigation technology and take action.

In case the complainant does not opt for anonymity, the person will also get an action-taken report within about 100 minutes.

The app has inbuilt features to prevent its misuse. It will receive complaints only about Model Code of Conduct violations. The user will get 5 minutes to report an incident after having clicked a picture or a video.

To prevent any misuse, the app will not allow uploading of the pre-recorded or old images and videos. **The officials at the ECI will be trained for the optimum handling of the app for effective action against the malpractices reported ahead of the elections.**

The app requires an **Android smartphone equipped with a camera, good internet connection and GPS access.**

Till now, the complaints about violations of Model Code of Conduct could not be followed instantly, making it easy for violators to escape the detection from the action squads.

Also, the lack of any documented evidence in the form of pictures or videos was seen as a hurdle in verifying a complaint. There wasn't any robust response system to quickly and accurately identify the scene of occurrence of violations with the help of geographical location details.

However, *cVigil App is expected to fill in all these gaps and create a fast-track complaint reception and redressal system.*

The app was made available for *first time in Bengaluru (capital of Karnataka)* in run-up to recently concluded

state assembly elections. It had registered total of 780 downloads and complaints were received from users. Accordingly, officials concerned in all the

cases had taken actions.

RAJASTHAN TO PROVIDE MILK TO 62 LAKH SCHOOL CHILDREN

Why in News: Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje

launched **Annapurna Milk**

Project for students of government schools. Under this

scheme 62 lakh children will be

provided free milk three times a week. In this scheme started by the state government, children studying in schools and schools of Rajasthan will be given **milk during mid-day meals**. Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje introduced this scheme from a government **school in Dahmi Kalan**.

About Annapurna Milk Scheme:

Under the scheme, more than 62 lakh students at 66,506 government schools will be provided warm milk as part of the mid-day meal.

Students till Class 5 will get 150 ml of warm milk thrice a week while those in class 6 to 8 will get 200 ml.

The milk production committees run by women under the project will be given preference.

State Government believes that milk project will prove beneficial for better nutrition of school students.

The responsibility of collecting milk has been given to **Saras Dairy**, which is given under the dairy department of the Rajasthan government, which will give fresh and hot milk to the children with Mid Day Meal.

The government's Annapurna Milk Scheme would add milk to the mid-day meal already being provided to school children.

Background:

It is a good step in the state to nurture the victims of malnutrition in the state. Another benefit of this can also increase the number of children in government schools. The Government believes that as the number of schoolchildren increased by mid-day meal, in the same way, by giving hot and fresh milk to children, control of the number of students falling in schools can be obtained. The scheme would encourage more and more parents to enroll their children in government schools.

CABINET APPROVES DNA TECHNOLOGY (USE AND APPLICATION) REGULATION BILL, 2018

Why in News: The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 4, 2018 **approved The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill 2018.**

Important Points:

The primary intended purpose for enactment of "**The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill**" is for **expanding the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.**

The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.

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

Speedier justice delivery.

Increased conviction rate.

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

Background:

Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those against property (including theft, burglary, and dacoity). The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year. Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present. It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

CABINET APPROVES ACCESSION TO WIPO COPYRIGHT TREATY, 1996 AND WIPO PERFORMANCE AND PHONOGRAMS TREATY, 1996

Why in News: The Union Cabinet has approved India's accession to *WIPO Copyright Treaty, 1996 and WIPO Performers and Phonograms Treaty, 1996 which extends coverage of copyright to the internet and digital environment. The proposal was submitted by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.*

The approval is step towards objective laid in National *Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)* Policy adopted by Government which aims to get value for IPRs through commercialization by providing guidance and support to *EPR (End Point Royalties)* owners about commercial opportunities of e-commerce through Internet and mobile platforms. Both treaties provide framework for creators and right owners to use technical tools to protect their works and safeguard information about their use i.e. *Rights Management Information (RMI) and Protection of Technological Protection Measures (TPMs)*.

Benefits:

Meeting the demand of the copyright industries, these treaties will help India:

- To enable creative right-holders enjoy the fruit of their labour, through international copyright system that can be used to secure a return on the investment made in producing and distributing creative works;
- To facilitate international protection of domestic rights holder by providing them level-playing field in other countries as India already extends protection to foreign works through the International Copyright order and these treaties will enable Indian right holders to get reciprocal protection abroad;
- To instil confidence and distribute creative works in digital environment with return on investment; and
- To spur business growth and contribute to the development of a vibrant creative economy and cultural landscape.

Copyright Act, 1957:

Copyright Act, 1957 governs the subject of copyright law in the country. Its administration was transferred to DIPP in March 2016. The Act was amended in 2012 to bring it in conformity, with WCT and WPPT. It includes amendment in definition of Communication to the public to make it applicable to digital environment (Section 2(ff)) as also introduced provisions related to Technological. It also includes Protection Measures (Section 65A) and Rights Management Information (Section 65B); Moral rights of performers (Section 38B); Exclusive rights of the performers (Section 38A); safe harbour provisions over electronic medium (Section 52 (1) (b) and (c)),

WIPO Copyright Treaty:

It came in force in March 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties till date. It is Special agreement under Berne Convention (for protection of literary and artistic works). It has provisions to extend protection of copyrights contained therein to the digital environment. It also recognises rights specific to digital environment of making work available, to address on-demand and other interactive modes of access.

WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty:

It came in force on May 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties. It deals with rights of two kinds of beneficiaries, particularly in digital environment. It includes (i) Performers (singers, musicians, actors etc.) (ii) Producers of Phonograms (Sound recordings). It empowers right owners in negotiations with new digital platforms and distributors. It also recognizes moral rights of performers for first time and provides exclusive economic rights to them.

Both the treaties provide framework for creators and right owners to use technical tools to protect their works and safeguard information about their use i.e. Protection of Technological Protection Measures (TPMs) and Rights Management Information (RMI).

KVIC LAUNCHES SINGLE UMBRELLA PAN-INDIA E-MARKETING

Why in News: *The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched its in-house developed, single-umbrella e-marketing system named Khadi Institution Management and Information System (KIMIS) in New Delhi.* The system can be accessed from *anywhere in the country for sale and purchase of Khadi* and Village Industries products.

About Khadi Institution Management and Information System (KIMIS):

KIMIS will serve as in-house single umbrella billing software for sale and purchase that could be monitored, round-the-clock, from any part of India. It has been developed by KVIC IT team. It will give real-time data of sales and also give updated status of stocks of khadi bhawans and godowns, allowing better planning and control of inventory. 480 Khadi institutions and showrooms of KVIC will be linked with this billing software. The software will be useful in raising demand and supply of goods in high demand.

About Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.

Functions: It is an apex organization *under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to - "plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary."*

The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning. These are:

The Social **Objective** - *Providing employment* in rural areas.

The Economic Objective - *Providing salable articles.*

The Wider Objective - *Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.*

COAL MINE SURVEILLANCE & MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND 'KHAN PRAHARI' APP

Why in News: Union Minister of Coal, Railways, Finance & Corporate Affairs, Shri Piyush Goyal launched the *Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS) and Mobile Application 'Khan Prahari' developed by CMPDI, Ranchi a Subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL) and Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG)* at a ceremony at, New Delhi.

About 'Khan Prahari' App:

Khan Prahari is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc. One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system. After that, the information will be automatically directed to the nodal officers to take suitable action on those activities. The complainant can also track his complaint through the system. The identity of the complainant shall not be revealed. This app can easily be downloaded in Android and IOS. The uniqueness of the system is that it uses satellite data as well as public input to capture information on unauthorised coal mining activities and also take appropriate action on them with due transparency.

Important Points:

The system also uses information provided by responsible citizens using smartphones using the mobile application 'Khan Prahari'.

The CMSMS will also provide other important information like reclamation work being done by Coal India Limited which is being monitored every year by CMPDI using satellite data.

The 'Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS) aims to report, monitor and take suitable action on unauthorised coal mining activities.

The CMSMS is a web based GIS application through which location of sites for unauthorised mining can be detected.

The basic platform used in the system is of **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's (MeiTY)** map which provides village level information. The leasehold boundary of all the coal mines is displayed on this map.

The system will use satellite data to detect changes by which unauthorised mining activity extending beyond the allotted lease area can be detected and suitable action can be taken on it.

The complaint originating from coal mines allotted to Coal India will go to Coal India Offices and those originating from coal blocks not allotted to Coal India will go straight to the State Government Officers.

For each complaint, the alert will also go to the District Magistrate and SP of the district.

UTTARAKHAND HC DECLARES ANIMAL KINGDOM A LEGAL ENTITY WITH RIGHTS OF A 'LIVING PERSON'

Why in News: In a unique ruling, the Uttarakhand High Court accorded the status of a **"legal person or entity" to animals in the state, saying "they have a distinct person with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person"**.

A division bench of Justices Rajiv Sharma and Lokpal Singh bestowed the unique status on the animal kingdom while issuing a series of directions to prevent cruelty against animals.

Important Points:

The bench also banned the use of spike or other sharp tackle or equipment on animals.

It also directed the state government to ensure that if the **temperature exceeds 37°C or drops below 5°C, no person be permitted to keep in harness any animal used for the purpose of drawing vehicles.**

Going into the aspect of animal safety, the court highlighted the need for fluorescent reflectors in carriages and animals, certificates of unladen weight of vehicles, compulsory shelter of suitable size for horses, bullocks and stray cattle and a direction to the veterinary doctors of Uttarakhand to treat any stray animals brought to them or by visiting them.

The court said that as the carts driven by animals have no mechanical devices, animal-drawn carriages have to be given **'Right of Way'** over other vehicles.

With the ruling, the entire animal kingdom in the state, including the avian and aquatic animals, will be treated as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

The court has further declared all the citizens of the state as guardians of the animals and has endowed them with the duty to ensure their welfare and protection.

The division bench also issued directions regarding the amount of load allowed to be pulled by various animals in accordance with the kind of carriage being pulled and the number of riders per carriage.

The court also declared all Uttarakhand natives as the guardians of animals and endowed them with the duty to ensure their welfare and protection.

In common law jurisprudence, there are **two types of persons - natural persons or human beings and artificial person**, which are also known as juristic persons, juridical entity or a legal person other than a natural person.

Legal or juristic persons are created by law and recognised as a legal entity, having distinct identity, legal personality and besides duties and rights. They include private business firm or entity, non-governmental or government organisations, trusts and societies, besides others.

Background:

The Uttarakhand Court's order came on a public interest lawsuit seeking restrictions on the movement of horse-drawn carts between Indian and Nepal through Banbasa.

The petition also sought provisions for vaccination, medical checkup of the horses for suspected infections before entering into the Indian Territory from Nepal and for regulating traffic in the border areas.

Last year, on March 20, 2017, the Uttarakhand High Court had accorded the status of 'living human entities' to the Ganga and Yamuna, the two most sacred rivers of India.

PUNJAB CM ORDERS MANDATORY DOPE TEST ON ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

Why in News: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered mandatory dope test for all government employees, **including police personnel, from the time of their recruitment through every stage of their service.** The chief minister has **ordered drug screening to be mandatory in all cases of recruitment and promotions, as well as the annual medical examination that certain employees** are required to undergo in accordance with the nature of their duties.

Important Points:

The order came on a day when the chief minister formally told the Union government that his Cabinet sought an urgent amendment to the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**, to award death penalty to first-time drug smugglers and peddlers too.

As of now, death penalty is awarded only if certain offences are committed a second time. This means a person can indulge in these nefarious activities and get away at least once, causing substantial damage to the youth and society, the chief minister lamented in a letter to Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

Given the magnitude of the problem, which had been denied during the last many years, these enforcement measures, though yielding results, need to be further strengthened. In this direction, it is felt that the existing drug prevention and control laws should be revisited to provide for more deterrent punishment to the offenders.

There was a widespread outrage over the deaths of youths in several parts of Punjab because of the drug overdose and a campaign against drugs called 'Black week against Chitta' was being observed by some activists in the state starting from July 1 in the wake of drug abuse.

A cabinet sub-committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, with the special working group mandated to report directly to it. Health and Social Security Ministers was appointed members of the sub-committee which will meet once a week to take stock of the situation and review the progress of the anti-drug campaign of the government.

BANK OF CHINA WILL NOW HAVE OFFICES IN INDIA, RBI ISSUES LICENCE

Why in News: Bank of China will now have operating offices in India after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued licences approving the application, **the second Chinese bank to be operating in the country. Several foreign banks, including the Bank of China, had earlier in the year sought RBI's permission to set up operations in the country.**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made a commitment to Chinese President Xi Jinping to allow Bank of China to set up branches in India when they met on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Chinese city of Qingdao last month.

Important Points:

As on 1 January, 2018 Industrial & Commercial Bank of China Ltd was operating in India along with 45 other foreign banks. The United Kingdom's Standard Chartered has the highest, 100 branches in India as of now.

Bank of China is one of the very few state-owned commercial banks in China. India and China have been focusing on expanding their economic ties notwithstanding differences on several sticky issues including on the boundary dispute.

Bank of China, which is listed on the Hong Kong and Shanghai stock exchanges and has a market capitalisation of \$158.6 billion, will be the second Chinese bank to secure a licence to open a branch in India.

Among those who had applied for permission to open a branch or office in the country were three banks from Iran, two from South Korea, one each from Malaysia and the Netherlands.

Bank of China is one of the four major state-owned banks in China, and is considered the second biggest in the country by assets. It does not have any branches in India yet, despite many of its corporate clients having extensive operations in India.

After last year's Doklam standoff, both the countries have stepped up dialogue at various levels to reset the ties.

China's market capitalization of more than 100 years is more than \$158 billion and BoC is the second Chinese bank to move to India. Earlier to this, China's **Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)** is present in India since 2011. A branch of ICBC is in Mumbai.

India's largest government bank SBI is doing business in China's Shanghai and Tianjin city and has opened two branches there. Apart from this, India's Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank, ICICI and Axis Bank also have one branch in China.

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTS TEST OF FIRST CREW ESCAPE SYSTEM

Why in News: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted its first 'pad abort' test - crucial for proposed human spaceflight programme - at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

Important Points:

The Crew Escape System is an emergency escape measure designed to quickly pull the crew module along with the astronauts to a safe distance from the launch vehicle in the event of a launch abort.

The first test (Pad Abort Test) demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad.

ISRO tested the crew escape system for its new crew capsule in an emergency pad abort test (PAT).

The Crew Escape System along with the simulated crew module with a mass of 12.6 tonnes, lifted off from its launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, following a smooth countdown of 5 hours.

The test, which lasted for around 259 seconds, a little over 3 minutes, involved aborting the crew module at launch to save the astronauts.

During the test, the Crew Escape System along with the crew module soared upward towards the sky and then arced out over the Bay of Bengal and floated back to Earth under its parachutes, about 2.9 km from Sriharikota.

The crew module reached an altitude of nearly 2.7 km under the power of its seven specifically-designed quick acting solid motors to take away the crew module to a safe distance without exceeding the safe g-levels.

Nearly 300 sensors recorded various mission performance parameters during the test flight.

Further, three recovery boats were exercised to retrieve the module as a part of the recovery protocol.

Background:

The crew escape system is being developed by ISRO as a part of its proposed Human Spaceflight Programme. The Indian **Human Spaceflight Programme (HSP)** is a proposal to ISRO to develop and launch the ISRO Orbital Vehicle, which would carry a two-member crew to the Low Earth Orbit.

The programme envisages the development of a fully autonomous orbital vehicle carrying two crew members to about 300 km low earth orbit and their safe return. The spaceship would be launched by the GSLV MkIII launcher. Pre-project activities have been initiated to study and develop critical technologies for the mission.

HINDI FASTEST GROWING LANGUAGE IN INDIA : CENSUS 2011

Why in News: The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India released the 2011 **Census data on Language and Mother Tongue. Hindi fastest growing language in India at 25.19 percent, adding close to a 100 million speakers between 2001-2011.**

Important Points:

As per the **2011 census, 43.63 percent of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue.**

Bengali, with 8.03 percent speakers, is second in the list, followed by Marathi at 3rd with 6.86 percent speakers, Telugu at 4th with 6.7 percent speakers and Tamil at 5th with 5.7 percent speakers.

In all, 13 of the 22 scheduled languages were reported as the mother tongue by at least 1 percent of the population.

Except for Sanskrit, each of the 21 scheduled languages was reported as the mother tongue by at least 10 lakh people. Sanskrit is the only language that is spoken by a set of around 25000 people.

Currently, 43.63 percent of India speaks Hindi including languages such as Bhojpuri that are fighting to be accorded separate status. Between 2001 and 2011, Hindi grew at a rate of 25 percent, adding about 100 million new Hindi speakers.

The growing movement of people from north to south has led to greater presence of Hindi in the five southern states. In Tamil Nadu, the proportion of Hindi speakers nearly doubled from 2001 to 2011.

As per the language census data 2011, two scheduled languages, Urdu and Konkani, saw fall in absolute numbers. There are 50772631 Urdu speakers in India, a fall of about 1.5 percent since 2001. The decline in Konkani speakers is 9.5 percent.

The Urdu language in modern India is associated only with Muslims, however, this fall in Urdu speakers is strange as the Muslim population in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has grown between 2001 and 2011.

As per the 2011 census, Bengali, with 8.03 percent, is second in the list after Hindi in terms of percentage of speakers. As Hindi language, Bengali too spreads to other states with migration. **The language is spreading to the south and west, there are 4.4 lakh Bengalis in far-off Maharashtra and 2.2 lakh in Delhi.**

The sharpest language divide of India exists in Assam, where a proposed citizenship law and National Register of Citizens have divided the state's Assamese and Bengali speakers.

Assam is the only major state that does not have any language group in a majority. Assamese speakers, the largest group, make up 48 percent of the state, however, the proportion of Bengali speakers went up in 2001-2011.

English seems to have registered a 15 percent jump in number of speakers since 2001, making it one of the fastest growing languages in the decade.

There are total 121 languages that are considered as mother tongues. Of these, 22 languages are included in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution. The **22 languages included in the Eighth Schedule account for the mother tongue of 96.72 percent Indians as per the 2011 census.**

CONTROVERSIAL COPYRIGHT LAW REJECTED BY EU PARLIAMENT

Why in News: The European Parliament rejected a highly controversial EU copyright law proposal that has pitted Beatles legend Paul McCartney against internet giants and the creators of Wikipedia. The draft law failed to get the required support with **318 parliamentary legislators voting against the measure, 278 in favour and 31 abstaining from the vote**. The proposal was firmly resisted by major US tech giants as well as advocates of Internet freedom.

Important Points:

The draft law proposed to put more responsibility on websites to check for copyright infringements and forced platforms to pay for linking to news.

The move was intended to bring the EU's copyright laws in line with the digital age, but instead, it led to protests from the websites and much debate.

The law was backed by several musicians including high-profile music stars such as Paul McCartney, Annie Lennox, Plácido Domingo and David Guetta.

Major publishers, including AFP, have pushed for the news media reform -- known as article 11 -- seeing it as an urgently needed solution against a backdrop of free online news that has decimated earnings for traditional media companies.

But opponents have called it a **"link tax"** that will stifle discourse on the Internet. Resistance has been especially heated to **Article 13: the proposal to make online platforms legally liable for copyrighted material put on the web by users**.

For the law:

The musicians urged the politicians to enact a law forcing sites like YouTube and Facebook to use filters that would stop users illegally uploading their music, arguing that websites had exploited their content.

They argued that musicians were being cheated out of money, while websites were making huge profits from their work.

Against the law:

The critics of the draft law said that the rules would stifle internet freedom and creativity.

Creative Commons Chief Ryan Merkley observed that 'The Beatles' would have been prevented from performing cover versions under the newly proposed rules.

Conclusion

The Members of the European Parliament decided at the end that the changes needed more debate and sent the proposals back to the Commission.

SAMSUNG OPENS WORLD'S LARGEST MOBILE FACTORY IN INDIA

Why in News: Samsung *has opened the world's largest mobile factory in Noida, India*. The factory will be officially inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-in. The Electronics facility will be inaugurated on a factory plot measuring 35-acre at Sector 81 in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Samsung is expectedly betting big as India is currently the second biggest mobile market and accounts for 10 per cent of global smartphone sales. From 299 million smartphone users in 2017, the projected increase in the number of users in India is likely to reach 340 million by the end of this year. By 2022, India's smartphone users are expected to shoot up to a whopping 442 million.

Important Points:

The factory inauguration marks the first-ever state visit of South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

The South Korean President will be accompanied by first lady Kim Jung-sook, senior cabinet members, officials as well as industry captains.

A helipad has been made adjacent to the factory for the smooth visit of the high-level dignitaries.

The de facto head of Samsung Electronics, Lee Jae-Yong, departed for India on July 8 to lay the groundwork for further expansion in the Indian smartphone market.

Samsung is currently making **67 million smartphones in India and with the new plant being functional, it is expected to manufacture around 120 million mobile phones, nearly double the number.**

The new facility is also expected to double Samsung's production capacity of consumer electronics such as refrigerators and flat-panel televisions, further consolidating the company's leadership in these segments.

It is also expected to reduce the time taken by goods to reach markets and create around 15000 new direct and indirect jobs.

The new facility will also enable the South Korean Technology giant to add some local features to its devices powered by research and development done in the country.

In June 2017, Samsung announced an investment worth Rs 4,915 crore to expand the Noida plant to increase its manufacturing capacity.

Besides the factory in Noida, Samsung also has a production unit in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, five research and development centres and one design centre in Noida, **employing over 70,000 people.**

Background:

Established in 1995, Samsung India laid the foundation stone of Noida plant next year. In 1997, production commenced and the first television was rolled out. In 2003, refrigerator production began.

By 2005, Samsung had become market leader in panel TVs and in 2007, the existing Noida facility started manufacturing mobile phones.

CJI IS MASTER OF ROSTER, HAS AUTHORITY TO ALLOCATE CASES: SUPREME COURT

Why in News: The Supreme Court in latest ruling once again has upheld Chief Justice of India (CJI) as 'Master of Roster'. According to ruling given by SC bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan, CJI is an individual judge and not the powerful collective of five senior-most judges of Supreme Court called the '**Collegium**'. CJI has exclusive authority to allocate cases to fellow judges and is spokesperson of the court.

The Bench heard the petition despite two separate judgments by the Supreme Court in November 2017 and April 2018, upholding the CJI's complete administrative authority to allocate cases and constitute Benches. Both these judgments were pronounced by Benches led by CJI Dipak Misra.

What does 'Master of Roster' mean?

'Master of Roster' refers to the privilege of the Chief Justice of India to constitute and allocate the benches to hear cases. The CJI has absolute discretion in the matter of distribution of judicial work among the judges of his court.

This privilege was emphasised in November 2017, when a Constitution Bench led by the Chief Justice Dipak Misra, declared that "the Chief Justice is the master of the roster and he alone has the prerogative to constitute the Benches of the Court and allocate cases to the Benches so constituted."

Important Points:

The 'Chief Justice of India' is an individual judge and not the powerful collective of five senior-most judges (Collegium) of the Supreme Court.

It is the exclusive authority of the CJI to allocate cases to fellow judges as the 'Master of Roster'.

The bench ruled that "**In the allocation of cases and the constitution of benches, the Chief Justice has an exclusive prerogative.** As a repository of constitutional trust, the Chief Justice is an institution in himself."

CJI is only 'first among equals' in his judicial functions on the Bench. The opinion of the CJI on the Bench carries the same weight as any other member of the Bench.

The bench said the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, had been notified with the President's approval and they alone would be the guiding light for the court on allocation of cases and benches.

The bench also noted that the relief which the petitioner seeks is misconceived. The petitioner does not have the right to seek a direction that benches should be constituted in a particular manner or there should be separate divisions of this court.

There is no constitutional foundation on the basis of which such a suggestion can be accepted.

Interference in the CJI's authority as the master of the roster would pose interrupt the duty and authority of the Chief Justice to constitute benches and to allocate cases to them.

Every judge appointed to the top court under **Article 124 of the Constitution** is invested with the equal duty of adjudicating cases assigned by the Chief Justice.

Background

The judgment was based on petition filed by former Union Law Minister Shanti Bhushan for considering expression CJI should be read as meaning Collegium for the purpose of allocation of cases. The petition had mentioned that to have collegium of Supreme Court judges collectively to allocate cases rather than leave the entire power in the hands of CJI in his administrative capacity as the 'Master of Roster'. This is the third time Supreme Court has declared its Chief Justice as the 'Master of Roster'. Earlier the apex court in two separate judgments in November 2017 and April 2018 had upheld CJI 's complete administrative authority to allocate cases and constitute Benches.

HIMACHAL PRADESH BANS

USE OF THERMOCOL CUTLERY

Why in News: The *Himachal Pradesh government issued a fresh notification banning the use of thermocol cutlery across the state*. The ban was announced by the state's Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on the occasion of the World Environment Day on June 5.

The government has issued fresh notification reiterating that no person including shopkeepers, vendors, wholesalers, retailers, hawkers, rehriwalas will use thermocol cutlery in any form manufactured from non-biodegradable material as listed in Schedule under *Himachal Pradesh Non-Biodegradable Garbage (Control) Act, 1995*.

Important Points:

Government's secretariat administration had earlier passed an executive order prohibiting government offices from using plastic bottles. It further directed all the offices of different departments, corporations and boards to discard the use of plastic bottles for serving water.

According to the State Governor Acharya Devrat, the steps were taken in order to reduce plastic waste generated in Himachal Pradesh and to help achieve the goals set by "*plastic hatao Himachal bachao*" *campaign launched last month*.

Himachal Pradesh generates nearly 2 tonnes of plastic waste daily. In an attempt to reduce such wastage, the government was planning to provide steel bottles to school children under the Mukhya Mantri Vardi Yojana.

As per the notification, the use and sale of thermocol cutlery, including cups, plates, glasses and spoons will invite heavy penalty.

The notification also has provision for imposing penalty on those selling and littering thermocol cutlery.

Any person, institution, commercial establishment, educational institution, offices, hotels, shops, restaurants, dhabas, religious institutions, industrial establishments and banquet halls causing a breach of the prohibition shall be liable for penalties.

The state government has set three months deadline for the manufactures, dealers and shopkeepers selling thermocol cutlery across the state to dispose of their stocks.

Background:

On June 5, International Environment Day, the state government had announced ban on the use of plastic bottles at public functions and government offices. Recently, the state government's secretariat administration had passed an executive order directing all the government offices to shed the use of plastic bottles for carrying water. It had also directed all the offices of different departments, corporations and boards to discard use of plastic bottles for serving water. In 2009, Himachal Pradesh had become the first state in country to ban the use of plastic bags

Penalties on Thermocol Cutlery

Quantity	Penalty (In Rupees)
Upto 100gm	500
101 to 500gm	1500
501gm to 1kg	3000
1.1kg to 5kg	10000
5.1kg to 10kg	20000
More than 10kg	25000

NO 'NAMAZ' BY NON-LOCALS AT TAJ MAHAL MOSQUE : SUPREME COURT

Why in News: The *Supreme Court* on refused a plea for allowing "outsiders" to perform Namaz at Taj Mahal. It said that the preservation of the historic monument was of paramount importance. A bench of Justices A K Sikri and Ashok Bhushan said that the Taj Mahal was one of the seven wonders of the world and people can offer their prayers at other mosques also.

Important Points:

The top court said the Taj is one of the seven wonders of the world and must be preserved. It added there is no need to perform prayers at the Taj Mahal.

To ensure foolproof security to the Taj Mahal, a world heritage site, the district administration on January 24 this year ordered that only locals with valid identity proof will be allowed entry to the monument complex to offer 'namaz' on Fridays. A petitioner had moved the SC against the district magistrate order.

The petition has challenged the January 24, 2018 order passed by the ADM (Additional District Magistrate) Agra which said that those who are not residents of Agra, would not be allowed to enter the mosque situated at the Taj Mahal for offering customary prayers on Fridays on grounds of security. "Why for such prayers they should go to the Taj Mahal," the bench said, adding "There are other mosques also. They can offer their prayers there."

Last year, a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-linked organisation had demanded that Friday prayers at the Taj Maha should be banned. The demand to ban Friday prayers had come from Akhil Bhartiya Itihaas Sankalan Samiti - the history wing of the RSS.

Background:

The district administration, to ensure foolproof security to the world heritage site, on January 24, ordered that only those with valid identity cards would be allowed entry to the monument complex to offer prayers on Fridays - when the Taj Mahal remains closed for tourists.

The order, which held that entry of outsiders could adversely affect the security of the monument, came following complaints that outsiders, including Bangladeshis and non-Indians, enter the Taj Mahal complex on Fridays on the pretext of offering.

HOW JIO INSTITUTE GOT ON TO THE SAME LIST AS IIT DELHI?

Why in News: The HRD Ministry granted "*Institutions of Eminence*" status to three public and three private institutes, enabling them to get full autonomy and special incentives to project them as "world class universities". While the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry will grant Rs 10 billion funds to the three public institutions in the next five years, the private institutes will not be eligible for government funding.

The government granted "*Institutions of Eminence (IoEs)* status to IIT-Delhi, IIT-Bombay and the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in the public sector, and Manipal Academy of Higher Education, BITs Pilani and Jio Institute by Reliance Foundation in the private sector.

Important Points:

The move is part of a scheme of the HRD Ministry to select 20 IoEs - 10 public and 10 private - that will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy.

The *Empowered Expert Committee (EEC)*, headed by former chief election commissioner N Gopalaswami, picked up six institutions that, according to the panel, showed the potential to find a place among top 500 of global rankings.

Unlike other institutions, IoEs will get greater autonomy to start new courses, admit foreign students, hire foreign faculty, and collaborate with foreign educational institutions without the need for government approval.

A UGC guideline describes an institute of eminence as "a distinct category of deemed to be Universities" and declares that they "shall be regulated differently from other deemed to be universities so as to evolve into institutions of world class in a reasonable time period.

The government has been insisting that the scheme is aimed at improving world-ranking of Indian institutes as none of the 800 institutes of higher education in India feature in even top 200 global institutes. It had, sometime back, said that a total of 20 institutes will be accorded the status and had appointed a committee, under former chief election commissioner N Gopalaswami to make the selections.

As many as 114 institutes had applied for the tag. These include 11 central universities, 27 'institutes of national importance', top IITs and NITs, 27 state universities, 10 private universities, and four greenfield institutes.

Top corporates were also competing for the private institutes category, with the Reliance Group applying for the Reliance Foundation Institution & Research in Maharashtra, Airtel for Bharti University (Satya Bharti Foundation) in Delhi, and Anil Agarwal's Vedanta University in Odisha.

Jio Institute draws criticism:

Meanwhile, the HRD Ministry's selection of the yet-to-be-established Jio Institute by Reliance Foundation as one of the six 'Institutions of Eminence' drew sharp criticism from various quarters today, with many questioning the process of selection and the motive behind it.

CHINA LAUNCHES TWO SATELLITES FOR PAKISTAN

Why in News: China launched two satellites for Pakistan on a Long March-2C rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwest China at 11:56 a.m. The PRSS-1 is China's first optical remote sensing satellite sold to Pakistan and the 17th satellite developed by the **China Academy of Space Technology (CAST)** for an overseas buyer. A scientific experiment satellite, **PakTES-1A**,

developed by Pakistan, was sent into orbit via the same rocket. This is another space cooperation between China and Pakistan since the launch of **PAKSAT-1R**, a communication satellite, in August 2011.

Important Points:

It was overall 279th mission for the Long March rocket series (mainly used to send satellites into low Earth or Sun-synchronous orbits) and first international commercial launch in nearly two decades after it carried Motorola's Iridium satellites into orbit in 1999.

The launch of the two satellites marks yet another space cooperation between China and its all-weather ally Pakistan. The satellites will provide space remote sensing information services for strategic US\$ 50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through.

Pakistan already had five satellites in space but lacks heavy duty launchers and satellite fabrication facilities and is dependent on China. India is way ahead of Pakistan in space technology, with 43 operational satellites in space. India also has its indigenous radar imaging satellites with all-weather surveillance capability.

PRSS-1: It is China's first optical remote sensing satellite sold to Pakistan. It can carry out day and night monitoring. It also has viewing capacity even in clouded conditions. It will be used for land and resources surveying, agriculture research, urban construction, monitoring of natural disasters and to provide remote sensing information for (CPEC) under China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It is China's first optical remote sensing satellite sold to Pakistan and overall 17th satellite developed by China Academy of Space Technology (CAST) for an overseas buyer.

PakTES-1A: It is Pakistan's indigenously developed scientific experiment satellite developed by engineers from its **space agency SUPARCO (Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission)**.

WORLD POPULATION DAY 2018

Why in News: *July 11 was established as World Population Day in 1989* by the United Nations and since then it has been celebrated on this date every year. The United Nations recognises World Population day as an important event to spread information of population-related issues across the globe.

World Population day will run on the theme "Family Planning is a Human right" this year.

Aim of World Population Day

Almost on the verge of completing three decades now, the internationally celebrated event aims to spread awareness on issues such as overpopulation, under-population and birth control. The world population is currently pegged at around 7 billion and according to UN reports is growing at a fast pace, adding 83 million people every year.

In a message published on the UNFPA website to celebrate the World Population Day, the organisation called for government to "fulfill their commitments to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health care", as agreed at the 1994 international conference on population.

Important Points:

This day is celebrated to empower both, young boys and girls.

Educating them about reasonable and youth-friendly techniques of avoid unwanted pregnancies at a young age.

Ensuring the access of **primary education for both girls and boys.**

Educating people to remove gender stereotypes from the society.

Educating people about **sexually transmitted infections and how they can be prevented.**

Ensuring easy access to reproductive health care services to every couple.

Demanding certain laws for **protecting the rights of a girl child.**

To offer knowledge about sexuality and continue delaying marriages until and unless one is able to understand the responsibilities which come along with it.

Out of the 7.4 billion (approximately) people in the world, India amounts 1.327 billion which equals to 17.5 percent of the World's population. This also brings up the urgency to understand why population control is important.

Despite correcting the employment problem, India is expected to become the **World's youngest country with 64 percent of its population in the working age by 2020.**

The '**rural-push and urban-pull**' theory has worked big time in a country like India. Half of the global population (estimated at 3.9 billion) has migrated to all the different cities of India. According to the census of 2011, the urban population of India amounts to 32.4 percent.

What is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)?

The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** works to support family planning by trying to ensure supply of contraceptives, tries to strengthen national health system. UNFPA has been advocating for policies that support family planning.

According to Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), family planning is not only a matter of human right but is also central to women's empowerment, reducing poverty and achieving sustainable growth. UNFPA supports family planning in developing countries by ensuring a reliable supply of a full range of modern contraceptives, strengthening national health systems, and promoting gender equality.

GUJARAT FINALLY GRANTS MINORITY STATUS TO JEWS, BECOMES THIRD STATE IN INDIA

Why in News: *Gujarat Government on July 6, 2018 granted Religious Minority Status to Jews living in the state. In this regard, Gujarat's Department of Social Justice and Empowerment issued a GR to this effect.* The government, thereon, mandated the Certificate issuing competent authorities to issue Religious Minority Status Certificate to the members of this community. With this, there are now seven religious minorities in the state. **The other six are - Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains.**

Important Points:

Gujarat is home to about 170 Jews and majority of them are located in Ahmedabad. **The city also is home to the only synagogue in the state, the Magen Abraham Synagogue, built in 1934.**

The Jewish population in Gujarat is so minuscule that they didn't even figure separately in the Census **2011, and were just mentioned as part of 16,480 'other communities' in the state.**

The Jewish community of India is the fourth largest Asian Jewish community after Israel, Asian Russia, and Iran. With this, Gujarat became the third state in India to grant religious minority status to Jews after West Bengal and Maharashtra.

West Bengal had granted the Minority Status to Jews over a decade ago. The state had a Jewish population of 43 at that time.

Maharashtra had accorded minority status for Jews in 2017, prior to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Israel. **The state is home to over 2000 Jews, making it the largest for a state.**

As religious minority members, Jews in the state will get religious minority rights envisaged in Constitution of India and various acts and rules of the state government.

They will also get benefits of welfare schemes formulated for religious minority communities within the jurisdiction of Gujarat.

Indian Jews in Israel:

When Israel was established in 1948, India inhabited around 25000 Jews. Between 1948 and 1979, 24000 Indian Jews immigrated to Israel and thousands more elsewhere. **Over 70000 Indian Jews now live in Israel.**

The Israeli towns of Dimona and Ashdod have been named as "Little India" by some residents, and it is largely inhabited by Indian Jews.

CHINA TO REDUCE TARIFFS, INCREASE IMPORTS OF INDIAN MEDICINES

Why in News: *India and China have reached an agreement on reduction of tariffs on Chinese imports of Indian medicines, particularly cancer drugs.* China also agreed to increase imports of Indian medicines, particularly anti-cancer drugs, as a part of its moves to broaden its trade relations amidst its on-going trade war with the United States.

Important Points:

Both India and China slashed import tariffs of a range of products starting July 1, following the fourth round of negotiations under the **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**, which also includes Bangladesh, Laos, South Korea and Sri Lanka.

Indian drugs, specially cancer curing medicines, are in big demand in China as they are far cheaper than their western counterparts.

Indian drugs, specially cancer curing medicines, are in big demand in China as they are far cheaper. **About 4.3 million people are diagnosed with cancer annually in China.**

In May, China had lifted tariffs on the import of cancer drugs. India has been demanding opening of China's IT and medicine sectors as part of measures to reduce over USD 51 billion trade deficit in over USD 84 billion bilateral trade.

Under the APTA, China said that it would reduce tariffs on 8549 items including chemical, medical, clothing, soybean, steel & aluminium and agricultural products, while India agreed to do the same for 3142 products. China had agreed to slash tariffs by 33 per cent.

India had particularly pressed China to open up its market for pharmaceuticals, along with rice and sugar imports to bridge the trade imbalance.

About Asia Pacific Trade Agreement:

The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), previously named the Bangkok Agreement, was signed in 1975 as an initiative of United Nations *Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)*. It is the oldest preferential trade agreement among the developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement was signed by seven participating nations including Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka.

The main objective of the agreement is to boost economic development among the seven participating states through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalisation measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provide for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation. Notably, APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India, two of the fastest growing markets in the world, and other major markets such as the Republic of Korea. APTA is open to all developing member countries. It is a truly region-wide trade agreement spanning East and South Asia, with the potential to expand to other sub-regions, including Central Asia and the Pacific.

'TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE' TO ELIMINATE HUMAN ENTRY INTO SEWERS

Why in News: The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched a **'Technology Challenge: Identifying solutions for cleaning of Sewerage Systems and Septic Tanks' to promote suitable techniques for cleaning sewers and septic tanks**. The move is in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who, in a meeting chaired by him on May 4, 2018 had desired a technology challenge to promote latest technologies to avoid human intervention in the cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

The challenge will be a part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention that will be held on October 2, 2018 and will remain open up to 5: 30 pm on August 14, 2018. Proposals have been invited by the **Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry from interested innovators, individuals, consortium partners, companies, academic institutions, research and development centers, NGOs, Parastatal and municipal bodies to provide innovative technical solutions that will eliminate the need for human entry into septic tanks and sewers.**

Objective:

The main objective of the challenge is to eliminate human intervention in the cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

Hence, the challenge aims to:

Identify **technological as well as business process** innovations.

Endorse viable business models that are suitable for a **different size, geographies, and class of cities**.

Pilot test and handhold to scale the **shortlisted technologies/solutions in select project cities**.

Bridge the gap between **innovators/manufacturers and beneficiaries- i.e. ULBs, citizens**.

Evaluation:

A special jury comprising experts from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, faculty from IITs/IIMs and representatives of leading civil society groups will be constituted for evaluation and scrutiny of the technological solutions submitted by the participants.

The jurors shall adopt the following broad criteria for evaluation of the proposals:

- The operational effectiveness of the Technology
- Life or durability of the machinery
- Ease of use (automation)
- Ease of availability/Economies of scale
- Adaptability/Versatility
- Made in India
- Environmentally Sustainable

Further, the challenge will be conducted for two separate categories:

Category A-Technological solutions for cleaning and maintenance of sewerage systems that eliminate the need for human entry.

Category B-Technological solutions for cleaning and maintenance of septic tanks that eliminate the need for human entry.

INDIA BEAT FRANCE TO BECOME SIXTH LARGEST ECONOMY

Why in News: The latest World Bank figures have some good news for India. **A World Bank report says that Indian economy has now become world's sixth-biggest pushing France to seventh place.** The US leads the table as the biggest economy followed by China, Japan, Germany and Britain. The new calculations were arrived on the basis of **Indian economy's performance in 2017. The data revealed that India recorded a GDP of USD 2,597,491 million in 2017, while France recorded a GDP of USD 2,582,501.** India is now placed just below the United, which recorded a GDP of **USD 2,622,434** million in the same period.

Important Points:

The United States leads the table recording a GDP of USD 19,390,604 million, followed by China with USD 12,237,700 million and then Japan with USD 4,872,136.95 and Germany with USD 3,677,439.13.

Britain remained the world's fifth-biggest economy with a GDP of USD 2,622,434 million at the end of 2017.

Among India's neighbours, while Pakistan recorded a GDP of USD 304,951.82 in 2017, Sri Lanka recorded USD 87,174.68 and Bangladesh recorded USD 249,723.89.

According to the World Bank, the surge in India's GDP has been a result of the good performances in the manufacturing sector driven by increased consumer spending.

The World Bank also noted that demonetisation in November 2016 and chaotic implementation of GST (goods and services tax) rollout in July 2017 were to be blamed for the extended slowdown of Indian economy.

However, the bank noted that the Indian economy has recovered from the effects of demonetisation and GST implementation and the predicted growth rate for India in 2018 is 7.3 percent.

Overall, India's economy has shown a rapid progress, doubling its GDP in less than past 10 years and positioning India as the engine of economic growth in Asia at a time when the Chinese economy is shown definite signs of lethargy.

While India has surged ahead of France in terms of GDP, in terms of per capita GDP, India still lags far behind France, which is nearly 20 times bigger in comparison.

This is mainly due to the huge size of India's population, which is estimated to be around 134 crore as against 6.7 crore of France.

Background:

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted that India will re-emerge as one of the fastest growing major economies in the 2018 - 2019 period. The International organisation has predicted India to grow at 7.4 per cent in 2018 and 7.8 per cent in 2019, leaving

behind its nearest rival China, which is expected to grow at 6.6 and 6.4 per cent respectively in the next two year.

The world economy, on the other hand, is expected to grow at 3.9 per cent over the next year. Besides, the World Economic League Table (WELT) 2018 released by the Centre for Economics and Business Research in December 2017, forecasted that India would 'leapfrog' both Britain and France in terms of GDP to become the world's fifth largest economy in 2018. The study stated that India had a good chance of becoming the world's third-biggest economy by 2032.

INDIA CLIMBS 3 SPOTS TO 57TH IN GLOBAL INNOVATION RANKINGS

Why in News: The *Global Innovation Index (GII)* has ranked India as the **57th most innovative nation in the world.** The country has improved its ranking from 60th position last year. India has been improving steadily since it was ranked 81st in 2015. Meanwhile, China improved its ranking from 22 in 2017 to 17 this year. **GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators. It is now in its 11th edition and has become a major input for policymakers on innovation around the world.**

Important Points:

Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year. This year, **Netherlands follows at second** place and **Sweden at third.** The **US drops down to sixth** from fourth last year. Apart from a rearrangement among themselves, the top 10 nations in GI have not changed.

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AT VIZAG PORT

Why in News: Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation will lay the foundation stone for, and inaugurate **National Highways and Port Connectivity projects worth Rs. 6688 Crores in Andhra Pradesh at an event in Vishakhapatnam.** The Minister is on a three day official visit to the state from 11th to 13th of this month.

Important Points:

The NH projects for which foundation stone will be laid include capacity augmentation of the existing 4-lane, 13.47 km stretch of NH-16 from Iccchapuram to Narasannapet at a cost of Rs 439 Crores, 6-laning of 54.20 km stretch of NH-16 from Narasannapet to Ranasthalam at a cost of Rs 1350 Crore, 6-laning of NH-16 from Ranasthalam to Anandapuram (Visakhapatnam) at a cost of Rs 1187.10 Crore and 6-laning of Anandapuram -Pendurthi - Anakapalli Section of NH-16 at a cost of Rs 2013 Crore.

These projects will improve connectivity between Chennai and Kolkata, reduce travel time between the two cities and also lower traffic congestion in Vishakhapatnam city.

The Port Connectivity projects for which Shri Gadkari will lay the foundation stone include 12.7 km long 4-lane connectivity from NH-16 to Vishakhapatnam Port at a cost of Rs 549 Crores under Bharatmala and 0.85 km Grade Separator from H7 area to port connectivity road bypassing convent junction in Vizag at a cost of Rs 39.93 Crores.

Shri Gadkari will also dedicate to the nation the 4.15 km 4-laning of balance connectivity road from Vishakhapatnam Port to NH-16, executed at a cost of Rs 100 Crores.

In addition to the above, Shri Gadkari will lay inaugurate Port Projects worth Rs 1062 Crores and lay the foundation stone for port projects worth Rs.679 Crores in Vishakhapatnam tomorrow. He is holding a meeting with officials of Shipping Ministry, Port Trusts and Inland waterways Authority in Vishakhapatnam today to review the progress of ongoing port and waterways projects. The Minister visited Polavaram Dam site.

India has maintained its top place in central and south Asia region. It has consistently moving up on global ranking from 81st in 2015 to 57th this year. In fact, it has climbed up the list third year in row. It ranked at 66th position in 2016 and 60th last year.

Strengths: These indicators have helped India to improve its ranking. It includes India's human capital (graduates in science & engineering), growth rate of GDP per worker, exports of information and communication technology (ICT) and services, productivity growth and creative goods exports etc.

Weakness: India has fared badly on indicators such as ease of starting business, political stability and safety, overall education and environmental performance

About Global Innovation Index (GII):

The GI global ranking is published by **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) - a specialized agency of United Nations in association with Cornell University and graduate business school INSEAD.** It ranks nations based on 80 indicators, ranging from intellectual property filing rates to R&D, online creativity, mobile application creation, computer software spending, education spending, scientific & technical publications and ease of starting business.

India's Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is one of the knowledge partners which assists GI team in bringing out the annual ranking. GI is published annually since 2007 and is considered leading benchmarking tool for business executives, policy makers and others seeking insight into state of innovation around the world. It is being used by them to evaluate progress on continual basis.

NO GOVT LARGESSE TO RAPE ACCUSED IN HARYANA: KHATTAR

Why in News: Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar announced *ten declarations for the protection and empowerment of women*. These include mainly the suspension of all facilities of the *accused of rape or molestation, facilitating personal advocate to the rape victim etc.*

The Chief Minister made this announcement while addressing the '*Another Improvement*' program organized in Panchkula-based Indradhanush Auditorium on the issue of *women's safety and women's empowerment*. On this occasion, the Chief Minister also honored four eminent women for outstanding work done for empowerment of women.

Women empowerment award:

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar also honored four eminent women for the empowerment of women, including Pankaja Chaudhari, woman bus driver of Sirsa, Mayanakhera village, Pancham Najma Khan of Dhunch village of Faridabad, poem of Bahara village of Jhajjar Sharma, Manju Kaushik from Mahendergarh district.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal flagged off 50 new vehicles for further improving the functioning of Women Police Stations in the state. Out of these 50 vehicles, 6-6 vehicles have been allocated in Gururgram and Faridabad districts, while 3-3 vehicles in Ambala, Karnal and Sonapat, District Panchkula Kurukshetra, Panipat, Rewadi, Jhajjar, Hisar, Fatehabad, Sirsa, Yamunanagar, Jind And 2 to 2 in Rohtak and 1-1 vehicles have been allocated in Bhiwani, Palwal, Nuh, Hansi, Charkhi Dadri, Narnaul and Kaithal districts.

Important Points:

In order to prevent crime against women, the Chief Minister launched Durga Shakti App.

Chief Minister Khattar also launched the theme '*My security - My responsibility*' prepared for giving information regarding security to schoolchildren who would become part of the curriculum in the school.

Apart from this, the *Chief Minister left the Durga Shakti Vahini Fleet with a green flag.*

The Chief Minister announced that in all the *districts where more than 50 women are pending in the cases of mental torture*, fast track courts will be opened so that victim women can get justice quickly.

Apart from this, he also made a declaration to the women witnesses not to call on the next muscle, special patrol arrangements in the day and night, the appointment of the women's self defense instructor in the girls' schools, the student transport security scheme, the action plan to stop sexual and gender violence.

The 9th to 12th class girl students would be trained in self-defence for which instructors would be appointed in all girls schools having over 50 students in classes 9th and 10th.

The Chhatra Parivahan Suraksha Scheme would be implemented to provide free transport facility to girl students.

GOVERNMENT SETS UP TASK FORCE TO SUGGEST WAYS ON REDUCING IMPORT DEPENDENCE

Why in News: The government has set up a high-level task force under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary PK Sinha to *identify various items and policy interventions to reduce dependence on import*.

The task force includes secretaries from departments of *commerce, industrial policy and promotion, skill development, revenue, defence production, steel, petroleum, electronics and telecommunications*.

Important Points:

It would suggest ways to cut import of those items which can be manufactured or explored in the country.

The move assumes significance as India is heavily dependent on imports of several items such as oil, electronic hardware, machinery, ingredients for pharmaceuticals, gold and chemicals.

On an average, India's imports stand at around \$450 billion per year.

In 2017-18, the inbound shipments grew about 20% to \$460 billion. Oil imports during the last fiscal rose 25.47% to \$109.11 billion.

Although the *increase in imports of intermediates and raw materials reflects a boost in economic activities*, inbound shipments of final goods impact domestic manufacturers.

Trade experts have raised concerns over high dependence on pharmaceutical ingredients or APIs from China. At present, over 60% of APIs are imported from China.

A trade expert said the government needs to focus on viable manufacturing to cut import dependence.

LGBTQ WILL NOT BE OSTRACISED ONCE SEC 377 IS DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL: SUPREME COURT

Why in News: *Once the criminality of consensual gay sex goes away, then related issues like social stigma and discrimination against the LGBTQ community will also go, the Supreme Court*. Observing that an environment has been created in the Indian society over the years that has led to deep-rooted discrimination against the community, a five-judge constitution bench, hearing petitions seeking decriminalisation of **158-year-old colonial law under**

Section 377 of the IPC, said discrimination against such people has also adversely impacted their mental health.

What is Section 377?

The section refers to 'unnatural offences' and states *"whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to pay a fine."*

Important Points:

The SC bench rejected a proposal of the lawyers, seeking retention of section 377, that public opinion should be elicited on the matter, saying it did not want a referendum but would go by constitutional morality.

The bench said that it will try to see whether section 377 of the IPC can stand the test of fundamental rights enshrined under Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (freedom of speech and association) and 21 (right to life and liberty) of the Constitution.

The bench further questioned the lawyers, whether there was any law, rule, regulation, bye-law or guideline which barred or restrained homosexuals from availing any right that is available to others, to which they replied that "there are no such provisions".

The observations were made on the third day of the crucial hearing to decide the constitutional validity of Section 377 of the IPC.

The observations came when senior advocate C U Singh, appearing for one of the intervenors said that mere striking down of section 377 will not serve the purpose as the LGBTQ community were being discriminated against on various counts.

What is LGBTQ?

The bench then said that the **LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer)** community faced discrimination and social stigma because of the criminality attached to the consensual same-sex relationship.

The bench stated that once the criminality under section 377 goes, then the stigma and discrimination will also go.

The bench observed that over the years, an environment has been created in the Indian society that has led to deep-rooted discrimination against the LGBTQ community, which has also adversely impacted their mental health.

Referring to the provision of the Mental Health Care Act, the bench said that it also recognises the fact that such persons cannot be discriminated against on the ground of sexual orientation.

SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT APPROVES DEATH PENALTY FOR DRUG RELATED OFFENSES

Why in News: The Sri Lankan Cabinet has unanimously approved a move to bring back capital punishment for **drug-related crimes, paving way for the resumption of death penalty after nearly 40 years.** Executions have not been carried out in Sri Lanka as successive Presidents in office since 1978 have refused to issue death warrants.

Important Points:

In Punjab, Chief Minister of Punjab, Capt Amarinder Singh, has recently approved the death penalty for drug trafficking in the state.

Cabinet Minister Gamini Jayawickrama Perera told the media that "President Mittal Sirisena had recently said that there is the pressure of restoring the provision of punishment-e-death on him for curbing serious crimes. The criminals who were serving the crime in drug trafficking were also running their business from within the jail. We cannot leave them in jail to plot a plot to ruin the country. For this reason, a proposal for the death penalty was brought on which the cabinet has unanimously stamped. "

In Sri Lanka, the sentence of hanging has been banned since 1978. Earlier, 19 drug criminals were punished in Sri Lanka but their punishment was reduced. It is not clear now that under the new policy, they will be given life imprisonment or death penalty.

Two years back, a massive campaign against drug substances was carried out by President Rodrigo Duterte, which resulted in the death of about 4500 people so far. The President was asked to go to any extent to deal with drug smugglers, which is being criticized internationally.

TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME (TOPS)

Why in News: In a departure from the norm, the Mission Olympic Cell included the entire **Indian hockey team in the Target Olympic Podium (TOP) scheme**, rewarding the players for their silver medal-winning performance at the Champions Trophy. **This is first instance that entire team has been made beneficiary of the scheme as earlier only individual athletes from different sports were included as beneficiaries of the scheme.**

Important Points:

The decision to include hockey was taken after India's performance had improved as they had finished runners up in Champions Trophy in Netherlands.

The 18 team members will be provided with monthly allowance of Rs. 50,000 each under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).

The women's team may be also included in the TOPS after reviewing its performance in the upcoming World Cup and following Asian Games.

About Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS):

TOPS was launched by Ministry of Sports within the ambit of **National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).**

It **aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for upcoming Olympic Games.** It will provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.

Under it, **Sports Authority of India (SAI)** and federations, which are members of **Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)**, will be nodal agencies for disbursement of fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes. Abinav Bindra Committee was constituted to identify and support potential medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games under the scheme.

FIFA WORLD CUP 2018

Why in News: **France has won 2018 FIFA World Cup**

Football by defeating Croatia by 4-2 goals in the final match held at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, Russia. It was **France's second World Cup crown after it had won it in 1998 (by defeating Brazil) on home soil.** With this, victory France joins Uruguay and Argentina in winning World Cup for a second time. It was **Croatia's first World Cup final** appearance and smallest country ever to reach final in the modern era.

Important Points:

The 2018 final, which went underway at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow, saw France lead by 2-1 at halftime with one own goal and a penalty shot.

The own-goal came off the top of Mario Mandzukic's head in the 18th minute.

Croatia rallied to equalise the score with a terrific left-foot strike by Ivan Perisic in the 28th minute.

However, Antoine Griezmann's penalty shot, after Ivan Perisic handled the ball in his own penalty area, gave France the lead once again.

In the second half, France made its lead even stronger with goals coming through Paul Pogba in the 59th minute and Kylian Mbappe in the 65th minute, taking the scorecard to 4-1.

Despite falling behind, Croatia kept their fighting spirit on and Mario Mandzukic pulled off an intelligent goal for the team in the 69th minute.

However, the scorecard at the end of the extra time read 4-2, delivering a blow to Croatia's hopes of winning their first-ever Cup.

Antoine Griezmann of France was awarded the Man of the Match accolade for the game.

The team's previous best performance was in 1998, when again they had lost to France in the semi-finals. The team then failed to get past the group stage in 2002, 2006 and 2014 World Cup and did not qualify in 2010.

For France, it was their first World Cup win after winning on home soil in 1998.

Harry Kane, the tournament's top goal scorer became the first Englishman since Tommy Lawton in 1939 to score in six consecutive internationals, although he did not score in England's last three matches in Russia. All his goals came in England's first four games, with three from penalty shootouts.

About 2018 World Cup:

The **2018 World Cup ended on July 15, 2018 after 32 days of great play.** The tournament had begun on June 14 with the first match being Russia vs. Saudi Arabia. It featured 32 teams and a total of 169 goals were scored, making it one of the highest-scoring World Cups ever. Coming to penalties, 219 yellow cards and 4 red cards were given during the entire length of the tournament. The tournament was full of surprises with underdogs like Russia and Croatia moving ahead and popular teams like - Argentina, Spain, Portugal and Germany- shown the door early.

The tournament ended with France being crowned the champions for the second time, after beating Croatia 4-2 in the final in Moscow. With the win, France joined Uruguay and Argentina in winning the World Cup for the second time. The only teams to have won the world cup more than two times include Brazil, which tops the tally with 5 wins and then Germany and Italy with 4 wins each. Spain and England both have won the Cup once each.

2022 FIFA World Cup:

Qatar would be hosting the 2022 edition of the World Cup. It would be the first time the World Cup would be held in the Middle East region and Qatar would be the first Arab country to host the World Cup.

WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY 2018

Why in News: World Youth Skills Day is being celebrated globally, which is held on **15th July** every year. This day is celebrated to amplify awareness on the importance of investing in youth skills development. To celebrate the World Youth Skills Day 2018, a **discussion focusing on how innovation and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), are transforming labor markets, as well as what skills youth need to operate in future economies and to become drivers of a sustainable future, will take place on July 16 at the UN Headquarters in New York.**

Important Points:

Rising unemployment among the youth is one of the most significant problems faced by the economies and societies in today's world.

At least 475 million new jobs need to be created over the next decade to absorb the 73 million youth currently unemployed and the 40 million new annual entrants to the labour market.

At the same time, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) surveys suggest that both employers and youth consider that many graduates are ill-prepared for the world of work. Hence, attaining decent work is a significant challenge.

In many countries, the informal sector and traditional rural sector remain to be a major source of employment.

The international community has established an ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Education and training are also focal to the accomplishment of the 2030 Agenda. That's why education and training are key determiners of achievement in the labour market.

The number of workers in vulnerable employment currently stands at 1.44 billion worldwide, among which more than half belong to Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

Technical and vocational education and training is expected to address the multiple demands of economic, social and environmental nature by helping youth and adults develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship, promoting equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and supporting transitions to green economies and environmental sustainability.

It can also reduce access barriers to the world of work, through work-based learning and ensuring that skills gained are recognised and certified.

The education can also offer skills development opportunities for low-skilled people who are under- or unemployed, out of school youth and individuals not in education, employment and training (NEETs).

Background:

Young people are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and continuously exposed to lower quality of jobs, greater labour market inequalities and longer and more insecure school-to-work transitions. In addition, women are more likely to be underemployed and under-paid and to undertake part-time jobs or work under temporary contracts. This is why education and training are key determinants of success in the labour market but the existing systems are failing to address the learning needs of many young people, and surveys of learning outcomes and skills show that a large number of youth have low levels of achievement in basic literacy and numeracy. Hence, the United Nations decided to designate July 15 as World Youth Skills Day to raise awareness on the importance of investing in youth skills development.

ASSAM GETS A STRINGENT LAW TO FIGHT WITCH-HUNTING

Why in News: President Ram Nath Kovind has *Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 passed by State Assembly in August 2015*. This law aims to reign in rising incidents of witch hunting cases across the state. It was prepared in lines with spirit of universal declaration of human rights, crimes in witch hunting cases cause gross violation of basic human rights.

Important Points:

The law aims to eliminate superstition from society by making such offences under it as non-bailable, non-compoundable and cognizable. It prohibit any person from calling, identifying or defaming any other person as witch by words, signs, conducts or indications. State Government has already notified the Act.

It prescribes stringent punishment, if anybody found guilty. It imposes up to 7 years of jail and fine up to 5 lakh rupees. This provision will come as per Section 302 (punishment for murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) if someone is killed after being branded a witch.

It also proposes sentence of **3 years imprisonment if anybody blames a person for natural disasters in a particular locality such as floods, droughts, illness or any death.** Cases and offences registered under this law will undergo trial in Special courts which will be set up in consultation with the high court.

Prohibiting witch-hunting, the act says no person shall identify, call, stigmatise, defame, accuse any other person as witch by words, signs, indications, conduct, action or any other manner or instigate, aid or abet such an act or commit witch-hunting.

The act has provisions to impose **finest on a community found involved in witch-hunt attacks. It also makes it mandatory for panchayat members, village development councils or gaonburhas (village chiefs) to inform the nearest police station if they come across a witch-hunting incident, failing which they will face departmental action or fine up to Rs 10,000.** The provision, many believe, will help check lynching.

Background:

Between **2001 and 2017, 193 people -- 114 women and 79 men -- have been branded as witches and killed. 202 cases have been registered by the police during this period.** The PIL said when maladies like illness, death or financial loss occur in a family, superstition leads many to believe that evil spells cast on them by others is behind the problems. Those accused of "practising witchcraft" are often hunted down and ostracised by the community and the village.

SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMEEN 2018

Why in News: The **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation launched the Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018).** This year, an independent survey agency will conduct the survey in all districts during August 1- 31, 2018 and the results will be announced in the form of a ranking of all districts and states on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters.

The top performing states and districts will be awarded on October 2, 2018.

Objective

The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake a ranking of states and districts on the basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative SBM-G parameters.

In the process, rural communities will be engaged in the improvement of the sanitation and cleanliness of their surrounding areas.

Important Points:

As part of Swachh Survekshan Grameen, 6980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered.

Total 34000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat, bazaars, religious places in these villages will be visited for survey.

Citizens' feedback will be collected from over 50 lakh citizens on Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) related issues through direct interaction as well as through online feedback.

During the process, 65 percent weightage has been assigned to the findings and outcome from the survey; and **35 percent to the service level parameters to be obtained from the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS).**

Weightage to different elements of the SSG

Direct Observation of sanitation in public places: 30 percent

Citizen's Feedback on sanitation parameters: 35 percent

Service Level Progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBM (Gramin): 35 percent

Other launches:

On the same occasion, the audio-visual communication campaign, featuring prominent celebrities including Swachh Bharat ambassadors including Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar, was also launched.

The SSG 2018 logo and the SSG 2018 brochure detailing essential facts about the initiative were also released.

'PAUDHAGIRI' CAMPAIGN

Why in News: **Haryana Government has launched 'Paudhagiri campaign', an unique program to increase green cover in the state.** It was launched by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar by planting 'maulsari' sapling in Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex premises of Gurugram. The campaign **aims increase green cover in the state, help in stabilising environment and improve overall climatic conditions, thus help in checking global warming.**

Important Points:

Under this plantation drive, **22 lakh students from class 6 to 12 of all government and private schools in Haryana will plant a sapling each during three months of monsoon - July, August and September.**

Every student will get a sapling from the Forest department and they can plant it either in the courtyard of their house, field or park or school or at any open space available in their proximity.

Students can even name the plant according to their likes, maybe after the name of great personalities of the country, freedom fighters or after the name of any of their family members or their ancestors.

Students who plant a sapling will have to take care of it for the next three years.

During these **3 years, once in every six months, students will be required to upload their selfie with their plant on the App.** The students will soon be made aware about the mobile app, using which they can upload the selfies.

Students will be given an **incentive of Rs 50 in every six months from the government for uploading their selfies on the app. Thus, the student will get Rs 300 in the next three years** for looking after a sapling planted by him or her.

In a span of three years, the sapling comes in a position to survive on its own and in 10 years, it starts giving flowers, fruits, shade and also help in checking global warming.

Class 6 to **12 students have been engaged for the state-level 'Paudhagiri' campaign.** About 2.7 crore saplings will be sown in the next month under the drive.

On the same occasion, the chief minister also distributed plants to the students and flagged off the tractor trolleys carrying plants to various schools of the district. Overall 3100 students from various schools of the district participated in the launch of the plantation drive.

ALL ARMS LICENCE HOLDERS MUST REGISTER WITH NATIONAL DATABASE

Why in News: Come April 2019, names of all arms licence holders - new or old - will be included in a national database and they will be issued a unique identification number (UIN), according to the Home Ministry. **The move is aimed at keeping a tab on authorised private gun holders, many of whom are often found involved in crimes and celebratory firing leading to loss of lives.**

Important Points:

The decision has been taken by exercising powers under **Section 44 of the Arms Act, 1959 (54 of 1959) by amending the Arms Rules, 2016. These rules will be called the Arms (Second Amendment) Rules, 2018.**

The move is aimed at keeping tab on authorised private gun holders, many of whom are often found involved in crimes and celebratory firing leading to loss of lives. It will also eliminate possibilities of issuing arms licence to persons whose antecedents are not bona.

All the arms licence holders, new or old, will be included in a national database of arms licenses system and they will be issued a unique identification number (UIN) as well.

Every licensing and renewing authority will have to enter the data in the National Database of Arms Licenses system, which will generate a UIN, and with effect from April 1, 2019, any arms licence without UIN shall be considered invalid.

Additionally, any existing licensee holding multiple licenses - under Form III - shall on or before April 1 make an application for grant of a single license in respect of all firearms held by him or her under his or her UIN to the concerned licensing authority.

Where the applicant applying for a licence for restricted category of arms or ammunition is also a holder of a licence for permissible category, or where the applicant applying for permissible category of arms or ammunition is also a holder of a licence for restricted category, the licensing authority concerned shall issue a new licence for restricted or permissible category of arms or ammunition under the existing UIN of the licensee.

Separate licence books will be generated in case of each licence, separately for restricted and permissible categories of arms and ammunition with an overall ceiling of three firearms under a single UIN.

Background:

Under Section 3 of the Arms Act, it is essential to obtain an arms possession licence issued by a competent licensing authority, by any person for acquisition, possession or carrying any firearms or ammunition.

UNITED NATIONS AGREES FIRST-EVER GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION

Why in News: For the first time ever, *United Nations member states, except the US, have agreed on a deal to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development.* The agreement will be formally

adopted by world leaders in Morocco in December 2018.

Important Points:

The compact is the first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration in holistic and comprehensive manner,

agreed upon by all the UN member states minus the United States.

It sets out 23 objectives to deal issues ranging from factors that compel people to move, legal channels for migration, combating trafficking and smuggling, harnessing the economic benefits of migration and return of the migrants.

It is not legally binding.

Over 250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP). Migrants remittance is huge contributor to their home countries' development.

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) offers the international community the opportunity to improve workplace productivity and deliver decent work outcomes for migrant and national workers, as well as to shift current misperceptions of migration, by readjusting migration policies to effectively include all labour market aspects.

The GCM is meant to be consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration.

SUPERSONIC CRUISE MISSILE BRAHMOS SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED

Why in News: The world's fastest supersonic cruise missile *Brahmos successfully test-fired from a military base at Balasore in Odisha.* The test-firing conducted from a Mobile Autonomous Launcher was part of service life extension programme for Indian Army under extreme weather condition.

Important Points:

Weighing 2.5 ton, BrahMos ALCM is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft. It has been modified by HAL to carry weapons.

It is a world-class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role and is capable of being launched from land, sea and air.

BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia.

The name Brahmos has been taken from two rivers - Brahmaputra and Moskva.

The heavyweight missile, integrated with the long-range fighter, is seen as a force multiplier for the IAF.

The Brahmos cruise missiles have an effective strike range of around 290-300 km.

The land and warship versions have already been inducted by the armed forces.

Background:

BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation and NPOM of Russia, is responsible for designing, developing and producing the missile.

In June, 2016, BrahMos Aerospace successfully demonstrated the integration of the BrahMos on Su-30. The demonstration flight involved the carriage of BrahMos by Su-30.

WOMEN CAN ENTER AT THE SABARIMALA TEMPLE JUST LIKE MEN DO: SC

Why in News: The *Supreme Court observed that banning the entry of women in Kerala's Sabarimala temple by the temple authorities is unconstitutional and questioned the authorities regarding the same.* The court stated that women have the right to enter and pray like men at the *Sabarimala temple in Kerala as the fundamental right of freedom to practice religion is provided to all persons by the Constitution.* The observation was made by a five-judge constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra.

Important Points:

The arguments in the case included that the bar on the entry of women into the popular temple was a kind of discrimination on the ground of sex and based on the assumption that menstruating women are "polluted".

The Supreme Court bench termed the notification of the Devaswom board, which runs the temple, banning entry of women of a particular age group as absurd.

It said exclusion of a particular age group of women forces them to disclose their menstruation stage and it violates their privacy.

The court was informed by the Kerala government that it also supported the entry of women of all age groups in the temple. The government also filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court regarding the same.

The bench said the issue on ban on entry may not be dealt with under Article 17 (untouchability) but can be resolved by expanding "all classes and sections" as provided under Article 25, which deals with the freedom to practice religion.

Background:

The observations came during the hearing on the issue of women in the menstruating age of 10 to 50 years being barred from entering the over 800-year-old Sabarimala shrine. The Supreme Court was hearing pleas filed by petitioners- Indian Young Lawyers Association and other activists, seeking elimination of the ban imposed on the entry of a section of women to Kerala's Sabarimala Temple. The apex court had on October 13, 2017 referred the issue to a Constitution bench after framing five "significant" questions including whether the practice of banning entry of women into the temple

amounted to discrimination and violated their fundamental rights under the Constitution. As per norms prescribed by the Sabarimala temple board-Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), women aged between 10 and 50 are prohibited from visiting the temple premises. The Kerala High Court had upheld the ban in its ruling in 1991.

However, in January 2016, the apex court had questioned the ban, saying that this could not be done under the Constitution. In November 2016, the Kerala government had told the Supreme Court that it was ready to allow women inside the temple. In January 2018, the temple board decided to make proof-of-age documents mandatory for female devotees at the shrine. The Sabarimala shrine is an ancient Hindu temple of Lord Ayyappan, who is also known as sasta or Dharmasasta. The temple is a prominent pilgrimage site among the Hindu devotees in the state of Kerala.

CHINA'S ONLINE WEATHER STATION IN TIBET COULD SUPPORT PLA DURING CONFLICT

Why in News: China has set up an unmanned weather station in *Tibet which can be used for military purpose in the event of an armed conflict with India.* According to the state-run *Global Times*, this unmanned automatic weather observation station has been set up in the Yumai township in Southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region close to the Indian border.

Important Points:

The station along the Indian border is situated at Yumai township under Lhunze county of Shannan Prefecture in Tibet and could provide data to help with transportation and communication in national defence, State-run *Global Times* reported in an article that claimed It could also offer support during regional live-fire conflicts.

The station will provide meteorological support for China's defence and further promote border development as well as military-civilian integration, according to a statement on the official website of the Tibet weather bureau.

Regional weather is an important factor that could influence the take-off and landing of aircraft and the launch of missiles during a battle particularly in Tibet where adequate air pressure is necessity for such activities. A small weather observation station could provide such information.

The construction of the station started in early 2018, but it was severely hit due to extremely bad weather in the area. It was finally completed in June and the station transmitted its first weather data on June 22.

The unmanned weather station set up near Arunachal Pradesh will provide meteorological support to the Chinese military and assist operations of aircraft and missiles in case of "regional live-fire conflicts,".

India and China had a military stand-off last year in Doklam near their border with Bhutan, that is close to Tibetan region.

Background:

The unmanned weather station is significant since regional weather is an important factor that could influence the take-off and landing of aircraft and the launch of missiles during a battle, Song Zhongping, a military expert, was quoted as saying by the Global Times. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) between India and China covered 3488-km which includes Arunachal Pradesh, which is claimed by China as part of southern Tibet.

Yumai, which is China's smallest township in terms of population, has just nine households and 32 residents. It is located in the southern foothills of the Himalayas and affected by the monsoon climate of the Indian Ocean. Yumai is connected to the outside world with a road which has been under construction since 2017. More weather stations are likely to come when the construction of the road is complete.

ODISHA GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTES HERITAGE CABINET

Why in News: The *State Government constituted Heritage Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to preserve the history and culture of Odisha*. A notification in this regard was issued by the Parliamentary Affairs Department. The Cabinet comprises eight members, including the Chief Minister. **The other members are Ministers of Finance, Odia Language, Literature and Culture and Tourism, Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts, SC/ST Development, Higher Education, School and Mass Education and Electronics and Information.**

Important Points:

While the Chief Secretary will be Secretary of Heritage Cabinet, Secretary in the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture will be the convenor. Secretaries of all the departments concerned will be special invitees. The State Cabinet at its meeting held at Puri on December 26 last year had decided to set up the Heritage Cabinet.

Its aim is to spread and preserve history and culture of Odisha and enrich Odia language further. The notification said the Heritage Cabinet will maintain coordination between the institutions and departments working to preserve and spread Odia language, culture and literature. It will also prepare policies, and prepare and approve short-term and longterm plans.

About National Cultural Fund:

The National Cultural Fund has been set up by the Ministry of Culture to uphold the country's cultural heritage. The purpose of this fund is to encourage industrial houses to adopt historic buildings. In this category they will come to the monuments which do not come under the Indian Survey of India. Keeping in view the interests of the industrial houses by the government, they have been given the exemption that they can run the possible business activities around the historic buildings. This step is expected to improve the situation of historic buildings in the country.

RAJYA SABHA PASSES PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Why in News: The *Rajya Sabha* passed amendments to the *Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988*, which will make giving bribes to a public servant an offence. The amendment bill had been first floated in 2013, by the Congress-led government at the Centre.

According to the amendments, a police officer will now have to take prior permission from appropriate authorities while pursuing cases. Further, bankers cannot be pulled under the corruption law unless they have accumulated assets disproportionate to their income or have misappropriated assets entrusted to them.

Important Points:

The Bill introduces the offence of giving a bribe as a direct offence. However, a person who is compelled to give a bribe will not be charged with the offence, if he reports the matter to law enforcement authorities within seven days.

The Bill makes specific provisions related to giving a bribe to a public servant, and giving a bribe by a commercial organisation.

The Bill redefines criminal misconduct to only cover misappropriation of property and possession of disproportionate assets. ***It does not cover circumstances where the public official: (i) uses illegal means, (ii) abuses his position, or (iii) disregards public interest and obtains a valuable thing or reward for himself or another person.***

The Bill modifies the definitions and penalties for offences related to taking a bribe, being a habitual offender and abetting an offence.

It introduces the powers and procedures for the attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption.

The Bill adds the provision for prior sanction to prosecute former officials. The Act only provided for the prior sanction to prosecute serving public officials. It deletes the provision that protects a bribe giver from prosecution, for any statement made by him during a corruption trial. This may prevent bribe givers from appearing as witnesses in court.

Under the Act, a person is proven guilty for the offences of taking a bribe, being a habitual offender or abetting an offence. The Bill amends this provision to only cover the offence of taking a bribe.

It provides more stringent punishment for the offences of bribery, both for the bribe giver and the bribe taker. It provides for seven years of imprisonment or a fine or both for the bribe givers.

Background:

The amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was necessitated from the obligation of India to review the existing provisions of the Act so as to bring it in line with the *United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)*. This led to the introduction of the *Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013* in the *Rajya Sabha* in **August 2013**. However, it could not be passed as the Bill contemplates an important paradigm shift in defining offences relating to bribery. Later, the views of the Law Commission of India were sought on the proposed amendments. The Bill incorporates the recommendations given by the 20th Law Commission headed by Justice (retd) AP Shah in its 254th Report.

About United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC):

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the most comprehensive anti-corruption convention, entering into force in December 2005. It covers a wide-range of corruption offences, including domestic and foreign bribery, embezzlement, trading in influence and money laundering.

FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS

BILL 2018 PASSED BY LOK SABHA

Why in News: The Lok Sabha passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, ***which aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.*** The legislation was passed through a voice vote after almost a two-hour long debate. The ruling government has been under attack from the opposition for failing to bring back defaulters like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi. The Bill will now be taken up in the upper house of the Parliament, Rajya Sabha.

What is Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2018?

The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2018 empowers authorities to attach and confiscate properties as well as assets of economic offenders like loan defaulters who flee the country. The ordinance is expected to re-establish the rule of law where the accused will be forced to return to India and face trial for his offences.

This would help the financial institutions to recover a higher amount from such fugitive economic offenders.

Provisions under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2018:

The ordinance makes provisions for a 'Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a defaulter as 'Fugitive Economic Offender' who can be identified as a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued in respect of a scheduled offence and who has left India -- or being abroad, refuses to return -- to avoid criminal prosecution.

Fugitive Economic Offender:

A fugitive economic offender is any individual against whom a warrant for arrest in relation to a scheduled offence such as cheating, forgery or corruption has been issued by any court of India who, either leaves or has left India to avoid criminal prosecution or refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

Important Points:

The bill provides for the creation of a 'Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

The process of repatriation of an economic fugitive under the act begins with the submission of an application before the special court declaring that an individual is a fugitive economic offender.

After going through the application, the special court would issue a notice to the individual alleged to be a fugitive economic offender.

This would be followed by confiscation of the individual's properties, located both in India and abroad including benami property, resulting from the proceeds of crime.

The offender would be disentitled from defending any civil claim.

If at any point during the course of the proceedings the alleged Fugitive Economic Offender returns to India and submits to the appropriate jurisdictional Court, proceedings under the proposed Act would come to an end.

Background:

The Bill was first announced in Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's 2017 Budget speech. India has witnessed several instances of economic offenders fleeing the country to avoid facing criminal proceedings such as industrialist Vijay Mallya and recently, billionaire jewellery designer Nirav Modi. Most of the cases involve non-repayment of bank loans, which is worsening the financial health of the banking sector in India. The existing civil and criminal provisions in the law are not entirely adequate to deal with the severity of the problem.

GANGA VRIKSHAROPAN ABHIYAN

Why in News: The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) organised the '*Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan*' in *five main Ganga basin states - Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal*. This week-long afforestation drive was organised during July 9 to July 15, 2018 as '*Shubharambh Saptah*'. The State Forest Departments of these five states acted as the Nodal Agencies for the smooth and effective execution of the campaign. While, the *Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) were designated as the district level Nodal Officers and Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) at the State level for the event*.

Apart from these states, various organisations took part in this drive such as the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Ganga Vihar Manch (GVM), NGOs and educational institutions.

Important Points:

The campaign was initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange Programme.

It was aimed at bringing greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.

A number of schools, colleges and departments were requested to "Adopt a Plant" for turning this campaign into a people's movement. Various seminars, workshops, lectures, drawing and painting competitions are being organised for the same purpose.

Plantation activities were carried out with great enthusiasm all along the banks of the River Ganga with participation of local people.

Formal events to mark the campaign were held at over 100 locations. In Uttar Pradesh, the programme is merged with the Ganga Haritima Abhiyan.

Some of the plants which were sown during the campaign are Kanji, Sheesham, Farmis, Jamun, Arjun, Gatal, Siras, Chhitvan, Mango, Neem, Semal, Jungal Jalebi, Gulmohar, Kadam, Sagwan, Saal, Mahogni, Ber, Bamboo, Karaonda, Ashwagandha, Curry Patta, Jathrofa, Beheda, Dhatura, Sargandha etc.

In order to implement the afforestation project in a scientific manner, Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun was assigned the project to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on the basis of which the State Forest Departments would carry out their plantation activities.

Getting Forest Research Institute (FRI) on board:

The Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted by Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun identified a riverscape covering an area of 83946 km along the five main stem Ganga basin states. This riverscape has been marked for afforestation over a period of 5 years at a cost of Rs 2293.73 crore. The FRI report provides a multi-disciplinary approach with potential plantation and treatment models. Considering the type of natural ecosystem, identification of native vegetation, soil conditions and agro-climatic zones, the potential models of various types have been developed. The implementation plan aims to contribute towards the Clean Ganga Mission, particularly Aviral Dhara and Nirmal Dhara, besides maintenance of the ecological and geological integrity.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):

It was established on 12 August 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860. It is the implementation arm of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (National Ganga Council). It has a two tier management structure and comprises Governing Council and Executive Committee. Both the bodies are headed by Director General (DG), NMCG. The Executive Committee is authorised to approve projects under mission up to Rs.1000 Cr. The Director General (DG) of NMCG is also an Additional Secretary in Government of India.

STUDENT POLICE CADET PROGRAMME

Why in News: The *Student*

Police Cadet (SPC) Programme will

be launched nationally on July 21,

2018 by Union Home Minister

Rajnath Singh in the presence of

the Union Human Resources

Minister Prakash Javadekar and

the Chief Minister of Haryana Manohar Lal.

Important Points:

The SPC programme seeks to build a bridge between the Police and the larger community through school students by inculcating values and ethics in them through classes in school and outside.

The programme will focus on students of class 8 and 9 and special care will be taken to ensure that it does not increase the workload of the students.

The programme will not have any prescribed text book and nor will it include any exam.

Under its schedule, only one class is proposed in a month.

The programme broadly seeks to cover two topics:

Crime prevention and control: The topics covered under this part include community policing, road safety, fight against social evils, safety of women and children, fight against corruption and disaster management.

Values and ethics: The topics covered under this part include values and ethics, respect for elders, empathy and sympathy, tolerance, patience, attitude, team spirit and discipline.

The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) with the support of NCERT has prepared a handbook for imparting instructions.

The programme would lay a greater emphasis on field demonstrations and hands on learning of the functioning of the police through visits to women police stations, child protection homes including NGOs, traffic police and fire brigade stations.

It will also enable learning through group discussions and audio-visual mediums.

Other Details

The programme will be steered by a state level committee headed by the Principal Secretary, Home Department with the Principal Secretary, Education and Director General of Police as members.

A similar committee will be formed at the district level, headed by the District Magistrate with the District Inspector of Schools and Superintendent of Police as members.

The Centre has released an amount worth Rs 67 crores to the states for the implementation of the programme. Besides, an amount of Rs 50,000 will be earmarked for each school to be spent on educational aids, training and contingency. The programme shall first be implemented in government schools, in both urban and rural areas.

INDIA SEES MAJOR REDUCTIONS IN HIV INFECTIONS: UN

Why in News: India saw a major reduction in the number of new *HIV infections, AIDS-related deaths and people living with HIV from 2010 to 2017 on the back of sustained and focussed efforts, according to a UN report* which warned that the epidemic was growing in Pakistan.

The Joint *UN Agency on AIDS (UNAIDS)* report titled *'Miles to go - closing gaps, breaking barriers, righting injustices'* said Asia and the Pacific regions have made strong inroads with its HIV response.

Important Points:

The report stated that sustained and focused efforts to reach key populations have led to major reductions in HIV infections in Cambodia, India, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam between 2010 and 2017.

In India, the report found that new HIV infections dropped from 1, 20,000 in 2010 to 88,000 in 2017, AIDS-related deaths reduced from 1, 60, 000 to 69, 000 and the number of people living with HIV decreased from 23 lakhs to 21 lakhs in the same time period.

The report noted that India has an approved social protection strategy, policy or framework that is being implemented. It, however, warned that the global new HIV infections were not declining fast enough. It also noted that the epidemic was expanding in Pakistan and the Philippines.

The report noted that global new HIV infections declined by just 18 per cent in the past seven years, from 2.2 million in 2010 to 1.8 million in 2017.

The report underscored the public health benefits of decriminalising sex work. It found that countries that had decriminalised at least some aspects of sex work have fewer sex workers living with HIV than countries that criminalise all aspects of sex work. Based on data from Canada, India and Kenya, the report indicates that the decriminalisation of sex work could avert 3346 per cent of HIV infections over the course of a decade.

Successive surveys in Cambodia, India, Thailand and Vietnam also indicate that attitudes towards people living with HIV have improved creating safer working conditions for sex workers and engaging them closely in the design and implementation of programmes make a huge difference.

The report cited the example of Karnataka, where advocacy work with senior police officials, sensitisation workshops and the inclusion of HIV and human rights topics in pre-service curricula led to a significant decrease in the arrest of female sex workers, especially during police raids.

The report revealed that before the interventions, 50 per cent of the 4,110 surveyed female sex workers said they had been arrested or detained at some point during police raids and that proportion shrank to 20 per cent after the interventions.

Concerns:

The report highlights the concern that the global decline in new HIV infections is not quick enough to reach the target of fewer than 500,000 by 2020. It reveals that in 2017, an estimated 36.9 million people globally were living with HIV and 21.7 million people were accessing treatment. It also shows that key populations are not being considered enough in HIV programming.

According to the report, key populations and their sexual partners account for 47 per cent of the new HIV infections worldwide and 97 per cent of new HIV infections in eastern Europe and central Asia, where one third of new HIV infections are among people who inject drugs. The report highlighted that sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, prisoners, migrants, refugees and transgender people are more affected by HIV but are still being left out from HIV programmes.

GOVERNMENT DEFEATS NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION IN LOK SABHA

Why in News: After enjoying majority for 4 years in the government, Narendra Modi led BJP now faces no-confidence motion. *In the history of India, this will be the 27th no-confidence motion. Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government has won No Confidence motion moved in Lok Sabha.* This was first no-trust motion against Narendra Modi government after it came to power in May 2014 and less than year before the next general elections.

The no-confidence motion against the government was moved by a former NDA ally Telugu Desham Party (TDP). In this trust vote, NDA bagged 325 votes against motion, while 126 members voted in favour. Total of 451 out of 534 MPs were present and voted in the house bringing down majority mark required to 226.

No-Confidence Motion:

In a parliamentary democracy, government can be in power only if it commands majority in directly elected House. **Article 75(3) of our Constitution of India embodies this rule by specifying that Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to Lok Sabha.** But there is no mention of a no-confidence motion in the constitution. The Rule 198 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha provides mechanism for testing this collective responsibility. Rajya Sabha does not have procedure for moving of no-confidence motion against Government and also adjournment motion, censure motion.

The rule allows any Lok Sabha MP who can garner support of 50 colleagues, to introduce motion of no-confidence against the Council of Ministers. Motion of No-confidence need not set out any grounds on which it is based. If there are 50 MPs in favour, the motion is admitted and speaker allots date for discussion on the motion. Thereafter, discussion on motion takes place. MPs who support motion highlight government's shortcomings. Then Prime Minister or ministers reply to the charges made. If the government loses trust vote, it is expected to resign.

Important Points:

The no-confidence motion was moved by TDP, a former NDA ally. The parties that supported the motion include Congress, CPI, CPI (M), TMC and AAP.

While there were no abstentions from the members present in the house, the members of the Shiv Sena gave the vote a miss and the BJD staged a walkout right before the debate began.

Though the TRS participated in the debate on the no-confidence motion, its 11 MPs did not vote.

A total of 451 out of 534 MPs were present and voting in the house, bringing down the required majority mark to 226.

The government obtained a two-thirds majority of the votes. Several AIADMK members supported the government and voted against the motion.

This was the first no-trust motion against Narendra Modi- led NDA government after it came to power in May 2014 and less than a year before the next general elections. It is also the first no-trust vote in 15 years.

In a House of 535 members, the ruling NDA has 313 members including 274 (including the Speaker) of BJP, 18 of Shiv Sena, six JJP and four SAD.

The stated strength of the Opposition was 222, including 63 of the Congress-led UPA, 37 of AIADMK, 34 of TMC, 20 BJD, 16 TDP and 11 TRS.

Important Facts:

The last no-confidence motion was moved 15 years ago by the Congress against Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA in 2003 following re-induction of George Fernandes in the Union Cabinet as Defence Minister. However, it was defeated with an overwhelming majority favouring Vajpayee.

Here are details on the three no-confidence motions that shook the governments in the past:

In 1999, the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had lost the no-confidence motion moved against his government by the opposition led by Sonia Gandhi. The BSP, which had assured the BJP of its support, voted against the government in the Lok Sabha. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government lost by 1 vote

In 1997, a no-confidence motion was moved against the HD Devegowda government. In, 1996, Devegowda became the prime minister with the support of Congress. However, soon after 10 months, Congress withdrew its support which led to the fall of Devegowda's govt.

In 1990, VP Singh's government faced the heat of no-confidence motion. Singh ruled for just 11 months before the BJP withdrew support over the Ram temple issue, causing the government to lose a no-confidence motion on November 10, 1990.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER INAUGURATES ADVANCED SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY 'SAFAR'

Why in News: *Science & Technology, Earth Sciences; Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan unveiled a state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System- SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) at Chandni Chowk in Delhi.* The giant true colour LED display gives out real-time air quality index on 24x7 basis with colour coding along with 72-hour advance forecast.

Important Points:

The system, first of its kind in the country, was developed indigenously in record time by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Based on the air quality index on a particular day, health advisory and related precaution will be notified to prepare citizens well in advance.

The new system would also be able to measure sun's UV-Index and track ultrafine particles such as PM1, mercury and black carbon in real time, which have a direct relevance to human health.

Based on the UVI, skin advisories will be issued on display.

About SAFAR:

The Environment Ministry's mission model project 'SAFAR' is being implemented in four cities of India - Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and Ahmedabad as an operational service.

The system will be an integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi and will strengthen the existing air quality network of SAFAR, Central Pollution Control Board and Delhi Pollution Control Committee.

Preliminary economic assessment of the benefits of the system reveal that if 5 per cent of the people suffering from air-pollution related diseases take advantage of the advisories and precautions in Delhi alone, it would result in a saving of nearly Rs 2,500 crores in terms of health-related cost benefit.

The system will also accelerate public awareness and preparedness of air pollution and weather extremes.

It will also lead to a better understanding of linkages among emissions, weather, pollution and climate.

It will also monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction.

In addition to regular air quality parameters like PM2.5, PM10, Sulfur Dioxide, Ozone, Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Monoxide, the system will also monitor the existence of Benzene, Toluene and Xylene.

Besides health, SAFAR system would benefit cost savings to several other sectors such as agriculture, aviation, infrastructure, disaster management skill and tourism, which directly or indirectly get affected by air quality and weather.

INDIA, RWANDA SIGN 8 AGREEMENTS

Why in News: *India and Rwanda signed eight agreements on July 23, 2018 following delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda.* The memorial has been built to honour over 2.5 lakh victims of Rwanda's mass killings in 1994.

Modi and Kagame held wide-ranging talks and discussed a host of measures to boost bilateral strategic ties. Addressing a joint press conference, Prime Minister Modi assured Rwanda that India will continue to back the African country's development. Rwanda President said PM Modi's visit represents a milestone between the two nations.

Important Points:

The documents exchanged include Defence Agreement on Cooperation in Capacity Building, Defence, Industry, Science and Technology.

The agreements were signed in the fields of defence, trade, agriculture, leather and allied products and dairy.

India also extended two lines of credit (LoCs) worth \$200 million to Rwanda:

For the development of industrial parks and Kigali Special Economic Zone

For the development of three agricultural projects in Rwanda.

PM's visits to Rwanda and Uganda en route South Africa for the BRICS summit are seen as an important outreach to vie for influence in Africa where China has deepened its foothold.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also announced the opening of the first Indian diplomatic mission in the East African nation.

The move will not only establish communication between the governments of the two countries but also enable facilities for consular, passport and visa.

Besides this, a task force will be set up between the two countries to enable digital learning mediums for children.

Modi has become the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Rwanda when he landed in Kigali on the first leg of his three-nation tour to Africa. The Rwandan President personally received Modi at the airport.

During his visit, the Prime Minister will visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial which is the final resting place of more than 2 lakh 50,000 victims of Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda.

Modi will also visit the Rweru Model Village where he would be donating 200 cows under the Girinka programme, a scheme initiated by President Kagame in response to the high rate of child malnutrition and as a means of accelerating poverty reduction and integrate livestock and crop farming.

Modi would also be taking part in the India-Rwanda Business Forum.

Background:

The Prime Minister's visit to Rwanda is historic as Rwanda is an important gateway to Eastern Africa. India had elevated its bilateral relations with Rwanda to the level of a strategic partnership in January 2017. The Rwandan President is the current Chair of the African Union. From Rwanda, the Prime Minister will visit Uganda, before heading to Johannesburg in South Africa to attend the 10th BRICS Summit.

About Line Of Credit:

LOC' A line of credit (LOC) is an arrangement between a financial institution, usually a bank, and a customer, that established the maximum amount of a loan that the customer can borrow.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

Why in News: The lower house of the Parliament today passed a bill to amend the *National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) Act seeking to provide post-facto approval to those approved institutions which are funded by the Centre or states, but do not have recognition under the 1993 law.*

Important Points:

The Negotiable Instruments Bill allows payment of an interim compensation in cheque dishonour cases to prevent holding of payments pending a long trial.

The Bill on teacher education seeks to grant retrospective recognition to the Central and state universities which have conducted teacher education courses without the permission of the National Council for Teacher Education.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Specific Relief (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which sets out remedies for parties whose contractual or civil rights have been violated. The amendments propose that if a party breaks an agreed contract, the affected party will have the freedom to get it executed by a third party. The Bill has been passed by the Lok Sabha.

Retrospective recognition of certain teacher education institutions: The Bill seeks to grant retrospective recognition to institutions that have been notified by central government, funded by Central Government or State/UT government and but do not have recognition under the parent Act. Besides, these institutions must have offered teacher education courses on or after establishment of NCTE until academic year 2017-2018.

Retrospective permission to start new courses: The Bill grants retrospective permission these institutions to start new course or training in teacher education to institutions.

About National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE):

It is statutory body of Central Government set up under NCTE Act, 1993 in 1995 to formally oversee standards, procedures and processes in Indian education system. NCTE plans and co-ordinates the development of teacher education system throughout the country (for both central as well as state governments). It also ensures the maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system. Its headquarters are in New Delhi.

BIHAR STARTS ONLINE TRANSFER OF DIESEL SUBSIDY TO FARMERS

Why in News: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar launched the *online transfer of diesel subsidy directly into the bank accounts of farmers in the state. A new system of online payment of diesel subsidy to farmers has been initiated.* Registered farmers would now directly get payment of diesel subsidy into their bank accounts. 11,00 farmers have got the money of diesel subsidy transferred into their accounts at a rate of Rs 50 per litre.

Important Points:

It used to take three months for farmers to get the money of diesel subsidy but with the launch of online payment system, farmers would now be able to get the diesel subsidy within 25 days.

All the district agriculture officers, agriculture coordinators in blocks, agriculture advisors should start a campaign in every villages in order to give information about various schemes and their benefits to the farmers, Kumar said adding that officials should get farmers registered besides linking their bank accounts with "aadhaar".

The agriculture department officials would also make farmers understand to go for the cultivation of alternative crops if paddy cultivation is not possible in that particular area. The seeds of alternative crops should be made available to farmers.

Around 76 per cent people are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. We are sensitive towards them. The state government would provide all possible help to farmers in the event of disaster.

The state has witnessed 48 per cent deficit rainfall so far whereas some of the districts have even witnessed 80 per cent deficit rainfall.

Stating that a slew of decisions was taken at a high-level meeting held yesterday, Kumar said the diesel subsidy was Rs 35 per litre last year which was increased to Rs 40 a litre earlier this year and now it was further hiked to Rs 50 a litre for farmers to irrigate land.

Rural areas, which used to get power supply of around 16 to 18 hours a day, will now get power supply of 20 to 22 hours a day for irrigation purpose, he said and added that power tariff has been reduced from existing 96 paise to 75 paise per unit for agriculture purpose. The rate of 75 paise per unit would also be applicable to state tubewells or private tubewells.

Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) has been asked to increase the number of tankers to 500 from the existing 175 to ensure potable water.

NITI AAYOG SIGNS SOI WITH LUPIN FOUNDATION FOR COLLABORATING IN ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS

Why in News: A *Statement of Intent (Sol)* was signed between NITI Aayog and Lupin Foundation to collaborate in Aspirational Districts Programme. The Sol was signed by Yaduvendra Mathur, Additional Secretary, NITI Aayog and Sita Ram Gupta, Executive Director, Lupin Foundation.

Important Points:

The NITI Aayog and Lupin Foundation will collaborate to improve indicators in education, health & nutrition, financial inclusion and skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure in Aspirational Districts of India.

Lupin Foundation, along with the NITI Aayog, will work in three states - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

The collaboration will facilitate the creation of an *ideal template to develop economic strength, technological viability and moral leadership across three districts in these 3 states as part of Phase I of the cooperation.*

Lupin Foundation will work towards three main pillars of ensuring integrated developmental policy in the model states

Social development - It will include initiatives for health, education and women empowerment.

Economic empowerment - It will focus on interventions in spheres of agriculture, animal husbandry and skill enhancement.

Infrastructure development - Lupin will loop to establish durable infra in the form of internal roads, school buildings and water resources.

Aspirational District Programme

The programme was launched in January 2018 aims to quickly and effectively transform some of most underdeveloped districts of the country. It envisages

rapid development of selected districts on basis of composite index based on five parameters health and nutrition, education, financial inclusion, skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure.

It focuses closely on improving people's ability to participate fully in burgeoning economy. It seeks to bring these indicators in selected districts at par with the better performing districts in the country. Broad contours of the programme are Convergence of Central and State Schemes; Collaboration of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers and District Collectors and Competition among districts driven by Mass Movement or Jan Andolan.

About Lupin Foundation

Lupin Foundation is a trust, NGO, independent body promoted by Lupin Ltd. Lupin is an innovation-led pharmaceutical company with a global footprint and known for its generic medicines. Formed in 1988, the Foundation works towards creating an alternative model of rural development which is sustainable, replicable and ever evolving.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS INDEX (PAI) 2018

Why in News: According to the *Public Affairs Index (PAI) 2018, released by the Public Affairs Center (PAC) on July 22, 2018, Kerala is the best governed state in the country.*

An index has been issued for better governance in the country. Kerala has been the best administered state in the category of big states since the year 2016.

Important Points:

Tamil Nadu second in Kerala, Telangana in third place, Karnataka at fourth place and Gujarat at fifth

position in this list.

In PAI, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar are at the lower level, indicating more social and economic inequality in these states.

PAC Chairman According to Kasturirangan, as a country with a growing population of youth, India

needs to assess and solve its developmental challenges.

Crime in children is increasing in the country. In such a situation, their security is also a matter of concern. According to the PAI, states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram have achieved good marks for better life conditions for children.

In the small state (less than 2 crore population), Himachal Pradesh has proved to be the best state in terms of better governance. Goa is second after Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram on third, Sikkim on fourth and Tripura on fifth. In the report, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya were in the lower position in the case of smaller states.

What is Public Affairs Index (PAI) and how was the report prepared?

The index is released since in 2016 by Bengaluru base Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not for profit think tank which aims to improve governance in India. It is based on 10 themes, 30 focus subjects and 100 indicators, relying solely upon government data. It covers wide range of themes such as support to human development, social protection, essential infrastructure, women and children, crime, law and order, delivery of justice, transparency and accountability, environment, fiscal management and economic freedom.

FIRST IN INDIA: 2 KERALA COPS TO HANG FOR CUSTODIAL DEATH

Why in News: For the *first time in independent India's history, police officers have been sentenced to death in a custodial murder case, in a state which claims to be highly progressive.*

The CBI Special Court judgement awarding death sentence to two police officers for the custodial murder of Udayakumar in 2005 has come at a time when two more similar cases - of Varapuzha Sreejith and Puthenveettil Sreejiv - are hanging like the Sword of Damocles over the state police's head.

Important Points:

K Jithakumar and S V Sreekumar, the first and second accused respectively, were handed out the capital punishment by judge J Nazer. The pair was also awarded a fine of `2 lakh each.

Former cops T K Haridas and E K Sabu and Crime Branch DYP T Ajith Kumar were given three-year jail term for conspiracy and destroying evidence.

'Deserve no clemency'

The accused had killed an innocent person in their custody. "They deserve no clemency," the judge said, ruling that the crime fell in the rarest of rare category that deserved death.

The illegal actions of the accused had severely eroded public trust in the law enforcement and caused social harm.

Background:

26 year old Udayakumar, who used to work in a scrap metal shop, was sitting with his friend Suresh Kumar, who faced theft cases, at a park in Thiruvananthapuram on September 27, 2005. Around 2 pm, constables Jithukumar and Sreekumar picked them up and took them to Fort police station after finding Rs 4,000 with Udayakumar. The prosecution said constables Jithukumar, Sreekumar and K V Soman tortured Udayakumar to make him confess that the money was stolen, tying him to a bench and rolling an iron rod on his thighs. Late that night, police took him to hospital where he was declared brought dead.

A revenue division officer conducted the inquest, noticed injuries and ordered a postmortem, which found 22 injuries and ruptured vessels in the thighs, and concluded that these ruptures were the cause of death.

Arguments & ruling:

While the prosecution argued that the custodial death was reminiscent of torture during the Emergency, defence advocate Prathachandran Pillai tried to build its case around the question as to under whose custody Udayakumar was tortured. It alleged that the evidence was circumstantial, and said there was no clarity about what had happened at the police station. The defence now plans to appeal in the High Court.

Judge J Nazer held that the "brutal and dastardly murder" is in the category of "the rarest of the rare cases" and life imprisonment would be inadequate. The court ruled: "The acts of the accused persons would definitely adversely affect the very institution of the police department... If the faith of the people in the institution is lost, that will affect the public order and law and order of the society and it is a dangerous situation."

KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS

Why in News: The Kargil Vijay Diwas is observed on **26 July** every year, in honour of the Indian Army's win in the war in the Kargil-Drass sector of Jammu and Kashmir. *The Indian soldiers successfully gained back the high altitude outposts which were infiltrated by Pakistani intruders culminating in Operation Vijay of 1999.*

Important Points:

Over 500 Indian armed forces personnel were martyred during the three-month-long war. The war occurred after the then Pakistan Army chief General Pervez Musharraf spurned the peace initiative of the then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The shelling from Pakistan began on 3 May 1999, as more intruders crossed over to the Indian side. After gathering actionable inputs, the army soon began to position its troops in the Kargil sector and, by the end of May 1999, the IAF launched massive air strikes to regain control of several key positions in the Batalic sector. Tiger Hill, a Pakistani stronghold and the highest peak in the Kargil-Dras sector, was captured after an eleven-hour-long battle. The Kargil War Memorial was built by the Indian Army in Dras, in the foothills of the Tololing Hills.

Paying tribute to the war heroes, President Ram Nath Kovind tweeted, "On Kargil Vijay Diwas, every Indian acknowledges the efforts and gallantry of our Armed Forces. We salute the ultimate sacrifice of the martyrs of Kargil, and record our everlasting debt to their families."

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa paid their tributes at Amar Jawan Jyoti in Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted, "On Kargil Vijay Diwas, a grateful nation pays homage to all those who served the nation during Operation Vijay. Our brave soldiers ensured that India remains protected and gave a befitting answer to those who tried to vitiate the atmosphere of peace."

Kargil War: How events unfolded

1. **MAY 3, 1999:** Intrusion by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir's Kargil district was reported to Indian officials by local shepherds.
2. **MAY 5, 1999:** Five Indian soldiers were martyred when they tried to confirm the intrusion reports as a part of Army patrol.
3. **MAY 9, 1999:** Pakistan army resort to heavy shelling and damages ammunition stock in Kargil.
4. **MAY 10, 1999:** Pakistan intrusion confirmed. Pakistan troops noticed for the first time in Dras, Kaksar and Mushkoh areas of Kargil. Following which Indian Army moves in more troops from Kashmir to Kargil district.
5. **MAY 26, 1999:** Indian Air Force (IAF) called in. IAF's fighter jets launch massive strikes on infiltrators.
6. **MAY 27, 1999:** IAF loses two fighter jets (MiG-21 and MiG-27) during strikes at Baltalik sector of the district. Also Flight Lieutenant Kambampati Nachiketa was captured by Pakistani troops after his jet caught fire following engine failure.

7. **MAY 28, 1999:** Another IAF's fighter jet (MiG-17) was shot down by Pakistan army. Four air commandoes were also martyred in the attack.
8. **JUNE 1, 1999:** Pakistan steps up attack on Indian soldiers. NH-1A, strategic highway between Kashmir and Kargil, was also being bombed.
9. **JUNE 5, 1999:** Indian Army releases documents recovered from three Pakistani soldiers confirming Pakistan's involvement.
10. **JUNE 6, 1999:** Indian Army starts major counter operations in Kargil.
11. **JUNE 9, 1999:** Indian Army re-captures two key positions in the Batalic sector of the district.
12. **JUNE 11, 1999:** India releases intercepts of conversation between then Pakistan Army Chief Gen Pervez Musharraf, while on a visit to China and Chief of General Staff Lt Gen Aziz Khan in Rawalpindi, as proof of Pakistani Army's involvement.
13. **JUNE 13, 1999:** Indian Army secures Tololing in Dras sector.
14. **JUNE 15, 1999:** Then US President Bill Clinton, in a telephonic conversation, asks Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to pull out from Kargil.
15. **JUNE 29, 1999:** Indian Army captures two vital posts: Point 5060 and Point 5100 near Tiger Hill
16. **JULY 2, 1999:** Indian Army launches three-pronged attack in Kargil
17. **JULY 4, 1999:** After 11-hour long battle, Indian Army recaptures Tiger Hill.
18. **JULY 5, 1999:** Indian Army takes control of Dras. Sharif announces Pakistani army's withdrawal from Kargil following his meeting with Clinton.
19. **JULY 11, 1999:** Pakistan starts withdrawal; Batalik recaptured by Indian forces.
20. **JULY 14, 1999:** Then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declares Operation Vijay a success.
21. **JULY 26, 1999:** Indian Army announces complete eviction of Pakistani intruders. Operation Vijay ends.

INDIA, UGANDA SIGN FOUR MOUS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

Why in News: India and Ugandasignedfour Memorandums of Understandings in a variety of fields that includes defence, cultural exchange, visa exemption for official and diplomatic passport holders, diplomatic ties along with material testing laboratories. **This agreement was signed followed with the delegation level talks between Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in Kampala and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.**

Signed Agreements are

1. MoU on Defence Cooperation
2. MoU on Visa exemption for Diplomatic and official passport holders.
3. MoU on Cultural Exchange Programme.
4. MoU on Material Testing Laboratory.

Important Points:

Both leaders comprehensively reviewed all aspects of bilateral relations. India announced two Lines of Credit worth nearly US\$200 million to Uganda in energy, infrastructure, agriculture and dairy sectors.

India announced to continue to play a stable partner in the country's journey towards development. It also announced to give vehicles, ambulances and cancer therapy machine to Uganda.

India retired its commitment of training, capacity building and infrastructure creation are core areas of cooperation between both countries. Both countries also agreed to work together in trade, investment and tourism sectors, supporting mutual prosperity through reciprocity.

Background:

PM Modi visited Uganda on the second leg of his three-African nations tour after concluding his Rwanda visit. After concluding his Uganda visit, he will visit South Africa to attend 10th BRICS Summit at Johannesburg. It was first visit by Indian Prime Minister to Ugandan in over 20 years. PM Modi also delivered keynote address at Ugandan Parliament, making him first Indian PM to do so.

10TH BRICS SUMMIT JOHANNESBURG DECLARATION

Why in News: The heads of state and government of all five BRICS nations including **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa convened for the 10th BRICS Summit from July 25-27, 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa.**

Theme: 'BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for inclusive growth and shared prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution'

The summit saw the BRICS leaders come together and discuss various international and regional issues of common concern and adopted the 'Johannesburg Declaration' by consensus. The declaration reaffirms principles of democracy, inclusiveness and agrees to fight unilateralism and protectionism.

India at BRICS

Addressing the 10th BRICS summit, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the fourth industrial revolution presents both opportunities and challenges for the BRICS nations.

He said there is need to be vigilant about the adverse impact of the disruptive technologies on the economies of the developing nations. He also laid emphasis on the need to focus on skill development and vocational training to reap the benefits of 4th industrial revolution.

In his concluding remarks, the Prime Minister said that there is a need to share best practices and policies among BRICS countries.

The Prime Minister held bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the Summit with the leaders of Russia, China, South Africa, Argentina and Angola.

It was Modi's third meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in last 3 months.

Besides the BRICS Summit 2018, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the BRICS Outreach with leaders from Africa and Outreach with leaders from Global South summit.

In the BRICS Africa Outreach, the invited countries include Rwanda, Uganda, Togo, Zambia, Namibia, Senegal, Gabon, Ethiopia, Angola and the African Union Chair.

About BRICS:

BRICS is made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The group was formed initially with just four nations -Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). The term-BRIC was coined by global economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 as an acronym of four countries that were all deemed to be at a similar stage of newly advanced economic development.

Why only these four countries?

According to a thesis proposed by Jim O'Neill, global economist at Goldman Sachs, the economic potential of Brazil, Russia, India and China is such that they could be among the four most dominant economies by 2050.

The countries not only encompass over 25 per cent of the world's land coverage and 40 per cent of the world's population but also hold a combined GDP (PPP) of \$20 trillion.

On almost every scale, they would be the largest entity on the global stage, as the four nations are among the biggest and fastest-growing emerging markets.

The original aim of the grouping was to establish an equitable, democratic and multi-polar world order.

When was the first BRIC meeting held?

The first BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in 2006 between China, Brazil, Russia and India on the margins of the general debate of the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly, which drew the prelude for BRIC cooperation.

In 2009, the first BRIC Summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia and in 2010, it became a formal institution. Since then, the Summit has become an annual event. Till date, 8 Summits have been held.

How did BRIC become BRICS?

In December 2010, China, the Chair of the group then, invited South Africa to join BRIC and attend the Summit in Sanya, China.

Following the summit, BRIC officially expanded to include 5 countries and the acronym changed from BRIC to BRICS.

Relevance of BRICS today:

With 10 years of development, BRICS has grown into an important platform for cooperation among emerging markets and developing countries.

BRICS countries come from Asia, Africa, Europe and America and are all members of the G20.

Together, the nations account for 26.46 per cent of the world land area, 42.58 per cent of the world's population, 13.24 per cent of the World Bank voting power and 14.91 per cent of IMF quota shares.

According to IMF's estimates, the BRICS countries generated 22.53 per cent of the world GDP in 2015 and they have contributed more than 50 per cent of world economic growth during the last 10 years.

WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY PASSES RESOLUTION TO CHANGE STATE'S NAME TO 'BANGLA'

Why in News: The state assembly of West Bengal unanimously passed a resolution on July 26, 2018 to change the state's name to 'Bangla' in all three languages - Bengali, Hindi and English. The name change will only become official when the resolution gets the approval from the Union Home Ministry.

Important Points:

The state BJP, however, later said that it was in favour of renaming West Bengal as 'Paschim Bango' (West Bengal) and not 'Bangla'.

The Centre had in the past rejected the state government's proposal of having three names - Bangla (in Bengali), Bengal (in English) and Bangal (in Hindi).

The Mamata Banerjee government's move to rename West Bengal as 'Paschim Bango' in 2011 was also turned down by the Centre.

The move comes almost two years after the West Bengal assembly first passed a resolution to change the name of the State.

The proposal had been turned down and had led to months of back-and-forth between the state and Centre.

Why does the state want to change its name?

The main reason for changing the name of West Bengal is that whenever there is a meeting of all the states, West Bengal figures at the bottom of the list, as it is prepared according to the alphabetical order.

Background:

On August 29, 2016, the West Bengal Assembly had passed a resolution changing the name of West Bengal to Bengal in English, Bangla in Bengali and Bangal in Hindi.

The state government had decided to rename the state as 'Bengal' after its earlier proposal of rechristening it as 'Paschim Bango', made in 2011 when the Trinamool Congress took office, failed to get the Centre's approval.

Hence, the current decision is the culmination of efforts since 2011, when Mamata Banerjee took the office of chief minister of the state.

2018 RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD:

TWO INDIANS BHARAT VATWANI AND

SONAM WANGCHUK AWARDED

Why in News: Two

Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six who have been declared winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award, often referred to as Asian version of the Nobel Prize. Others are Youk Chhang (Cambodia), Maria de Lourdes Martins Cruz (East Timor), Howard Dee (Philippines) and Vo Thi Hoang Yen (Vietnam). The winners will each receive certificate, medallion bearing image of late Filipino leader Ramon Magsaysay and cash prize. They will be conferred with award during formal presentation ceremony at Cultural Centre in Philippines in August 2018.

About Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk:

Bharat Vatwani: He is a psychiatrist who works for mentally-ill people living on the streets in Mumbai. The award recognizes his courage and compassion in embracing India's mentally-afflicted destitute and his dedication to work of restoring and affirming human dignity of even most ostracized.

Sonam Wangchuk: He is educational reformer from Ladakh. In 1988, he had founded Students' Education and Cultural Movement of Ladakh to coach poor Ladakhi students. The award recognizes his uniquely systematic, collaborative and community-driven reform of learning systems in remote Ladakh region which has helped to improve life opportunities of youths. He is widely regarded as inspiration for Aamir Khan's character, Phunsuk Wangdu in the film '3 Idiots'.

About Ramon Magsaysay Award:

It is Asia's highest honour and is often regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. It was established in 1957 by trustees of the New York City based Rockefeller Brothers Fund and Philippine government in the memory of Philippines' third President Ramon Magsaysay who had died in air disaster in March 1957. It is awarded annually to individuals or organizations from Asia region for their altruistic and philanthropic service. It carries Medallion bearing the likeness of the late President Ramon Magsaysay, cash prize and a certificate.

28 JULY 2018: WORLD HEPATITIS DAY

Why in News: World Hepatitis Day is observed on July 28. The WHO's theme for this year is "Test. Treat. Hepatitis". On the occasion, the World Health Organisation conducts several activities and events across the globe with the aim of achieving the following objectives:

Important Points:

To support scale-up of hepatitis prevention, testing, treatment and care services, with specific focus on promoting WHO testing and treatment recommendations.

To showcase best practices and promote universal health coverage of hepatitis services

To improve partnerships and funding in the fight against viral hepatitis

Viral hepatitis B and C are major health challenges, which affect around 325 million people globally.

They are chronic infections that may not show symptoms for a long period, sometimes even for years or decades.

They are also the root causes of liver cancer, leading to the deaths of around 1.34 million people every year.

At least 60 per cent of liver cancer cases are due to late testing and treatment of viral hepatitis B and C.

Hence, low coverage of testing and treatment is the most important gap that needs to be addressed in order to achieve the 2030 global elimination goal.

By dedicating a day to the cause, more and more people around the world are becoming aware of the chronic results of the infection and thus, it can save many lives.

Ten things to know about Viral Hepatitis

1. Viral hepatitis B and C are major health challenges
2. Viral hepatitis B and C are root causes of liver cancer
3. Timely testing and treatment of viral hepatitis B and C can save lives
4. Viral hepatitis causes debilitating diseases and also places a huge economic burden on families
5. Viral hepatitis has become a major killer due to a lack of global attention
6. Over the past 15 years, more and more people have been dying of viral hepatitis
7. At the same time, people are becoming newly infected with hepatitis
8. Hepatitis attacks the most vulnerable
9. Hepatitis can be prevented, diagnosed, treated and even cured
10. You can help eliminate hepatitis

About Hepatitis:

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. The condition can be self-limiting or can progress to fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer. Hepatitis viruses are the most common cause of hepatitis in the world but other infections, toxic substances (e.g. alcohol, certain drugs), and autoimmune diseases can also cause hepatitis.

There are 5 main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E.

World Hepatitis Day 2018

The World Health Organisation along with the Government of Mongolia will be holding a series of

events in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia to commemorate the World Hepatitis Day 2018.

The events will engage high-level leaders, advocates and patient representatives from global, regional

and national organisations.

They will be aimed at highlighting the innovative solutions and partnerships needed in scaling up hepatitis testing and treatment services, as well as celebrating the country's championing experience in the global hepatitis response.

BLOOD MOON 2018

Why in News: The longest total lunar eclipse of the 21st century takes place this Friday, July 27. The total phase of the "blood moon" eclipse of July 27 will last 1 hour and 43 minutes, during which Earth's natural satellite will turn a spectacular red or ruddy-brown color. From start to finish, the entire celestial event will last nearly 4 hours. Blood Moon, a rare celestial event, is considered to be the longest total lunar eclipse of the 21st century which lasted beyond 100 minutes.

Places where the Total Lunar Eclipse was visible?

In July 2018, the Full Moon, as well as the Lunar Apogee Fall, occurred on the exact same date, which is July 27. The Lunar Apogee is said to be the moon's farthest orbital point from the Earth, which makes it appear particularly small and distant.

The Blood Moon 2018 was first visible in India from around 10:44pm, while its capital New Delhi was right between the action of the full total eclipse at around 1 am midnight which ended at 2.43am.

It was majorly seen in the Eastern Hemisphere including Central Asia and Eastern Africa. The best view of the entire eclipse was visible across the Eastern Europe, Central and East Africa and South East Asia.

The first part of the lunar eclipse saw the Moon fall under the Earth's shadow called Umbra. This part of the eclipse is known as the Penumbral Eclipse.

It coincided not only with Mars's close approach, but with the "procession of planets", a line-up of celestial neighbours Venus, Jupiter and Saturn.

The total lunar eclipse lasted 103 minutes, that is 1 Hour 43 minutes, which made it the century's longest.

Various stages of a Total Lunar Eclipse

Beginning of Penumbral eclipse: The outer part of the Earth's shadow begins moving across the Moon.

Beginning of Partial eclipse: The inner part of the Earth's shadow begins covering the Moon.

Beginning of Total eclipse: The Earth's shadow completely covers the Moon, turning it into a reddish brown colour.

Maximum eclipse: The mid-point of totality

Total eclipse ends: The Earth's shadow starts moving away from the Moon.

Partial eclipse ends: Earth's shadow completely leaves the surface of the Moon.

Penumbral eclipse ends: The outer part of the Earth's shadow completely moves away from the Moon

What is Total Lunar Eclipse?

A Total Lunar Eclipse occurs when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon and covers the Moon with its shadow called Umbra. When it happens, the Moon can turn red, thus, earning the name of Blood Moon.

What is the Blood Moon of July 27?

The moon turns deep red or reddish brown during eclipses, instead of going completely dark. That's because some of the sunlight going through Earth's atmosphere is bent around the edge of our planet and falls onto the moon's surface. Earth's air also scatters more shorter-wavelength light (in colors such as green or blue); what's left is the longer-wavelength, redder end of the spectrum.

PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL FOR QUICK PROSECUTION IN CHEQUE BOUNCE CASES

Why in News: The Parliament passed an amended bill that will allow *courts to try offences related to cheque bounce expeditiously and direct the drawee to pay a minimum of 20 per cent of the cheque amount as interim compensation*. The Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was passed by the upper house of the Parliament, the Rajya Sabha through a voice vote. The Lok Sabha had cleared the bill on July 23.

The new amendment has been brought in the law to ensure that people have trust and faith on issuing cheques.

About Cheque Bounce:

Many times, bad checks are written inadvertently by people who simply are unaware that their bank balances are too low. To avoid bouncing checks, some consumers use overdraft protection or attach a line of credit to their checking accounts. According to Section 138 of the Act, the dishonour of cheque is a criminal offence and is punishable by imprisonment up to two years or with monetary penalty or with both.

Important Points:

The 1881 law on negotiable instruments has been amended from time to time.

The latest amendments aim to insert Section 143A and Section 148 in the Act to provide that a court trying a cheque bounce offence under Section 138 may order the drawer of the cheque to pay interim compensation to the complainant.

The drawer, who pleads not guilty of the accusation, will have to pay at least 20 per cent of the cheque amount as interim compensation within 60 days of the trial court's order.

An additional 20 per cent compensation will have to be paid if the drawer goes for an appeal.

If the drawer is acquitted, the court may direct the payee to repay the amount paid as interim compensation with interest.

The amendments to the negotiable instruments bill received support from many members of the opposition.

However, the opposition suggested stringent penalties to curb cheque payment defaults.

The opposition suggested that the government should come out with laws like other nations such as France and the UAE have, where a person who defaults on cheque payments is barred from issuing a cheque for five years.

The members also suggested that the government make cheque payment default a non-bailable offence.

Currently, over 16 lakh cases of cheque bounce are pending in subordinate courts and around 34,000 such cases have gone to the high court following an appeal.

TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS BILL, 2018

Why in News: The Lok Sabha on July 26, 2018 passed the *Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018*. The Bill provides for the prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked persons and seeks to establish a National Anti-Trafficking Bureau to investigate trafficking cases. It also provides for the setting up of Anti-Trafficking Units (ATUs) at the district level which will deal with the investigation, prevention, rescue, and protection of victims and witnesses.

Key features of Bill:

National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB): The Bill proposes establishment of NATB to investigate trafficking cases and implement provisions of Bill. NATB will comprise of police officers and any other officers as required. It will take over investigation of any offence under Bill referred to it by two or more states. Further, it may request state government to co-operate in investigation or transfer the case to state government for investigation and trial, with approval from central government.

Functions of NATB: Coordinate and monitor surveillance along known trafficking routes, facilitate surveillance, enforce and take preventive steps at source, transit and destination points, maintain coordination between law enforcement agencies and NGOs and other stakeholders and increase international cooperation with authorities abroad for intelligence sharing and mutual legal assistance.

State Anti-Trafficking Officers: The Bill mandates state government to appoint State Nodal Officer. The officer will be responsible for follow up action as per provisions of Bill and as per instructions of State Anti-Trafficking Committee and provide relief and rehabilitation services. It also mandates state government to appoint Police Nodal Officer at state and district levels. The state government will also designate Anti-Trafficking Police Officers for each district to deal with all matters related to trafficking in the district.

Anti-Trafficking Units: The Bill provides setting up of Anti-Trafficking Units (ATUs) at district level. They will deal with prevention, rescue and protection of victims and witnesses and for investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences. In districts where ATU is not functional, this responsibility will be taken up by local police station.

Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committee:

The Bill provides for establishment of these committees (ATCs) at all three levels viz. national, state, and district levels. These committees will be responsible for providing compensation, repatriation and re-integration of victims in society, among others.

Search and rescue: The Bill empowers Anti-Trafficking Police Officer or ATU to rescue persons, if they are in imminent danger. They will be produced before Child Welfare Committee or Magistrate for medical examination. The district ATC will provide relief and rehabilitation services to rescued persons.

Protection and rehabilitation: The Bill mandates central and state government to set up Protection Homes to provide shelter, food, counselling, and medical services to victims. It also mandates central or state government will maintain Rehabilitation Homes in each district to provide long-term rehabilitation to victims. In all cases, rehabilitation of victims will not be dependent on criminal proceedings being initiated against accused or outcome of proceedings. Union Government will also create Rehabilitation Fund which will be used to set up these Protection and Rehabilitation Homes.

Time-bound trial: The Bill provides for setting up designated courts in each district to complete trial within year.

Penalties: The Bill specifies penalties for various offences including for promoting trafficking, trafficking of persons, disclosing identity of victim and aggravated trafficking such as trafficking for bonded labour and begging. For trafficking it prescribes rigorous imprisonment of 10 years up to life imprisonment, along with minimum fine of Rs. 1 lakh. For publishing of any material it prescribes imprisonment between 5 to 10 years, and fine between Rs 50,000 to Rs.1 lakh.

PM MODI LAUNCHES 81 PROJECTS WORTH RS 60K CRORE IN LUCKNOW

Why in News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched **81 projects worth Rs 60000 crore in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. All these 81 projects are part of the 1045 MoUs that were signed at the Uttar Pradesh Investors' Summit that was held on February 21- 22, 2018.** Within a few months of the Investors' Summit, the investment proposals for 81 projects amounting to investment of about Rs 60000 crore have now materialised.

The event was attended by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and business tycoons like Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani, Aditya Birla Group's Kumar Mangalam Birla, Essel Group chairman Subhash Chandra and ITC Ltd Managing Director Sanjeev Puri.

Important Points:

Some of the projects, which were launched on the event, include setting up of fiber or establishment of IT center for internet service in Uttar Pradesh with an aim to give a new direction to the state through such digital infrastructure.

Reliance Jio Com would be investing Rs 10000 crores and BSNL would be investing Rs 5000 crores for laying optical cable network in the state.

Infosys would be investing Rs 5000 crores and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) will be investing Rs 2300 crores to establish IT/TES centres across the state.

Adani Power will invest Rs 2500 crores to lay 765 KV Ghatampur-Hapur transmission line.

Paytm will invest Rs 3500 crores to build its headquarters and campus in the state.

The government aims to create around 2.1 lakh jobs in the states through these projects.

These projects will prove to be a big step in giving a new direction to Digital India and Make in India initiatives of the Union Government.

Uttar Pradesh Investors' Summit 2018:

The UP Investors' Summit was organised in the state from February 21- 22, 2018 with an aim to attract investments and promote industrialisation in the State.

The Summit saw the signing of over 1000 MoUs.

According to official sources, the worth of the MOUs was estimated to be more than Rs 3 lakh crores.

The agreements were signed in various sectors including agriculture, food processing, dairy industry, tourism, information technology and MSME.

The partner nations at the summit included the Netherlands, Japan, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Finland, Mauritius and Thailand.

'MISSION SATYANISHTHA'

Why in News: The *Indian Railways* launched 'Mission Satyanishtha' and a programme on Ethics in Public Governance, in a first-of-its-kind event, at a day-long function held at National Rail Museum, New Delhi on July 27, 2018.

The Union Minister of Finance, Piyush Goyal administered the oath to the officers and supervisors at the programme. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that people define an organisation and an organisation defines its people, hence, work culture has to be improved, transparency needs to be brought about and data should be displayed on public domains so as to get constructive feedback from the users.

He further added, "**Lack of interest towards work in any system, may be termed as unethical amounting to corruption**".

Important Points:

The first-of-its-kind event was inaugurated by Ashwani Lohani, Chairman, Railway Board. Lohani then introduced the subject to the participants.

The event saw participation from senior officers and staff members of the Railways.

The event was webcasted live to all Zonal, Divisional and Production Units from the National Rail Museum.

Aim:

The Satyanishtha mission aims to sensitise all railway employees about the need to adhere to good ethics and to maintain high standards of integrity at work.

To train every employee to understand the need and value of ethics in personal and public life.

To deal with ethical dilemmas in life and public governance.

To help understand the policies of Indian Railways on ethics and integrity and the employee's role in upholding the same.

To develop inner governance through tapping inner resources.

Background:

The issue of ethics, integrity and probity in public life has been a matter of concern all over the government sector.

Hence, it has become extremely important that all railway servants adhere to impeccable conduct and integrity at all times.

To enable the same, talks and lectures on the subject were organised all over the Indian Railways.

INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY

Why in News: Every year, **July 29** is celebrated as the Global Tiger Day to raise awareness about the endangered big cats. It was created when 13 countries came together in 2009 and pledged to double the world's Tiger population by **2022 -- the next "Year of the Tiger"** on the Asian lunar calendar.

International Tigers Day 2018 Theme : Save More Tigers

Important Points:

With concerted efforts to bring the number of tigers up, independent activists, government policies, amendments to the Wild Life Protection Act, and raising awareness increased the number of tigers to 2,226 in 2014 Census report.

India conducts a census to assess tiger population every four years. The cycles of the estimation have already been completed in 2006, 2010 and 2014.

These estimates showed there to be 1,411, 1,706 and 2,226 tigers in 2006, 2010 and 2014 respectively.

The census exercise will use the latest technology, including Monitoring System for Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status or M-STripES application, for collecting, archiving and analyzing data.

This year, once the census is completed, tiger conservationists throughout the year, will hope that tiger numbers will increase in India, which has the most number of tigers in the world.

The conference of the heads of 13 countries - where tigers are available - held at Saint Petersburg of Russia in 2010 took the decision to mark the world tiger day on July 29 every year.

Jim Corbett National Park, a famous National Park for tigers is situated Uttarakhand.

Karnataka is the State in India with Maximum number of Tigers.

Causes of Decline in their Numbers:

Poaching and illegal tiger trades: Tigers face poaching for demand of every part of their body -- from whiskers to tail -- for traditional medicines. They fetch high prices in the illegal wildlife trades

Habitat loss: Clearing of forests for various purposes - agriculture, timber, development activity etc -- has lead to loss of 93 per cent of natural habitat of tigers. Chances of survival in the fragmented areas are lower considerably for these royal animals. Also, it leads to conflict with humans, where both compete for space.

Climate change: Rising sea level as a result of climate change is on the verge of wiping out Sundarbans, one of the last remaining habitats of the Bengal tigers

Reasons for increase in Tiger Population:

Improved surveys

Enhanced protection: better field patrolling

About International Tiger Day:

It is an annual celebration to raise awareness regarding tiger conservation

It was started in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit in Russia in view of the alarming fall in the number of wild tigers

Governments of tiger populated countries came forward in 2010 and vowed to double the tiger population by the year 2020

INVEST INDIA AND UAE MINISTRY SIGN MOU FOR TECHNOLOGICAL COOPERATION

Why in News: Invest India and the UAE Minister for **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** signed an **MoU for India - UAE Artificial Intelligence Bridge in New Delhi**. This partnership will generate an estimated USD 20 billion in economic benefits during the next decade for both countries.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu and H.E. Ahmad Sultan Al Falahi, Minister Plenipotentiary - Commercial Attache, UAE Embassy at the India leg of GovHack series of World Government Summit. The Minister appreciated the effort made by UAE on leading the initiative to change the government and governance through technology and reiterated India's commitment with UAE in the field of AI.

Important Points:

The MoU will spur development across areas like Blockchain, AI and Analytics as data and processing will be a catalyst for innovation and business growth and serve as the backbone of more effective and efficient service delivery systems. By 2035 AI can potentially add USD 957 billion to the Indian economy.

The UAE-India collaboration will seek to evaluate the dynamic nature of innovation and technology by convening a UAE-India AI Working Group (TWG) between the UAE Ministry for Artificial Intelligence, Invest India and Startup India. The TWG will meet once a year with the mandate to increase investment in AI startups and research activities in partnership with the private sector.

India and UAE share a bond that extends beyond business as Indians make-up the largest expat community in the UAE at 27% and the UAE is India's third largest trading partner.

The UAE has invested over USD 5.3 billion in India and infrastructure is one of the top 5 focus sections of UAE-India bilateral trade. The UAE has committed USD 75 billion towards infrastructure development in India. The Government of India is launching multiple initiatives to create an environment for digital growth through which the potential of AI can be realized in the areas of agriculture supply, healthcare and disaster management services.

PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL FOR MERGER OF FIVE SUBSIDIARY BANKS WITH SBI

Why in News: The *Indian Parliament passed the State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 that merges the subsidiary banks with the State Bank of India (SBI)*. The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by then Union Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley on July 21, 2017.

The merger of these subsidiary banks is already in effect from April 1, 2017. The merger was approved by the Union Government in February 2017.

Important Points:

The Bill seeks to repeal the State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959, the State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956. These Acts established the State Bank of Bikaner, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Travancore, and State Bank of Hyderabad, the subsidiaries of the SBI.

It amends the State Bank of India Act, 1955 to remove references related to subsidiary banks. These references include: (i) the definition of a subsidiary bank in the 1955 Act, and (ii) powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for a subsidiary bank.

Why was there a need of this merger?

The merger of subsidiaries with the SBI is a part of the PSU Banks Consolidation Plan that was proposed by the Union Government in March 2016 at a congregation of bankers and government officials where various issues pertaining to banks were discussed. The move aims to stimulate the flow of credit to fuel private investment.

Significance of the merger:

With this merger, SBI will join the league of top 50 banks globally in terms of assets. Currently, no Indian bank features in the top 50 banks of the world.

The total customer base of the SBI will now reach to 37 crore people with a branch network of around 24000 and nearly 59000 ATMs across the country. The merged entity will have a deposit base of more than Rs 26 lakh crore and advances level of Rs 18.50 lakh crore.

Soon, the bank will rationalise its branch network by relocating some of the branches to maximise reach. This will help the bank in optimising its operations and improve its profitability.

Integration of treasuries of the associate banks with the treasury of SBI will bring in substantial cost saving and synergy in treasury operations.

About State Bank of India:

The State Bank of India is a public sector banking and financial services company. It is a government-owned corporation. Its headquarters are located in Mumbai, Maharashtra. It has more than 14000 branches, including 191 foreign offices spread across 36 countries. It makes it the largest banking and financial services company in India by assets. SBI's roots lie in the first decade of the 19th century, when the Bank of Calcutta, later renamed the Bank of Bengal, was established on June 2, 1806. The Bank of Bengal was one of three Presidency banks. The other two were the Bank of Bombay (incorporated on 15 April 1840) and the Bank of Madras (incorporated on 1 July 1843). On 27 January 1921, the Presidency banks amalgamated and were rechristened as Imperial Bank of India. The imperial Bank of India became the State Bank of India on July 1, 1955.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE APPROVES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GUIDELINES

Why in News: The *Ministry of Defence approved guidelines for the Strategic Partnership model aimed at giving a push to indigenous defence manufacturing, over a year after the policy was unveiled in May, 2017*. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman took the decision, days after a parliamentary panel said that nothing concrete has been done to implement the strategic partnership model.

Important Points:

The model promulgated in May 2017 seeks to identify Indian private firms to be designated as Strategic Partners. Apart from allowing private manufacturers, it also keeps the door open for defence PSUs and the Ordnance Factory Board to tie up with foreign original equipment manufacturers to make big-ticket military hardware.

The first project under the newly implemented scheme will be to kick off the long-delayed Strategic Partnership policy will be 111 utility twin-engine helicopters worth an estimated Rs 21,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

In the initial phase, the selection of such partners would be confined to four segments: Fighter aircraft, helicopters, submarines, armoured fighting vehicles and main battle tanks. In each segment, only one partner would generally be selected, according to the policy.

The model aims to revitalise the defence industrial ecosystem and progressively build indigenous capabilities in the private sector to design, develop and manufacture complex weapon systems for the future needs of the Armed Forces.

A parliamentary report tabled last week in parliament highlighted the slow progress of the strategic partnership model and observed that dependence on foreign suppliers particularly for military hardware, not only results in huge expenditure on import of defence equipment but makes the security of the country vulnerable as during emergency situations a supplier may not provide the required weapons or spare parts.

About Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

The Group of Ministers recommendations on "Reforming the National Security System," the Ministry of Defence vide its order dated 11 Oct. 2001 had set up broad structures and systems to deal with acquisitions on the Capital Account.

An overarching structure, the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), under the Defence Minister was constituted for overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process.

CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018 PASSED IN LOK SABHA

Why in News: The Lok Sabha has passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018. **The main highlight of the bill is that it seeks to amend the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Evidence Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to introduce a new provision to sentence convicts of such crimes punishment of death.**

Important Points:

The bill stipulates stringent punishment for perpetrators of rape, particularly of girls below 12 years and death sentence has been provided for rapists of girls under 12 years.

According to the bill, in case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 to 20 years, extendable to life imprisonment.

The punishment for gangrape of a girl below 16 years will invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict. The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial.

The time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatory completed within two months.

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have passed a Bill providing for death penalty to those convicted of raping girls of 12 years and below.

The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed, the bill says, adding that there will also be no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gangrape of a girl under 16 years.

It has also been prescribed that a court has to give notice of 15 days to a public prosecutor and the representative of the victim before deciding on bail applications in case of rape of a girl under 16 years of age.

The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial. The time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatorily completed within two months.

The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.

Background:

The number of reported cases of rapes of children increased in India by 82% in 2016 compared to 2015. A climate of violence, social and economic insecurity, alienation, and a progressive undermining of the status of women and children seem to have given an impetus to carry out crimes against women and children.

Therefore, the legal system must give a clear signal that we as a nation consider the rape of children below the age of 12 as among the most heinous of offences. Making such crimes punishable by capital punishment certainly gives such a signal.

Statistics have not been able to prove or disprove the efficacy of capital punishment as a deterrent. While the U.K. has seen an increase in murders since 1965 when capital punishment for murder was removed from the statute book, Canada has not seen any such impact since it abolished the death penalty in 1976. The underlying socio-economic conditions in a society that cause crimes seem to have as much of an impact on the increase or decrease of crimes as the law does.

It is not the severity of the punishment but the certainty and uniformity of it which will reduce crime. Even for capital punishment to work as a deterrent, the fairness of the investigation, the certainty of conviction, and the speed of the trial are vital. With the police and judicial independence being under a cloud, especially after the incidents in Kathua and Unnao, the deterrent value of capital punishment seems diminished unless police reforms and fast-track courts are a part of the package.



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