

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Month of
NOVEMBER-2019



Plot-1441, Opp. IOCL Petrol Pump, CRP Square, Bhubaneswar

Ph : 8093083555, 8984111101

Web : www.vanikias.com | E-mail : vaniksias@gmail.com



www.facebook.com/vanikias

Daily Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

01.11.2019

1. Mumbai, Hyderabad enter Unesco Creative Cities list

- Mumbai entered the global network of creative cities under the film category and Hyderabad under gastronomy.
- It is among the 66 cities named by the UNESCO in the list of new Creative Cities, which aims at pushing the Sustainable Development Goals through innovative thinking & action.
- Previously, in 2010, haleem was honoured with the Geographical Indication (GI) status, thus becoming the first meat-based product from India to win the prestigious tag.

Related Information

Unesco Creative Cities Network

- The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- The Network covers seven creative fields:
 - a. Crafts and Folk Arts
 - b. Media Arts
 - c. Film
 - d. Design
 - e. Gastronomy
 - f. Literature
 - g. Music
- The Creative Cities Network is a privileged partner of UNESCO, not only as a platform for reflection on the role of creativity as a lever for sustainable development but also as a breeding ground of action and innovation, notably for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Note:

- Till now, Varanasi (music), Chennai (music) and Jaipur (crafts & folk art) were in the network, which was expanded to 246 members, with the

inclusion of 66 cities, including Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

2. Pegasus spyware: An Israeli spyware

- Recently the Centre has sought an explanation from messaging platform WhatsApp after the Facebook-owned company confirmed that some Indian users of its app came under surveillance using Israeli spyware.

Related Information

Pegasus

- It is Israeli-origin spyware that got into the phones of activists and journalists via WhatsApp.

Who developed it?

- It has been developed by the Israeli cyber arms firm, NSO Group.
- The NSO Group is a Tel Aviv-based cybersecurity company that specialises in “surveillance technology” and claims to help governments and law enforcement agencies across the world fight crime and terrorism.

How does Pegasus come into your phone?

- The code is transmitted via WhatsApp call.
- The code enters the phone even if the call is not answered.

Who was targeted?

- According to reports, over 100 activists, lawyers, and journalists were targeted.
- Among them were several Indian lawyers and journalists

What does it do?

- It sends the target’s contacts, calls and messages to its controller.
- It can also turn the phone into a spy device by switching on the camera or microphone

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu

3. Second International Solar Alliance

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy hosted the second Assembly

of International Solar Alliance in New Delhi.

- The objective of 2nd ISA is that the Member countries of the International Solar Alliance sought enhanced support from multilateral development institutions such as the World Bank to set up solar power projects in small island countries.

Related Information International Solar Alliance

- It is an Indian initiative that was launched by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France in 2015 at Paris, France on the side-lines of the COP-21.
- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an alliance of 121 countries initiated by India, most of them being sunshine countries, which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- The primary objective of the alliance is to work for efficient exploitation of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
- It's headquartered in Gurugram, Haryana.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

4. Cyclone Maha

- The Cyclone Maha in the Arabian Sea has crossed Lakshadweep and is now centred over east-central Arabian Sea, about 300 KM north of Cherapani Reef.

Related Information

Tropical cyclones

- These are violent storms that originate over oceans in tropical areas and move over to the coastal areas bringing about large scale destruction due to violent winds (squalls), very heavy rainfall (torrential rainfall) and storm surge.
- They are irregular wind movements involving the closed circulation of air around a low-pressure centre.
- This closed air circulation is a result of rapid upward movement of the hot air which is subjected to Coriolis force.

- The low pressure at the centre is responsible for the wind speeds.
- The cyclonic wind movements are anti-clockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere due to Coriolis force.

Conditions Favourable for Tropical Cyclone Formation

- Presence of the Coriolis force enough to create a cyclonic vortex
- Small variations in the vertical wind speed
- Large sea surface with a temperature higher than 27° C
- A pre-existing weak low-pressure area or low-level-cyclonic circulation
- Upper divergence above the sea level system

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- The Hindu

5. 35th ASEAN Summit to be held in Bangkok

- The 10 ASEAN member countries and six trading partners remain optimistic about making a breakthrough on the much delayed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal during the 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok.
- If the RCEP is finalized the 16 countries will form a major trading block across domestic product accounting for around one-third of the world's gross domestic product.
- Signatory countries to the RCEP have a combined population of about 3.56 billion, with a trading volume 29 per cent of world trade.
- Once the RCEP comes into effect the agreement will cover nearly half of the world's population.

Related Information

RCEP

- It was launched in November 2012. The main objective of RCEP is deepening economic cooperation between 10 ASEAN nations and six trade partners.
- Trade partners are India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

6. DRDO's Air Independent Propulsion system gets a boost

- DRDO programme to build a fuel cell-based Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) system for Indian Naval Submarines.

Related Information

Air Independent Propulsion system

- Air-independent propulsion (AIP) is any marine propulsion technology that allows a non-nuclear submarine to operate without access to atmospheric oxygen (by surfacing).
- It is usually implemented as an auxiliary source, with the traditional diesel engine handling surface propulsion.
- Most such systems generate electricity which in turn drives an electric motor for propulsion or recharges the boat's batteries.
- It can also augment or replace the diesel-electric propulsion system of non-nuclear vessels.
- It enables conventional submarines to remain submerged for longer duration.

Significance of AIP

- It significantly improves the stealth of a submarine as it allows a submarine to generate electricity for services and battery charging and propulsion while completely submerged.
- It also helps to reduce the noise without compromising the submarine performance.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- Times of India

7. IIIT Hyderabad researchers create first-ever Indian Brain atlas

- Researchers at the IIIT Hyderabad said that the first-ever Indian Brain Atlas (IBA) has been created.
- They stated that the next step is to prepare atlases for different age groups to study age-related effects on brain anatomy.
- The average brain size of an Indian was smaller in height, width and

volume in comparison to people of the Caucasian and eastern races.

- The immediate implication of this finding can be seen in treatment outcomes of neurological problems or brain-related ailments - like dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease etc.

Topic- GS-2- Health Issues

Source- Business Line

8. PISA 2021

- Union Human Resource Development Minister has reviewed the preparations for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2021.

Related Information

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

- It is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations.
- It intended to evaluate educational systems by measuring 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance -on mathematics, science and reading.
- It was first performed in 2000 and then repeated every three years.
- Its aim is to provide comparable data with a view to enabling countries to improve their education policies and outcomes.
- It measures problem solving and cognition.
- PISA requires the examinees to have finished at least six years of formal schooling.

India and PISA

- India has decided to participate in this examination in 2021 after 2009.
- Till date, India has participated only once in PISA-2009.
- The students of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti and Union Territory of Chandigarh will represent India in this examination.

Background

- India participated in the 2009 test with 16,000 students from 400

schools in Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

- India was placed 72nd among the 74 participating countries.
- The then government blamed “out of context” questions for the poor show and also it chose not to participate in the 2012 and 2015 cycles.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

9. National Health Profile 2019

- According to the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence's (CBHI) National Health Profile (NHP) 2019, India has registered an improved sex ratio and a decline in birth and death rates with non-communicable diseases dominating over communicable in the total disease burden of the country.
- The NHP covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, human resources in the health sector and health infrastructure.

Highlights of the Profile

- The Sex ratio (number of females per 1,000 males) in the country has improved from 933 in 2001 to 943 in 2011.
- In rural areas, the sex ratio has increased from 946 to 949.
- The corresponding increase in urban areas has been of 29 points from 900 to 929.
- Kerala has recorded the highest sex ratio in respect of total population (1,084), rural population (1,078) and urban (1,091).
- The lowest sex ratio in rural areas has been recorded in Chandigarh (690).
- The report also showed that the estimated birth rate, death rate and natural growth rate are declining.
- The total fertility rate (average number of children that will be born to a woman during her lifetime) in 12 States has fallen below two children per woman and nine States have reached replacement levels of 2.1 and above.

- Delhi, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have the lowest fertility rate among other States.
- It was also observed that non-communicable diseases dominated the communicable in the total disease burden of the country.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Report

Source- The Hindu

04.11.2019

1. Hygiea: the sixth dwarf planet in the Solar System
- Recently the Hygiea is a claimant for a sixth dwarf planet and if it qualifies, Hygiea will be the smallest dwarf planet in the Solar System.
 - Hygiea lies in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.

Related Information

- According to the International Astronomical Union, there are officially five dwarf planets in our Solar System.
- The most famous is Pluto, downgraded from the status of a planet in 2006 and the other four, in order of size, are Eris, Makemake, Haumea and Ceres.

Criteria for a dwarf planet

- The International Astronomical Union sets four criteria for a dwarf planet.
 - a. It orbits around the Sun
 - b. It is not a moon
 - c. It has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.
 - d. It has enough mass that its own gravity pulls it into a roughly spherical shape.

International Astronomical Union

- It is a collection of professional astronomers, at the PhD level and beyond, active in professional education and research in astronomy which is founded in 1919.
- It's headquartered in Paris, France.

Objective

- Promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation.

- It is an internationally recognized authority for assigning designations (names) to celestial bodies (stars, planets, asteroids, etc.) and any surface features on them.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Times of India

2. First-ever India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise "Dustlik-2019"

- The first-ever India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise - Dustlik-2019 will begin at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent.

Related Information
About the Dustlik Exercise

- The exercise, which will be focused on counter-terrorism.
- During the exercise, an Indian Army contingent will train along with Uzbekistan Army.
- The exercise will enable the sharing of best practices and experiences between the Armed Forces of the two countries and will lead to greater operational effectiveness.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- AIR

3. SCO Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search and Rescue (SCOJtEx)

- Union home minister will inaugurate the four-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) joint exercise on urban earthquake search and rescue.
- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is hosting the exercise with the aim to rehearse disaster response mechanisms and share knowledge, experience and technology.
- The main focus of SCO Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search and Rescue (SCOJtEx) will be to test the region's preparedness to activate intergovernmental interaction for immediate response.
- This exercise will also provide an opportunity to enhance coordination and cooperation as it involves multi-agency operations.
- There will be participants from all eight SCO member countries - China,

India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

- The simulation exercise will be conducted as per the methodology and guidelines of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

4. NavIC set to be commercialised by Antrix

- ISRO and its older commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd. are poised to commercialize India's regional navigation satellite system, Navigation in Indian Constellation (NavIC).

Related Information
NavIC

- It is the Indian system of eight satellites that is aimed at telling the business and individual users where they are, or how their products and services are moving.
- NavIC was also certified by the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.
- The specifications will be available in March 2020 and would be adopted as a national standard.

Antrix Corporation

- Antrix Corporation Limited (ACL), Bengaluru is a wholly-owned Government of India Company under the administrative control of the Department of Space.
- Antrix Corporation Limited was incorporated as a private limited company owned by Government of India.
- It acts as a Marketing arm of ISRO for promotion & commercial exploitation of space products, technical consultancy services and transfer of technologies developed by ISRO.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu

5. Fifth India International Science Festival

- The Prime Minister inaugurated the Fifth India International Science Festival at Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, Kolkata.
- The prime objective of the festival is to instil scientific temper among the masses, showcasing India's contribution in the field of S&T over the years and encourage the translation of its benefits to people.
- It aims to build a strategy for inclusive advancement of Science & Technology.
- The theme for this year's festival is RISE N India – Research, Innovation, & Science Empowering the Nation.

Related Information

IISF 2019

- It is an annual event organised jointly by the science and technology-related Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and Vijnana Bharati (Vibha).
- IISF-2019 is a festival to celebrate the achievements of India's scientific and technological advancements with students, innovators, craftsmen, farmers, scientists and technocrats from India and abroad. Thus,
- IISF is perhaps the biggest platform in the country to bring together students, researchers, innovators, artists, and the general public to celebrate India's achievements in science and technology.

Note:

- Vigyan Prasar, an autonomous organisation of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, is the nodal agency to coordinate the IISF 2019.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

6. Elephant bonds

- A High-Level Advisory Group on Trade Policy estimates that India could recover up to \$500 billion of black money stashed overseas if it implements its proposal to issue a type of long-term government bond to those with undisclosed wealth.

- These 'elephant bonds' would be an avenue for people to bring their offshore undisclosed wealth into India without fear of prosecution.
- The HLAG estimates that the creation of elephant bonds could help fund (approximately) \$500 billion worth of infrastructure projects.
- Countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, Argentina and the Philippines have already launched their own tax amnesty schemes for persons to disclose undeclared income without the risk of prosecution.
- Indonesia, which had launched its tax amnesty scheme in 2016 to forgive taxes and criminal sanctions, received declarations of hidden assets valued at \$367.9 billion from around 970,000 participants during the amnesty period.

About Elephant Bonds

- Elephant Bonds are the 25-year sovereign bonds in which people declaring undisclosed income will be bound to invest 50 per cent.
- The fund, made from these bonds, will be utilized only for infrastructure projects.
- It is like an Amnesty scheme to help State treasury raising tax revenues, adding beneficiaries in tax base who have not declared their assets previously.

About High-Level Advisory Group on Trade Policy

- It was set up under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry headed by Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla

Surjit Bhalla Committee Recommendations

- The HLAG has made several recommendations for boosting India's share and importance in global merchandise and services trade.
- Among other things, the Report identifies tax reforms also to boost export and investment channels for exports.

- The Committee has recommended “Elephant Bonds” as a specialised security product providing funds towards Long Term Infrastructure.
- HLAG has also made recommendations for reforms in Financial Services Framework for making India a Preferred Destination for financial services.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Economics Times

7. 28 states. 9 Union Territories: Here is the new map of India



Topic- GS Paper 1 –Indian Geography
Source- Indian Express

8. Nanak Naam Lewa

- After Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan waived the requirement of a passport and 10-day advance registration for Sikh pilgrims from India visiting Gurdwara Darbar Sahib via Kartarpur Corridor.
- Punjab Chief Minister ‘urged’ Islamabad to apply this “to all citizens of secular India”.

Related Information

Nanak Naam Lewa or Nanakpanthi

- Any person who believes in Guru Nanak and follows his teachings in life, irrespective of belonging to any religion is a Nanak Naam Lewa.
- The core values of Guru Nanak’s philosophy are not based on anyone religion and nor are the Nanak Naam Lewa Sangat, who belong to other religions too and may not necessarily be Sikhs.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture
Source- PIB

05.11.2019

1. Finance Minister launches IT initiatives ICEDASH, ATITHI for improved customs clearance

- Finance Minister unveiled two new IT Initiatives - ICEDASH and ATITHI for improved monitoring and pace of customs clearance of imported goods and facilitating arriving international passengers.
- ICEDASH is Ease of Doing Business monitoring dashboards of the Indian Customs helping the public see the daily Customs clearance times of import cargo at various ports and airports.
- The ATITHI app will facilitate hassle-free and faster clearance by Customs at the airports and enhance the experience of international tourists and other visitors at the airports.
- ATITHI will also create a tech-savvy image of India Customs and would encourage tourism and business travel to India.

Related Information

Ease of Doing Business

- Ease of Doing Business Report is released by the World Bank.
- According to the report 2020, New Zealand retained its 1st position whereas Somalia was ranked at 190th spot.
- India was placed at 63rd position this time (2019) out of 190 countries marking an improvement of 14 places from its 77th in 2018.
- India's score improved from 67.23 (2019) to 71.0 (2020).
- India for the third consecutive year was present in the list of 10 economies where the business climate has improved the most.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

2. 'Visibly elusive' Bengal tree frog gets recorded as new species

- Six herpetologists from Assam, West Bengal and Malaysia have recorded a new species of tree frog that had eluded the world of science.

Related Information

Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog (Polypedates bengalensis)

- It was found in two places in West Bengal – Badu, North 24 Parganas

District and Khordanahala, South 24 Parganas District.

- The frog's body colour is yellowish-brown to greenish-brown.
- It belongs to the genus Polypedates which is a genus of tree frog found throughout South and Southeast Asia.
- The male frogs were seen perched on vegetation, including bamboo, banana and taro leaves.

Note:

Herpetology- It is the branch of zoology concerned with the study of amphibians and reptiles.

Herpetologist - A herpetologist is someone who specializes in the study of reptiles and amphibians.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

3. US formally notifies the UN about its withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord

- The US has formally notified the United Nations that it was withdrawing from the Paris climate accord.
- The notification begins a one-year process of exiting the global climate change accord, culminating the day after the 2020 US election.
- The US contributes about 15 percent of global emissions of carbon.

Related Information

Paris Climate Accord

- The agreement brought together 188 nations to combat climate change.
- It committed them to keep rising global temperatures below 2 Celsius above pre-industrial levels and attempting to limit them even more, to a 1.5 Celsius rise.
- Paris agreement, which takes effect in 2020, calls on nations to establish a fund (Green Climate Fund) of at least \$100 billion a year in climate-related financing by 2020.
- It is not legally binding.

Impact of USA s withdrawal from the agreement

- The Financial aid for the developing countries to develop clean energy capabilities is in jeopardy.
- The road map for rich countries to provide the US \$100 billion annually starting in 2020 looks more dubious than before.
- US by its actions also set a bad precedent on other players who could follow US footsteps.
- Countries which lack capabilities like Maldives, Bangladesh and other island nations will be the worst sufferers.

Implications on India

- US largest most responsible nation has walked away, now countries like China and India may have to take more responsibility.
- Climate funding for cleaner technologies may get affected which will further limit the climate protection measures.

Note:

- Article 28 of the Paris Agreement deals with withdrawal mechanism. It states that parties cannot apply for withdrawal for the first three years.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- AIR

4. Red Atlas Map and Coastal Flood Warning System App

- Vice-President has recently unveiled the 'Red Atlas Action Plan Map and CFLOWS-Chennai, a first of its kind ready reckoner, prepared by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

About the Red atlas Map

- The over 200-page atlas was prepared by the National Centre for Coastal Research, India Meteorological Department and National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting in association with TN State Disaster Management Authority and Greater Chennai Corporation.
- It is effective flood mitigation in Chennai which witnessed the worst deluge in 2015.
- The atlas, with probable scenarios for different rainfall periods, aims at flood

mitigation, preparedness, operations and management aspects.

- The manual provides information, including on corporation wards that are likely to be affected due to flooding, and the areas that may need evacuation in Chennai taking into account all historical datasets.

'Coastal Flood Warning System App (CFLOWS-Chennai)'

- The CFLOWS-Chennai is a complete webGIS-based decision support system that can be used both for mitigation planning operations before flooding and in real time to for aspects like relief work.
- CFLOWS is an integrated system that involves coupling models of regional weather forecasts, storm surges and captures about 796 flood scenarios.
- These are effectively tackled urban flooding are likely to be replicated in cities including Mumbai.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Disaster Management

Source- Business standard

5. Why is India's labour productivity growth faltering?

- An analysis done by India Ratings and Research of Annual Survey of Industries data on India's labour productivity growth in the organised manufacturing sector shows a disappointing trend.

Highlights of the analysis

- During the high economic growth phase between 2004 and 2008 (just before the global financial crisis hit), India's labour productivity grew by over 14 per cent every year.
- But between financial years of 2011 and 2015, this rate fell to just half of that (7.4 per cent) and continued its deceleration to just 3.7 per cent between financial years of 2016 and 2018.
- There are two other crucial results from the analysis.
 - i. Between financial years 2001 and 2018, the capital intensity — that is, fixed capital used per worker — in

India's organised manufacturing has been rising.

- ii. Notwithstanding this rise in capital intensity, the output intensity — that is, the value of output per fixed capital — has actually declined over the same period.
 - In other words, while more and more capital is being used per unit of labour, it is not yielding commensurate level of output growth.

Related Information

Labour productivity

- Productivity is a measure of the efficiency with which resources, both human and material, are converted into goods and services.
- Labour productivity is crucially dependent on businesses investing in knowledge and innovation even as the governments bring about structural reforms that enable such investments to bear fruit.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

6. South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP)

- Union Minister of Environment Prakash Javadekar attended the 15th meeting of the Governing Council of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in Dhaka.

Related Information

- It is an inter-governmental organization which was established in 1982.
- Its member countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka aim to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region.
- The 14th meeting of the SACEP Governing Council was held in March 2018 in Colombo.

Topic-GS P-2-International Organisation

Source- AIR

7. Agriculture Minister releases 5th edition of Wastelands Atlas - 2019

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar released the fifth edition of Wastelands Atlas - 2019.

- The Atlas, published jointly by Department of Land Resources and National Remote Sensing Centre, provides robust geospatial information on wasteland.
- It is helpful in rolling back the wastelands for productive use through various land development programmes and schemes.
- Wastelands Atlas-2019 also provides State and district wise distribution of different categories of wastelands area in the country and will be helpful in addressing land degradation.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Indian Geography

Source- AIR

8. Skills Build platform

- Directorate General of Training (DGT), under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), has announced the launch of Skills Build platform in collaboration with IBM.
- As part of the programme, a two-year advanced diploma in IT, networking and cloud computing, co-created and designed by IBM, will be offered at the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) & National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs).
- The platform will be extended to train ITI & NSTI faculty on building skills in Artificial Intelligence.
- This initiative is part of IBM's global commitment to create a job-ready workforce and to build the next generation of skills needed for new collar careers.

Related Information

- IBM joined hands with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in early 2018 to launch a first-of-its-kind 'New Collar Curriculum'.
- Post the successful completion of the course, in September 2019, 19 students were offered a five-month paid internship at IBM.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

9. First Movement of container cargo on the Brahmaputra (National Waterway - 2)

- The first-ever container cargo consignment will sail on National Waterway-2 from Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) to the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) terminal at Pandu in Guwahati.

Related Information

National waterways in India

- As per the National Waterways Act, 2016, 111 have been declared as National Waterways (NW).
- These waterways pass through 24 states and two union territories, with an approximate total length of 20274 km.
- National Waterway-1 (Prayagraj-Haldia) with length 1620 km is the longest National waterway in India.

National Waterway-2

- The Sadiya-Dhubri stretch of the Brahmaputra River (891 Km) declared as National Waterway-2 in 1988 is located in the state of Assam.

Inland Waterways Authority of India

- They are responsible for the development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from the Ministry of Shipping.
- It was established in 1986 and is headquartered in Noida.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- The Hindu

06.11.2019

1. Wastelands atlas 2019

- Union Rural Development Minister has released Wastelands Atlas – 2019.
- It is prepared by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Department of Space.

- The atlas has geospatial information which will be helpful in turning wastelands to productive use through land development schemes.
- Wastelands Atlas has earlier been brought out in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2011.
- This Wastelands Atlas-2019 provides district and state-wise distribution of different categories -of wastelands.
- The changes in wastelands between 2008-09 and 2015-16 have been presented in the Atlas.

Related Information

Highlights of the Wasteland Atlas

- India with 2.4 per cent of the world's land area supports 18 percent of its population.
- The per capita availability of agricultural land in India is 0.12 hectare while the world per capita agricultural land is 0.29 hectare.
- The effort has resulted in estimating the spatial extent of wastelands for the entire country to the tune of 55.76 Mha (16.96 per cent of the geographical area of the country i.e. 328.72 Mha) for 2015-16 as compared to 56.60 Mha (17.21 per cent) in 2008-09.
- Majority of wastelands have been changed into categories of 'croplands', 'forest-dense / open', 'forest plantation', 'plantation' and 'industrial area'
- A reduction in wasteland area was observed in the categories of land with dense scrub, waterlogged and marshy land, sandy areas, degraded pastures / grazing land and gullied and ravinous land.

About Waste Land

- Wastelands are lands which are unproductive, unfit for cultivation, grazing and other economic uses due to rough terrain and eroded soils.
- The lands which are waterlogged and saline are also termed as wastelands.

- The loss of fertility followed by erosion also leads to the conversion of marginal forest lands into wastelands.

Classification of Wastelands:

- The wastelands are broadly classified into two categories:
 - a. Barren & uncultivable wastelands
 - These lands cannot be brought under cultivation or economic use except at a very high cost, whether they exist as isolated pockets or within cultivated holdings.
 - b. Cultivable wastelands:
 - These lands are not cultivated for five years or more.
 - It consists of lands available for cultivation, but not used for cultivation.
 - Next to fallow lands, cultivable wastelands are important for agricultural purposes, because they can be reclaimed through conservational methods for cultivation, grazing or Agroforestry.
 - Maximum wasteland areas in our country lie in Rajasthan anthropogenic activities leading to wasteland formation are deforestation, overgrazing, mining and intensive agricultural practices.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- PIB

2. Biggest US-Bangladesh Navy exercise "CARAT-2019" starts in Chattogram

- The second phase of the biggest US-Bangladesh Navy exercise named 'Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)- 2019' conducted in Chattogram.
- The exercise provides an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the operational activities of the Navies of two countries and to get acquainted with advanced technology through various theoretical & practical training.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Defence

Source- PIB

3. GV-971 or "Oligomannate: A new drug to treat Alzheimer's

- China announced that a new drug called GV-971 or "Oligomannate" meant to potentially treat Alzheimer's disease which will be available to Chinese patients by the end of this year.

Related Information

Alzheimer's

- It is a progressive brain disorder that typically affects people older than 65.
- The disease destroys brain cells and nerves and disrupts the message-carrying neurotransmitters.
- Eventually, a person with Alzheimer's loses the ability to perform day-to-day activities.
- Symptoms include memory loss, difficulty in completing familiar tasks, confusion with time or place, problems in speaking and writing, decreased or poor judgment, and changes in mood and personality.
- Alzheimer's disease is also the most common cause of dementia — which is a syndrome.

GV-971 or "Oligomannate

- It is a seaweed-based drug, administered orally.
- It is jointly developed by the Shanghai Institute of Materia Medica and the the Ocean University of China and Green Valley Pharmaceutical Company Ltd.
- Chinese researchers have claimed it is capable of treating mild to moderate Alzheimer's and may improve cognition.

Note:

- There is no cure for Alzheimer's because its exact causes are not known.
- Most drugs being developed try to slow down or stop the progression of the disease.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Business Standard

4. High Energy Materials Research Laboratory

- Raksha Rajya Mantri has inaugurated the Defence Research & Development

Organisation (DRDO) Igniter Complex at High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) in Pune.

Related Information

- It has developed various fuel /oxidizer based igniter compositions using organic binders.
- Ignition is a crucial and highly critical phenomenon in the ignition chain of Rocket motor.
- The laboratory has developed several ignition systems to ensure reliable initiation of rocket motors of various tactical as well as strategic missiles.
- The ignition system for Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Nag, Pinaka, Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM), etc. have been designed and developed in HEMRL.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- Livemint

5. 3rd Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) summit

- Prime Minister of India announced that India was dropping out of the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), citing its negative effects on "farmers, MSMEs and the dairy sector".

Related Information

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

- The 3rd Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) summit will be held in Bangkok.
- The RCEP is a proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between sixteen countries namely 10 countries of ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam).
- There six FTA partners (also known as AFP's or ASEAN FTA Partners) namely Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand.
- It was formally launched in 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- The 16-member RCEP bloc aims to cover among the issues related to goods, services, investments, economic and technical cooperation,

competition and intellectual property rights.

Reasons for India walking out of it:

- The present form of the RCEP Agreement does not fully reflect the basic spirit and the agreed guiding principles of RCEP.
- It also does not address satisfactorily India's outstanding issues and concerns. Indian farmers, traders, professionals and industrialists have protested against the government's decision to go ahead with the negotiations.
- India to toe the line on issues like safeguards against flooding of Chinese goods, allowing Indian labour mobility to other countries for services, and agricultural and dairy tariffs.
- Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) are lower in India when tariffs are reduced, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN countries will be the major beneficiaries.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- AIR

6. WHO will identify online shopping as an addictive disorder by 2024

- By 2024, the World Health Organisation (WHO) will identify online shopping as an addictive disorder, as millions abuse digital commerce and encounter financial stress, predicts research firm Gartner.
- The ease of online shopping will cause financial stress for millions of people, as online retailers increasingly use artificial intelligence (AI) and personalisation to effectively target consumers and prompt them to spend discretionary income that they do not have.
- The resulting debt and personal bankruptcies will cause depression and other health concerns caused by stress, which is capturing the attention of the WHO.

Related Information

- The Internet of Things (IoT) where physical things are directed to do a

certain thing based on a set of observed operating parameters relative to the desired set of operating parameters is now being extended to people, known as the Internet of Behaviour (IoB).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- AIR

7. Danakil Depression

- Recently in new research, it is found that Extremophile microbes can adapt in Danakil Depression which is one of the world's hottest places.
- New research, however, has pointed to a place on Earth — bubbling pools of water and mounds of salt covering its landscape — that is too daunting even for these microorganisms.

Related Information

Danakil Depression

- The Danakil Depression in northeastern Ethiopia is one of the world's hottest places, as well as one of its lowest, at 100 metres below sea level.
- At the northern end of the Great Rift Valley, and separated by live volcanoes from the Red Sea, the plain was formed by the evaporation of an inland water body.
- All the water entering Danakil evaporates, and no streams flow out from its extreme environment.
- It is covered with more than 10 lakh tonnes of salt.
- Now, a new study published in Nature Ecology & Evolution on October 28, says that active and naturally occurring life cannot be sustained at Danakil.
- It identifies two barriers: magnesium-dominated brines that cause cells to break down and an environment having simultaneously very low pH and high salt, a combination that makes adaptation highly difficult.

Topic- GS Paper 1–Geography

Source- PIB

8. Ethanol from B-heavy molasses

- The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has

recently announced that no separate environmental clearance is required to produce additional ethanol from B-heavy molasses as it does not contribute to the pollution load.

- It has been clarified that all such proposals intended to undertake additional production of ethanol from B-heavy Molasses, sugar cane juice, sugar syrup or sugar, may be considered under the provisions of 7 (ii) (a) of EIA Notification, 2006 by the concerned Expert Appraisal Committee for grant of environmental clearance.

Related Information

Molasses

- Molasses or black treacle is a viscous product resulting from refining sugarcane or sugar beets into sugar. Molasses varies by the amount of sugar, method of extraction, and age of the plant.

Government Initiatives

- Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme was launched in 2003 on a pilot basis and has been subsequently extended to 21 states and 4 Union Territories.
- India has set a target of 10 percent ethanol blending in petrol by 2022.
- The government has also reduced Goods and Services Tax (GST) on ethanol targeted for blending from 18 percent to 5 percent in July 2018.
- To ensure the clearance of dues of farmers the government brought out a comprehensive package of about Rs.7000 crore which includes a plan of Rs.4400 crore for increasing the ethanol capacity in the country.
- In September 2018, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has taken a decision to provide incentives for the production of ethanol from sugar cane.

Benefits of Ethanol Blended Petrol programme

- The move will encourage the production of ethanol and will thus reduce excess sugar in the country.

- It will increase the liquidity with the sugar mills and will help them settle the arrears of the farmers.
- It will incentivize ethanol output and will increase Investment in capacity addition of the sugar mills.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

07.11.2019

1. Indian Air quality Interactive Repository or IndAIR

- CSIR's National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) has launched the country's first interactive online repository, IndAIR.
- The aim of the project is to make air quality research available to everyone.
- IndAIR has archived approximately 700 scanned documents from pre-Internet times (1950-1999), 1,215 research articles, 170 reports and case studies, 100 cases and over 2,000 statutes to provide the history of air pollution research and legislation in the country.
- This includes all major legislation in the country dating back to 1905.
- The repository, one of the few such facilities in the world, has the maximum number of studies — 262 — concerning Delhi-NCR.
- IndAIR reveals air pollution was recognised as a subject in India even in 1905 when a study was carried out for Bengal Smoking Nuisance Act.

National Environmental Engineering Research Institute

- The CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) is a research institute created and funded by the Government of India.
- It was established in Nagpur in 1958 with a focus on water supply, sewage disposal, and communicable diseases and to some extent on industrial pollution and occupational diseases

found common in post-independent India.

- NEERI is a pioneer laboratory in the field of environmental science and engineering and part of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).
- NEERI has five zonal laboratories at Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai. NEERI falls under the Ministry of Science and Technology (India) of central government.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology
Source- The Hindu

2. ShaalaDarpan portal for Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti

- Minister of State for Human Resource Development has launched Shaala Darpan portal.

About Portal

- The portal is an E-Governance school automation and management system for Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.
- It has been implemented at Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti as the first major initiative to enable automation of all activities of the country's largest residential schooling system through a single umbrella.
- This is a single integrated platform has been developed for information sharing and knowledge dissemination across schools and offices of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.
- It is also an end to end e-Governance school automation and management system.
- The system has several pluggable components that can interact with each other. These are enlisted below:
 - School Information and Management System for complete school automation
 - Bilingual Content Management Portal for information dissemination
 - Employee ERP to manage the day to day activities of all employees
 - Budget & Finance management system
 - Inventory & Store management system
 - Library management system

Note:

- The Navodaya Vidyalayas are co-educational residential schools established by the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti which is an autonomous organization under MHRD to provide quality modern education.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

3. Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill

- President has given his assent to the controversial Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime (GCTOC) Bill.

Key features of the bill

- The GCTOC's definition of 'terrorist act' is "an act committed with the intention to disturb law and order or public order or threaten the unity, integrity and security of the State.
- One of the key features of the new Act is intercepted telephonic conversations, which would now be considered as legitimate evidence.
- This bill also provides for the creation of a special court as well as the appointment of special public prosecutors.
- The economic offences the GCTOC covers include Ponzi schemes, multi-level marketing schemes, and organised betting. It also includes extortion, land grabbing, contract killings, cybercrimes, and human trafficking.
- The extension of time for filing the charge sheet has been increased up to 180 days from for 90 days.
- Other provisions of the act include the admissibility of confession made before a police officer as evidence.

Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act

- This Act was passed by the Maharashtra Government in 1999.
- It aims to counter terror-related offences.
- This Act defines "organised crime" as continuing unlawful activity by an individual or jointly or either by a

member of an organized crime syndicate, by use of violence or other unlawful means for the aim of gaining pecuniary benefits or undue economic or other advantages.

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 aims at the effective prevention of unlawful activities across India and abroad.
- Its main objective was to provide powers to central agencies and states to deal with terrorist activities.
- Recently Rajya Sabha has cleared the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 or anti-terror law.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Internal Security

Source- The Hindu

4. Khadi gets separate HS code

- Khadi has been allocated a separate harmonised system code by the commerce and industry ministry.

Related Information

Harmonised system

- It is a six-digit identification code developed by the World Customs Organization (WCO).
- The custom officers use this code to clear every commodity that enters or crosses any international border.
- It will help to boost Khadi exports in the coming years.

Khadi and Village Industries Commission

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956).
- It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

World Customs Organization

- It is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- It was established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council.

- It is headquartered in Brussel, Belgium

India and the World Customs Organization

- India is a member of the World Customs Organization since 1971.
- It is a part of the Asia Pacific region having 33 countries, one of 6 regions.
- India is currently vice-chair (regional head) of the Asia Pacific region of the World Customs Organisation for a period of two years till June 2020.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

5. Boeing CST-100 Starliner or Space taxi

- Recently the Boeing said that an unmanned safety test flight of its CST-100 Starliner crew capsule being developed to ferry astronauts to and from the International Space Station (ISS) had been successful.

Related Information

Boeing CST-100 Starliner or Space Taxi

- The Boeing CST-100 Starliner (Crew Space Transportation) crew capsule is a spacecraft under construction by Boeing as its participation in NASA's Commercial Crew Development (CCDev) program.
- Its primary purpose is to transport crew to the International Space Station (ISS) and to private space stations such as the proposed Bigelow Aerospace Commercial Space Station.
- It is one of two companies that CCP has agreements with to develop new private spaceships meant to ferry astronauts to space and back; the other is Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies Corporation or SpaceX.
- The Starliner can accommodate seven crew members or a mix of crew and cargo to low-Earth orbit.
- NASA expects the first mission to carry humans using these capsules to take off by 2020.

NASA's Space Shuttle Program

- In the 30 years beginning 1981, NASA's space shuttle fleet under its SSP — Columbia, Challenger, Discovery, Atlantis, and Endeavour —

flew 135 missions, many of which helped construct the International Space Station.

- International Space Station is the largest manmade structure in space.
- The shuttles were reusable spacecraft that could carry humans into orbit.
- The final space shuttle mission was carried out by Atlantis in 2011.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and technology

Source- Times of India

6. Govt sets up Rs.25,000 crore fund to revive stalled housing projects

- The government has decided to set up 25 thousand crore rupees fund to revive stalled housing projects.
- The government will put in 10 thousand crore rupees in the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) while State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation will provide 15 thousand crore rupees taking the total size to 25 thousand crore rupees.
- It will finance over 1,600 stalled housing projects comprising about 4.58 lakh housing units across the country.
- The fund will provide relief to developers that require funding to complete a set of unfinished projects and consequently ensure delivery of homes to the home-buyers.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and technology

Source- Times of India

7. Sudan launches its first-ever satellite in partnership with China

- Sudan's first-ever satellite to carry out research in military, economic and space technology has been launched by China.
- Sudan Remote Sensing Satellite (SRSS-1), was launched from the northern Chinese province of Shanxi.

Topic - GS Paper 3 –Science and technology

Source- Aljazeera

8. Economic slowdown will lighten India's carbon burden

- According to an analysis published in Carbon Brief, carbon dioxide

emissions in India are poised to grow at their slowest since 2001 which would only be a 2% rise from 2018.

Factors contributing to the slow rise in CO2 emissions

2018- Slower growth in coal-based power generation help to due to fall in Industrial coal use fell dramatically in 2017 because of a slowdown in the construction sector and bounced back in 2018.

2019- Rise in renewable

- Wind generation rose by 17% in the first six months of 2019 compared to the same period a year earlier, with solar up 30% and hydro increasing by 22%.

India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to Paris Climate Change Agreement

- As per its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, India has promised to reduce the emission intensity of its economy by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
- It has also committed to having 40% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

Note :

- The Carbon footprint Last year, a report by the International Energy Emissions Agency said India's per capita emissions were about 40% of the global average and contributed 7% to the global carbon dioxide burden.
- The U.S., the largest emitter, contributed 14%.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

9. Feni River

- The Union Cabinet gave an ex-post facto approval for the MoU between India and Bangladesh on withdrawal of 1.82 cusec of water from Feni River by India for drinking water supply scheme for Sabroom town in Tripura.
- As on date, there is no water-sharing agreement on Feni River between India and Bangladesh.

Related Information

Feni River

- Feni River is a river in southeastern Bangladesh.

- It is a trans-boundary river with an ongoing dispute about water rights.
- The Feni River originates in South Tripura district and flows through Sabroom town and then enters Bangladesh.
- Muhuri River, also called Little Feni is the right bank tributaries of Feni River.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- Business Standard

10. IIT-Madras launches country's first standing wheelchair

- Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched The wheelchair 'Arise' which was the country's first indigenously designed standing wheelchair.

Related Information

Wheelchair 'Arise'

- The assistive device enables a differently-abled person requiring a wheelchair to shift from sitting to standing position, and vice versa, independently and in a controlled manner.
- The project also got support from foreign countries like the United Kingdom.
- The commercialisation of the Standing Wheelchair technology was made possible through support from Wellcome, UK, through an 'Affordable Healthcare in India' Award, which brought together the research and manufacturing partners.
- This award brought together research and manufacturing partners.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

08.11.2019

1. Mission Innovation

- The Union Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Health and Family Welfare has inaugurated the Mission Innovation (MI) Face to Face meeting of Innovation Challenges.

- The objective of the meeting is to take stock of the deliverables by Mission Innovation and its plans until 2020.
- Another major objective is to identify major gap areas in Clean Energy Innovation and how to address these beyond 2020 to make MI more impactful.

Related Information

Mission Innovation

- It was announced in 2015 during COP 21 due to pioneering efforts by India, France and USA, as world leaders came together in Paris to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate changes.
- India is a founding member of the Mission Innovation.
- Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Union to dramatically accelerate global clean energy innovation.
- It aims to accelerate global clean energy innovation with the following aims
 - (a) to make clean energy affordable
 - (b) to address climate change
 - (c) to create green jobs and commercial opportunities
- It includes participating countries doubling their clean energy R&D investment.
- It is required to meet economic and energy security goals in a timely manner
- Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science & Technology is nodal agency coordinating and steering activities of Mission Innovation (MI) in India.

Note:

- India plans to increase renewable energy capacity to much beyond 175 GW by 2022 and later till 450 GW.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- PIB

2. RBI's panel suggests measures to strengthen core investment companies
- RBI had constituted a Working Group (WG) to Review Regulatory and

Supervisory Framework for Core Investment Companies (CICs) under the Tapan Ray, submitted its report.

Key recommendations

- They suggested a simplified structure for core Investment companies (CIC) with fewer layers, restrictions on their capital investments and stronger board structures with at least 50% independent directors.
- The audit committee of the board should be chaired by an independent director who has oversight over the CIC's financial reporting process and policies.
- The current threshold of Rs 100 crore asset sizes and access to public funds for registration as CIC should be retained.
- There is a need for ring-fencing boards of CICs by excluding employees or executive directors of group firms from its board.

Related Information

Core Investment companies

- It is a non-banking financial company having an asset size of Rs 100 crore and above.
- They carried on the business of acquisition of shares and securities and which
 - (a) holds not less than 90 per cent of its net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies and
 - (b) its investments in the equity shares in group companies constitute not less than 60 per cent of its net assets as on the date of the last audited balance sheet.
- CICs were not required to obtain Certificate of Registration (CoR) from Reserve Bank.
- Practically, it is very difficult to determine what type of share transaction the CIC is engaging with.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- The Hindu

3. Moody's cuts India outlook to negative

- Global rating agency Moody's Investors Service cut its outlook on the Government of India's ratings to negative from stable, but affirmed the Baa2 foreign-currency and local-currency long-term issuer ratings.
- Moody's also affirmed India's Baa2 local-currency senior unsecured rating and its P-2 other short-term local-currency rating.
- Moody's said its decision to change the outlook to negative reflects increasing risks that economic growth will remain materially lower than in the past, partly reflecting lower government and policy effectiveness at addressing long-standing economic and institutional weaknesses.

What is the impact?

- Reduction in outlook is the first step towards an investment downgrade, as India is now just a notch above the investment-grade country rating.
- An actual downgrade in country ratings can lead to massive foreign fund outflows.
- However, if the government is able to address fiscal deficit concerns through higher fundraising from stake sales, the rating agencies tend to revise up their outlook.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Indian Express

4. Indian Coast Guard conducted ReSAREX-2019

- The Indian Coast Guard conducted the Regional level Search and Rescue Workshop and Exercise - 2019 (ReSAREX - 2019) to check the preparedness and response measures for search and rescue at sea in a coordinated manner.
- A rescue operation was carried out off the Goa coast wherein for exercise purpose a message was received regarding a fire on a passenger ferry and passenger overboard.
- A Coast Guard Dornier on patrol was diverted to assess the incident and report exact datum.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

5.

India Justice Report 2019

- Recently India Justice Report 2019 has been released by the Tata Trusts in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, among others.

Highlights of the Report

- The report is based on publicly available data from different government entities on the four pillars of justice delivery — police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.
- Maharashtra has topped the list of 18 large-medium States in the overall first-ever ranking of Indian States on justice delivery, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Haryana.
- In this category, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are at the bottom, while among seven smaller States, Goa leads the group.
- The report highlights the fact that even the best performing States scored less than 60% in their performance on capacity across the police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.
- The country has about 18,200 judges with about 23% sanctioned posts vacant.
- The women are poorly represented in these pillars, constituting just 7% of the police.
- Prisons are over-occupied at 114%, where 68% are undertrials awaiting investigation, inquiry or trial.

Budget constraints

- India's per capita expenditure on free legal aid is 75 paise per annum.
- The report looked at data indicators from the four pillars, covering themes like infrastructure, human resources, diversity (gender, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Other Backward Class), budgets, workload and trends over the last five years.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

6. Exercise 'Samudra Shakti

- The Indian Navy and Indonesian Navy Bilateral Maritime Exercise 'Samudra

Shakti' is currently going in the Bay of Bengal.

Related Information

- It is a Bilateral Naval Exercise between Navies of India and Indonesia.
- The aim of the exercise is to strengthen bilateral relations, expand maritime co-operation, enhance interoperability and exchange best practices.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- PIB

7. India Internet 2019

- The Internet And Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) recently released a report, titled 'India Internet 2019.'

Highlights of the Report

- Kerala's Internet penetration rate is the second-highest in the country (54%), next only to Delhi NCR with 69% penetration.
- Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Delhi have the highest proportion of female Internet users.
- The Internet penetration rate (defined as a number of individuals aged above 12 per 100 population who accessed the Internet in the last month; survey period January-March 2019) was the lowest in Odisha (25), Jharkhand(26) and Bihar (28).
- While Bihar has the lowest number with 29 subscriptions per 100 population, Uttar Pradesh's number stands at 34.

Related Information

Other International Report on Internet Freedom on Net 2019 report

- The Freedom of Net report 2019 titled "The Crisis of Social Media" was released by The Freedom House, an international watchdog.
- The report assessed 65 countries and 33 among them showed an overall decline in internet freedom since June 2018.
- Only 16 countries showed improvements in their internet freedom status.
- Some of the countries that showed the biggest decline in internet freedom include Sudan, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.
- India was given an overall score of 55 in the report and the internet freedom status in the country was reported to be 'partly free'.
- Iceland ranked the highest with an overall score of 95 as it had no civil or criminal cases registered against users for online expression during the coverage period.
- China with an overall score of 10 was adjudged 'not free' and as the world's worst abuser of internet freedom for the

fourth consecutive year.

- Pakistan was given a score of 26 and was declared 'not free' in internet freedom status for the 9th consecutive year.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-The Hindu

8. Documentation Identification Number

- The Documentation Identification Number (DIN) system of Central Board of Indirect Taxes (CBIC) came into existence from 8th November.

Related Information

- It is a unique Director identification number allotted by the Central Government to any person intending to be a Director or an existing director of a company.
- It is an 8-digit unique identification number which has lifetime validity.
- It is specific to a person, which means even if he is a director in 2 or more companies; he has to obtain only 1 DIN.
- It is used whenever a return, an application or any information related to a company will be submitted under any law, the director signing such return, application or information will mention his DIN underneath his signature.
- The objectives of the DIN to bringing transparency and accountability in the indirect tax administration also through the widespread use of information technology.
- It will provide the taxpayer with a digital facility to verify any communications.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- PIB

9. GeM Partners with Central Bank of India for Payment Related Services

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) has signed MoU with Central Bank of India.

Related Information

Government e-Marketplace

- It is an online marketplace launched by Union Government in 2018 to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various Ministries and agencies of the Government.
- It offers online, end to end solution for procurement of commonly used goods and services for all central government and state governments departments, public sector units (PSUs) and alienated bodies.
- Its main aim is to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement of goods and services and eliminate corruption.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance Source- PIB

Daily Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

12.11.2019

1. World's first CNG port terminal at Bhavnagar

- Gujarat Government has given its nod to the world's first CNG port terminal at Bhavnagar.
- It will be developed jointly by U.K.-headquartered Foresight Group and Mumbai-based Padmanabh Mafatlal Group.
- The new facility will be developed in the Northern side of the present port, under which RoRo terminal, liquid terminal and container terminal will be developed in future.
- The proposed CNG terminal at Bhavnagar port will have a cargo capacity to handle of 1.5 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) and will also develop facilities such as Ro-Ro terminal, liquid cargo terminal and container terminal.
- Bhavnagar port has had trade links with Southeast Asia, Africa, Arabia and ports of Red Sea since the early 18th century.

Related Information Compressed natural gas

- It is made by compressing natural gas, (which is mainly composed of methane, CH₄), to less than 1% of the volume, it occupies at standard atmospheric pressure.
- It is a fossil fuel substitute for petrol, diesel, or LPG.
- CNG is more environment-friendly – Harmful emissions such as carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) can be reduced by as much as 95% when compared to gasoline-powered vehicles.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology
Source- PIB

2. Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan"

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change are undertaking a mass cleanliness-cum-awareness drive in 50 identified beaches under the "Swachh – Nirmal Tat Abhiyaan",
- The identified beaches are in 10 coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) namely Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha.
- The beaches have been identified after the consultation with the States/UTs.

Nodal Agency

- Environment Education Division of the Ministry and Society of Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM) under the aegis of this Ministry will be responsible for the overall coordination for the drive-in 50 beaches.
- Respective State Governments and Central Ministries will also be actively participating in the beach

Related Information

Blue Flag Programme

- The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education).
- It started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987 and in areas outside Europe since 2001 when South Africa joined.
- Japan and South Korea are the only countries in South and southeastern Asia to have Blue Flag beaches.
- In India, the Environment Ministry embarked on the Blue Flag project in December 2017

Blue flag standards

- To achieve the Blue Flag standards, a beach must be plastic-free and equipped with a waste management system.
- Clean water should be available for tourists, apart from international amenities
- The beach should have facilities for studying the environmental impact around the area

Blue Flag certification

- The Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha will be the first in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- PIB

3. PM-UDAY (PM Unauthorized Colonies in Delhi AwasAdhikar Yojana)

- Members of the Unauthorised Colonies and Office bearers of the Resident Welfare Associations of Delhi felicitated the Prime Minister on the recent historic decision of the Union Cabinet to confer/ recognise the ownership or mortgage/ transfer rights to the residents of unauthorized colonies in Delhi.

Related Information

PM Unauthorized Colonies in Delhi AwasAdhikar Yojana

- Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister has approved the Conferring of Ownership/Transfer Rights to the Residents of Unauthorised Colonies on the 23rd of October 2019.
- Union Cabinet has also approved the introduction of the bill in the ensuing session of Parliament to recognise ownership of property based on General Power of Attorney (GPA), Will, Agreement to Sell, Payment and Possession Document etc.
- The Proposed bill will allow Registration Charge and Stamp Duty to be levied on nominal charge fixed by the Government instead of the prevailing circle rate as per the extant law.

- These reliefs are onetime measure for the residents of unauthorised colonies considering their special circumstances.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

4. Anaemia among men in India: Study

- A recent study published in The Lancet Global Health, which looked at anaemia among men in India.

Key findings of the study

- The study has found that nearly a quarter of Indian men (23.2% in a sample of 1 lakh men) in the age group 15-54 had some form of anaemia.
- Among age groups, men in the group 20-34 years had the lowest probability of having anaemia, while actual prevalence was lowest in the age group 50-54, at 7.8%.
- The prevalence was higher for younger age groups.
- Among the states, the highest prevalence of anaemia among men was in Bihar while the lowest prevalence was in Manipur.
- The study has also found that anaemia was more common among poorer and less educated individuals, people living in rural areas and in poorer districts for both men and women.

Related Information

Anaemia

- The World Health Organization defines anaemia as a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiological needs.
- Anaemia in men can cause fatigue, lethargy, creates difficulty in concentrating, thereby reducing the quality of life and decreasing economic productivity.
- Factors such as consuming smokeless tobacco, being underweight, level of urbanisation and household wealth

are associated with a higher probability of developing the disease. Government initiative to prevent and treat anaemia

- a. National Iron Plus Initiative
 - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2013 launched "National Iron Plus Initiative" as a comprehensive strategy to combat the public health challenge of Iron Deficiency Anaemia prevalent across the life cycle.
- b. Anaemia Mukh Bharat
 - The scheme has been launched in the year 2018 as part of Intensified National Iron Plus Initiative (NIPI) Program for accelerating the annual rate of decline of anaemia from one to three percentage points.
 - The target groups for this scheme are Children 6-59 months, 5-9 years, Adolescent Girls & Boys of 10-19 years, Women of Reproductive Age (15-49 years), Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.
- c. POSHAN Abhiyaan
 - POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission was launched by the government on March 8, 2018.
 - The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
 - The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.
 - POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- AIR

5. New Zealand's Zero Carbon Law

- New Zealand's Parliament has recently passed The Zero-Carbon Act,

which will commit New Zealand to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner.

- The Act is not separate legislation but is an amendment to the existing Climate Change Responses Act, 2002.
- It provides a framework by which New Zealand will be able to develop and implement climate change policies in line with the Paris Agreement to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degree Celsius.
- The key aims of the Act include:
 - a. Reduce all greenhouse gases (except methane) to net-zero by 2050
 - b. Reduce emissions of biogenic methane (produced from biological sources) up to 24-47 percent below 2017 levels by 2050 and to 10 percent below 2017 levels by 2030
- c. Establish an independent Climate Change Commission and establish a system of an emissions budget.
- The Act proposes separate targets for biogenic methane because methane is a short-lived gas and degrades into the atmosphere over the decades even though it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Biogenic methane

- Biogenic methane is produced from biological (plant and animal) sources.
- This is carbon recently derived from carbon dioxide (CO₂) present in the atmosphere.
- When the methane is emitted it causes additional warming (as methane is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂).
- Over time it decays back to CO₂ without adding to the concentration of CO₂ in the long term.
- Biogenic methane is emitted by livestock, waste treatment and wetlands.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Government

Source- Livemint

6. New species of spider named after Sachin Tendulkar

- Dhruv Prajapati, a junior researcher with the Gujarat Ecological Education & Research (GEER) Foundation, found a unique way to pay tribute to God of cricket.
- He named the species of spider that he newly discovered during his PhD research after Tendulkar.
- He named the species as 'Marengo Sachintendulkar'.
- The researcher also found another spider species that he named 'Indomarengo Chavarapater' after Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, who created awareness about education in Kerala.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Deccan Herald

7. Centre gives nod for four medical device parks

- The government has approved setting up four medical device parks with a view to support Make in India initiative and provide world-class treatment at affordable prices.
- The parks will be set up in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
- These parks will provide the necessary infrastructure, where companies can easily plug and play.
- This will not only cut import bill but will also help in easy access to standard testing facilities and reduce the cost of production.

Related Information

- India is largely an importer of medical devices, with domestic industry accounting for about 2 per cent of the global industry which stands at USD 250 billion, as per the estimates.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Policies

Source- The Hindu

8. NASA unveils its first electric airplane

- NASA, most prominent for its many Florida-launched exploits into space, showcased an early version of its first

all-electric experimental aircraft, the X-57 "Maxwell".

- Adapted from an Italian-made Tecnam P2006T twin-engine propeller plane, the X-57 has been under development since 2015.
- The Maxwell is the latest in a proud line of experimental aircraft the NASA has developed over many decades for many purposes, including the bullet-shaped Bell X-1 that first broke the sound barrier and the X-15 rocket plane flown by Neil Armstrong before he joined the Apollo moon team.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

9. G20 Brown to Green Report 2019

- The Brown to Green Report 2019 is the world's most comprehensive review of G20 climate action.
- It provides concise and comparable information on G20 country mitigation action, finance and adaptation.
- Developed by experts from 14 research organisations and NGOs from the majority of the G20 countries, the report covers 80 indicators.
- It informs policymakers and stimulates national debates.

Highlights of the Report

- Australia's response to climate change is one of the worst in the G20 with a lack of policy, reliance on fossil fuels and rising emissions leaving the country exposed "economically, politically and environmentally.
- G20 countries are responsible for 80% of global Green House Gas emissions.
- According to the report, India is the only country that is close to 1.5-degree Celsius temperature rise.
- It is the scenario set by the global scenario in the Paris Agreement that will lead to disastrous consequences.
- India has set ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions and is investing more in long term goals. Russia, France, Italy, Germany and

India were the highest-ranked countries that faced economic losses from extreme weather events.

- The other countries like Russia, Indonesia, China, Saudi Arabia, EU and Turkey are lagging ambitious NDC targets as required by Paris Agreement. Australia was the worst-performing country in terms of climate response according to the report.

G20 Groupings

- It is an international forum which includes 19 of the world's largest economies and the European Union.
- The G20 comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK and USA.
- G20 is a forum for economic, financial and political cooperation.
- It addresses the major global challenges and seeks to generate public policies that resolve them.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Important Report

Source- The Guardian

13.11.2019

1. Maharashtra placed under President's Rule

- President of India has recently approved a proclamation imposing President's Rule under Article 356(1) in Maharashtra, following a recommendation from Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari of Maharashtra.

Related Information

President Rule

- The imposition of Article 356 of the Constitution on a State following the failure of constitutional machinery is called President's Rule in India.
- Once the President's Rule has been imposed on a state, the elected state government will be temporarily dissolved.

- The Governor, who is appointed by the government at the Centre, will replace the Chief Minister as the chief executive of the State.
- The state will fall under the direct control of the Union government, and the Governor will continue to be head the proceedings, representing the President of India – who is the Head of the State.
- The imposition of the President's rule requires the sanction of both the houses of Parliament.
- If approved, it can go on for a period of six months.
- However, the imposition cannot be extended for more than three years, and needs to be brought before the two houses every six months for approval.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

2. Mihir Shah Committee: For National Water Policy

- The Union Water Resources Ministry has finalised a committee under Mihir Shah to draft a new National Water Policy (NWP).
- The committee has 10 principal members who are expected to produce a report within six months.

Related Information

National Water Policy (NWP), 2012

- The National Water Policy currently in force was drafted in 2012 and is the third such policy since 1987.

Salient Features Of Revised Draft National Water Policy (2012)

- It emphasis on the need for a national water framework law, comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys, amendment of Irrigation Acts, Indian Easements Act, 1882, etc.
- It introduced the concept of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach that took the "river basin/ sub-basin" as a unit for

planning, development and management of water resources.

- It recommended setting up of Water Regulatory Authority.
- It also proposed that a portion of river flows ought to be kept aside to meet ecological needs.
- The policy also stressed for a minimum quantity of potable water for essential health and hygiene to all its citizens to be made available within easy reach of households.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

3. HADR Exercise TIGER TRIUMPH to Commence at Visakhapatnam

- The India US joint Tri services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise named 'TIGER TRIUMPH' is scheduled on the Eastern seaboard.

Related Information

About Tiger Triumph

- It is the first India US joint Tri services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise.
- The tri service drill is being organised under the aegis of the headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff.
- The Exercise is aimed to developing interoperability for conducting HADR operations.
- The HADR operations seek to provide immediate succour and relief to the disaster affected population.

About Integrated Defence Staff

- It is an organisation responsible for fostering coordination and enabling prioritisation across the different branches of the Indian Armed Forces.
- It was established in 2001 after the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and is located at New Delhi.
- It is composed of representatives from the Indian Army, Indian Navy,

Indian Air Force, Ministry of External Affairs, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Finance.

- The IDS is headed by Chief of Integrated Defence Staff along with Deputy Chiefs of Integrated Defence Staff.
- The body advises and assists the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- PIB

4. Suranga Bawadi on World Monument Watch list

- Recently the Suranga Bawadi along with 24 other monuments has been included in the World Monument Watch list for 2020 from across the world.
- The monument has been selected under the 'Ancient Water System of the Deccan Plateau' by World Monuments Fund [the NGO], which monitors restoration of ancient monuments across the globe.

Related Information

About Suranga Bawadi

- It is an integral part of the ancient Karez system of supplying water through subterranean tunnels built during Adil Shahi era in Vijayapura, is now set to get funding for restoration.
- According to historians, the Adil Shahis built the magnificent underground system to supply water to the city, which had a population of nearly 12 lakh then.

About Karez System

- It is a water harnessing technology that originated in Iran/Persia.
- The karez technology basically taps into the ground water sources (or natural springs) and transports it through an underground tunnel to the settlement, ending in surface canal and/or pools in the village for various uses.
- The Karez is found in 38 countries worldwide and most of these are concentrated in the Middle East region.

About World Monuments Watch

- It is a global program launched in 1995 by World Monuments Fund (a private, international, non-profit organization founded in 1965.)
- It aims to identify imperiled cultural heritage sites and provide direct financial and technical support for their preservation.
- It is a biennial selection program of at risk cultural heritage sites that combine great historical significance with contemporary social impact.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- PIB

5. Bolivia

- The President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, has resigned amid turmoil following his disputed re-election last month.

Related Information

About Bolivia

- Its geography varies from the peaks of the Andes in the West, to the Eastern Lowlands, situated within the Amazon Basin and One-third of the country is within the Andean mountain range
- It is bordered to the north and east by Brazil, to the southeast by Paraguay, to the south by Argentina, to the southwest by Chile, and to the northwest by Peru.
- It is also the largest landlocked country in the Southern Hemisphere and the world's seventh largest landlocked country, after Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Chad, Niger, Mali and Ethiopia.
- The capital is Sucre, while the seat of government and financial center is located in La Paz.

Note :

- Alongside Paraguay, it is one of the only two landlocked countries in the Americas.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- AIR

6. International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

- Agriculture Minister attended the Eighth Session of Governing Body of Seed Treaty at Food and Agriculture Organization located in Rome.
- The Governing sessions of the treaty are biennial.

Related Information

About International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food & Agriculture

1. It is popularly known as the International Seed Treaty which is a comprehensive international agreement in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity.
2. It aims to guarantee food security through the conservation, exchange and sustainable use of the world's plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), as well as the fair and equitable benefit sharing arising from its use.
3. It also recognises farmers' rights, subject to national laws to:
 - a) the protection of traditional knowledge relevant to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
 - b) the right to equitably participate in sharing benefits arising from the utilisation of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
 - c) the right to participate in making decisions, at the national level, on matters related to the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
- Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is the nodal agency of this treaty in India that fulfills the objective of the treaty.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Agriculture

Source- Livemint

7. India To Host Shanghai Summit's Heads Of Government Council Meet In 2020
- India will host the 19th council of heads of government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2020.
- It will be the first such high level meeting of the eight-member grouping to be organised by New

Delhi after its admission into the grouping in 2017.

Related Information

About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation



- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation formed in 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- Its founding members included China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
- The Heads of State Council is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO.
- It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.
- Its official languages are Russian and Chinese.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- Indian Express

8. International Lavi Fair

- Himachal Pradesh Governor has been inaugurated the four-day-long International Lavi fair in Shimla district's Rampur.

Related Information

About International Lavi Fair

- The famous 'International Lavi Trade fair' is one of the unique examples of the glorious, social, cultural, economic history and legacy of Himachal Pradesh.
- It is the biggest trade fair of the greater Himalayas, which is held at Rampur Bushahr.
- Rampur Bushahr, which is popularly known as the gateway of tribal District Kinnaur is situated on the left bank of river Sutlej and is one of the oldest town on Hindustan Tibet road.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Time of India

9. 27th Conference of Central and State Statistical Organizations

- The 27th Conference of Central and State Statistical Organizations (COCSSO) at Kolkata, West Bengal by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The theme of the conference: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Related Information

About Conference of Central and State Statistical Organizations

- It is a major national forum for coordination between the Central and State Statistical Agencies with the objectives of putting in coordinated efforts for making available reliable and timely statistics to planners and policymakers.
- The detailed deliberations in the conference will enable the State Governments to develop their State Indicator Frameworks in line with the NIF and will strengthen the statistical system of the country.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- PIB

14.11.2019

1. Office of Chief Justice of India comes under RTI Act

- In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court has held that the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) is a public authority under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- It said that the Right to Privacy is an important aspect and it has to be balanced with transparency while deciding to give out information from the office of the Chief Justice

Background

- In January 10, 2010, the Delhi High Court had held that the office of the Chief Justice of India comes within the ambit of the Right to Information (RTI) law.

Related Information

About Right to Information

- The Supreme Court, in State of U.P.v. Raj Narain - a 1974 case, recognized the 'right to know' as a right inherent in Fundamental Right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.
- Consequently, The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 was thus passed to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.

Right to Information (amendment) Act 2019

- The amendment act changes the Sections 13 and 16 of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005.
- Section 13 of the original Act sets the term of the central Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) at 5 years (or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier).

- Whereas Section 16 sets the term for state-level CICs and ICs at 5 years (or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier).
- The amendment now proposes that the appointment for both will be "for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government".
- Salary, etc - Under Section 13, salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the CIC shall be the same as that of the Chief Election Commissioner.
- Those of an Information Commissioner shall be the same as that of an Election Commissioner.
- Similarly, under Sec 16, the original Act prescribes salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the state CIC and state ICs as the same as that of an Election Commissioner and Chief Secretary to the State respectively.
- The act proposes that the salaries, allowances and other terms of service of both CIC and ICs at both central and state levels shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

2. 2nd edition of Paris Peace Forum

- External Affairs Minister has attended the second annual Paris Peace Forum in held in Paris.

Related Information

About Paris Peace Forum

- The Paris Peace Forum is an international event on global governance issues and multilateralism, held annually in Paris, France.
- The Forum aimed at finding solutions to global challenges ranging from climate change and terrorism to migration and cybersecurity.
- They maintain a specific focus on governance solutions in six major themes:
 - a. Peace & Security
 - b. Development

- c. Environment
- d. New technologies
- e. Inclusive economy
- f. Culture & Education

Note:

- The first edition of the Paris Peace Forum was held in November 2018.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- Live mint

3. Supreme Court strikes down rules in amended Finance Act 2017 on tribunals

- The Supreme Court has recently struck down the rules in the amended Finance Act 2017 on tribunals. The upper court directed the government to reformulate fresh norms with respect to appointment of tribunal members.
- The top court directed that the appointment in tribunals should be in accordance with respective statutes.

Related Information

About Finance (amendment) act 2007

Aadhaar mandatory

- It has been mandatory for every person to quote their Aadhaar number while applying for a Permanent Account Number (PAN), or filing their Income Tax returns.
- In case a person does not have an Aadhaar, he will be required to quote their Aadhaar enrolment number, indicating that an application to obtain Aadhaar has been filed.

Tribunals

- Certain Tribunals are proposed to be replaced, and their functions are proposed to be taken over by existing Tribunals under other Acts.
- The Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Chairmen, or other members who are currently occupying posts with Tribunals to be merged, will be entitled to receive up to three months' pay and allowances for premature termination of their office term.
- Currently, terms of service of Chairpersons and other members of Tribunals, Appellate Tribunals and

other authorities are specified in their respective Acts.

- Amendments propose that the central government may make rules to provide for the
 - qualifications
 - appointments
 - term of office
 - salaries and allowances
 - resignation
 - removal,
 - other conditions of service for these members.

Cash Transactions

- Bill initially mandated that cash transactions above three lakh rupees will not be permitted to a single person in one day, for a single transaction and for any transactions relating to a single event.
- The amendments propose to lower this limit from three lakh rupees to two lakh rupees.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

4. World Pneumonia Day

- World Pneumonia Day has been observed on November 12, since 2009 to raise awareness about the infection.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies pneumonia as the single largest cause of death in children worldwide.
- According to the WHO, every year, it kills an estimated 1.4 million children under the age of five years, accounting for 18% of all deaths of children under five years old worldwide.

About Pneumonia

- It is a form of acute respiratory infection that affects the lungs.
- Pneumonia is caused by a number of infectious agents, including viruses, bacteria and fungi. The most common are –
 - Streptococcus pneumoniae – the most common cause of bacterial pneumonia in children;

- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) – the second most common cause of bacterial pneumonia;
- Respiratory syncytial virus is also the most common viral cause of pneumonia.
- Pneumonia can be spread in a number of ways via air-borne droplets from a cough or sneeze or blood, especially during and shortly after birth.
- The WHO and UNICEF integrated Global action plan for pneumonia and diarrhoea (GAPD) aims to accelerate pneumonia control with a combination of interventions to protect, prevent, and treat pneumonia in children.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

5. 11th BRICS summit

- Prime Minister has attended the 11th BRICS summit to be held in Brasilia capital of Brazil and theme of summit 'Economic Growth for an Innovative Future'.
- The summit will discuss the Afghanistan situation.
- Both China and Russia have maintained dialogue with the Taliban even after the U.S. ended peace talks with the outfit.
- The summit will also launch the Innovation BRICS Network which will include networking of research institutes like science parks, incubators and accelerators.
- The platform will also discuss formation of BRICS Bond Fund, which will help member countries conduct intra-BRICS trade in national currencies, avoiding the U.S. dollar.

About BRICS

- BRICS is the acronym coined for an association of five major emerging national economies that have similar economic development.
- Five countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Note:

- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to be chief guest at Republic Day 2020.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- PIB

6. Haryana brings more crops under 'Bhavantar Bharpayee Yojana'

- The Haryana government recently decided to bring more crops under the 'Bhavantar Bharpayee Yojna (BBY)' scheme.
- Now carrots, peas, kinnow, guava, capsicum and brinjal will also be included under the BBY along with potato, onion, tomato and cabbage,

Related Information

About Bhavantar Bharpayee Yojna

- It was launched by the Haryana government in 2018.
- The scheme has been designed and developed for safeguarding the investment of the farmers.
- Under the scheme, the state agricultural department will fix the least selling price of certain crops.
- In case the farmer gets the price lower than the price fixed by the government, the difference will be paid as an incentive to the farmers directly into their bank accounts.
- For getting the scheme benefits, the state's farmers have to register themselves on "Meri Fasal Mera Byora (MFMB)" portal

Meri Fasal Mera Byora portal

- The portal was launched by the Haryana Government.
- The portal enables farmers to self-report their land and crop details and help them receive benefits of several government schemes directly.
- Through the portal, the government will also get the accurate data of area and name of crop cultivated in various parts of the state.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- AIR

7. 7th IUCN Asia Regional Conservation Forum

- International Union for Conservation of Nature organized the 7th Regional Conservation Forum in Islamabad, Pakistan.
- India attended this forum along with more than 500 representatives from different countries, corporate sector and NGOs participated in the forum

About Asia Regional Conservation Forum (RCF)

- It is one of Asia's most important regional conservation events held every 4 years which discusses the current situation related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Asia, and the ways forward.
- The aim of the RCF is to provide IUCN Members with a platform to present input on a joint program of action for addressing Asia's challenges related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and natural resource management in the coming four years.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Indian Express

8. Dhaka Global Dialogue

- Prime Minister of Bangladesh had inaugurated the first edition of the three day long Dhaka Global Dialogue.
- The three day long program is being jointly organised by the New Delhi based Observer Research Foundation and the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

About Dhaka Global Dialogue

- It will act as a platform for countries in this region on the way of achieving environmentally sustainable peace and prosperity.
- Participants also agreed upon that peace and stability in the maritime domain will be critical to Asia's rise.

About Observer Research Foundation

- It is an independent think tank based in India with three centers in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

- It provides informed and viable inputs for policy and decision-making for Government as well as political and business leadership of India.
- ORF started out with an approach towards dealing with internal issues of the economy in the wake of the 1990s reforms.
- However, today its mandate extends to security and strategy, governance, environment, energy and resources, economy and growth.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

9. Sabarimala case: SC refers review pleas to larger bench

- Supreme Court today said that restrictions on women in religious places were not limited to Sabarimala alone and was prevalent in other religions as well.
- Supreme Court has referred the review petition to a larger seven bench.
- Larger bench will decide all such religious issues relating to Sabarimala, entry of women in mosques and practice of female genital mutilation in the Dawoodi Bohra community.
- The apex court, by a majority verdict of 4:1, in September 2018, had lifted the ban that prevented women and girls between the age of 10 and 50 from entering the famous Ayyappa shrine in Kerala. It had also held that this centuries-old Hindu religious practice was illegal and unconstitutional.

15.11.2019

1. Sabarimala order: What is the 'Doctrine of essentiality' test in religious practice?

- The doctrine of "essentiality" was invented by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the 'Shirur Mutt' case in 1954.

- The court held that the term "religion" will cover all rituals and practices "integral" to a religion, and took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.
- Last year, a Supreme Court Bench by a 2-1 majority declined to refer for reconsideration by a larger Bench the five-judge Constitution Bench judgment in 'Dr M Ismail Faruqui and Ors vs Union Of India and Ors' (October 24, 1994), which upheld the law under which the Centre acquired the disputed land in Ayodhya on which the Babri Masjid had stood.
- The Constitution Bench had ruled in 1994 that "A mosque is not an essential part of the practice of the religion of Islam and namaz (prayer) by Muslims can be offered anywhere, even in open."
- In some cases Supreme Court have relied on religious texts to determine essentiality, in others on the empirical behavior of followers, and in yet others, based on whether the practice existed at the time the religion originated.

1. Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

2. International Criminal Court

- International Criminal Court Judges have recently approved a request from prosecutors to open an investigation into crimes committed against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority.

1. Related Information

About International Criminal Court

- The International Criminal Court is an intergovernmental organisation and international tribunal headquartered in the Hague, Netherlands.
- It is the first permanent international criminal court in the world.

- It investigates and tries people charged with serious and grave crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression
- It was created by the 'Rome Statute'
- India is not a member of the ICC.
- The ICC has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals and is independent of United Nations (UN).

Why India is not a member of the ICC?

- India did not sign the Rome Statute because of the following reasons:
 - National interests
 - State sovereignty
 - Problem to find impartial prosecutors
 - Difficulty in collection of evidences
 - Crime definition

Note:

- Myanmar is not a member of the global court.
- It has been accused of committing widespread abuses in a campaign against the Rohingya.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- Livemint

3. Ultima Thule.' The Farthest Spacecraft-Visited Rock. Renamed 'Arrokoth'

- Ultima Thule, the farthest cosmic body ever visited by a spacecraft, has been renamed Arrokoth, or "sky" in the Native American Powhatan language, following a backlash over the previous name's Nazi connotations.
- The new official name, which was chosen by the New Horizons team and ratified by the International Astronomical Union.

Related Information

About Arrokoth

- It is icy rock, which orbits in the dark and frigid Kuiper Belt about a billion miles beyond Pluto.
- It is one of the “cold classical object” which has remained undisturbed since the solar system formed some 4.5 billion years ago.
- It was surveyed by the NASA spaceship New Horizons in January 2019, with images showing it consisted of two spheres stuck together in the shape of a snowman.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

4. 9th Edition of Diabetes Atlas

- International Diabetes Federation has recently published the Diabetes Atlas in Brussels to mark World Diabetes Day 14th

Highlights of the Report

- India continues to be home to the second-largest number of adults with diabetes worldwide putting the incidence at 77 million in the 20-79 years age group which follow China.
- China, India and the United States had the largest number of adults with diabetes and are expected to remain so in 2030.
- It is projected that the number of adults with diabetes in Pakistan will exceed that in the United States of America, and it will move to third place by 2045.
- In recent years, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) have set global targets to encourage action to improve care and strengthen healthcare systems.
- These actions include
 - reducing premature death from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including diabetes, by 30% by 2030.
 - establishing national diabetes plans
 - to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- PIB

5. Acqua alta : high tides in the Adriatic Sea

- Italy has declared a state of emergency in Venice after the Italian city was engulfed by high water levels, flooding its historic basilica and cutting power to homes.

- More than 80% of the city, a UNESCO world heritage site, was under water when tides were at their highest.

Related Information

Venice city

- Venice is a city in northeastern Italy and the capital of the Veneto region.
- It is situated on a group of 118 small islands that are separated by canals and linked by over 400 bridges.
- The islands are located in the shallow Venetian Lagoon, an enclosed bay that lies between the mouths of the Po and the Piave rivers (more exactly between the Brenta and the Sile).

UNESCO site in Italy

- Italy has more UNESCO sites than any other European country—and it ties only with China globally.
- The hills of Conegliano and Valdobbiadene is located north-east of Venice in Italy.
- It is home to the world-famous sparkling wine Prosecco.
- These hills are the eighth UNESCO World Heritage site in the Veneto region, the 55th site in Italy, and the 10th site in the world to be registered under the category of “cultural landscape” in recognition of their unique interaction between man and the environment.

About Acqua alta

- It is the name given to exceptionally high tides in the Adriatic Sea (Venice is situated on the coast of northeastern Italy, bounded by the Adriatic Sea).
- The peaks reach their maximum in the Venetian Lagoon, where they cause partial flooding of Venice and Chioggia.
- The phenomenon occurs mainly between autumn and spring, when the astronomical tides are reinforced by the prevailing seasonal winds that hamper the usual reflux.
- The main winds involved are the sirocco, which blows northbound along the Adriatic Sea, and the bora, which has a specific local effect due to the shape and location of the Venetian lagoon.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- BBC

6. Global Cooling Prize

- Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare, will announce the finalists of the 'Global Cooling Prize' (GCP), under the Mission Innovation (MI) programme.

About Mission Innovation (MI)

- It is a global initiative of 24 countries and the European Union to accelerate global clean energy innovation.
- MI identified "Affordable Heating and Cooling of Building Innovation Challenge" as one of the seven innovation challenges.
- India agreed to its engagement as MI Member for the Mission Innovation Challenge # 7: Affordable Heating and Cooling Challenge.

About Global Cooling Prize

- Department of Science & Technology (DST) in partnership with BEE & MoEF&CC has launched GCP jointly with Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), an independent non-profit research institute and think tank founded in 1982 in the US.
- It aims to spur the development of a residential cooling solution that has at least five times (5x) less climate impact than today's standard products.
- It was launched in November 2018.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- PIB

7. 6th World Congress on Rural And Agricultural Finance

- The 6th World Congress on Rural and Agricultural Finance was recently held in New Delhi.
- It is being jointly hosted by Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.
- This congress was attended by 300 delegates across the globe who engaged in interactive discussions to

unleash the potential role of rural and agricultural finance.

Objectives of the conference:

- To promote Global value chains in agriculture
- To ensure agriculture is in line with sustainability, natural resource conservation and social harmony.
- To help in tackling food security
- To achieve the objective the financial institutions should constantly evolve innovatively to provide rural people stable and constant financial services.

About Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association

- It is a regional association that promotes cooperation and facilitates the mutual exchange of information and expertise in the field of rural finance.
- It is also one of the three regional agricultural credit associations, along with NENARACA (Near East – North Africa Agricultural Credit Association) and AFRICA (African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association) that were established, with the help of FAO, following the 1975 World Conference on Agricultural Credit.
- It is located in Bangkok, Thailand.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

Source- News 18

8. Vashishtha Narayan Singh

- The Prime Minister and President have condoled the passing away of renowned Mathematician Dr. Vashishtha Narayan Singh.

About Dr. Vashishtha Narayan Singh

- Vashishtha Narayan Singh was an Indian mathematician from Basantpur, Bhojpur District, Bihar, India.
- He had been suffering from schizophrenia for 40 years.
- He had challenged Einstein's theory of relativity.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

(Important for State PCS)

2. Source- PIB

Daily Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

18.11.2019

1. India gets USD 43 million from Green Climate Fund to boost climate resilience in 3 coastal states

- India recently kicked-off a USD 43 million project to boost climate resilience in three coastal states in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme

About the Project

- The project is funded by the Green Climate Fund, established within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to assist developing countries.
- It is a six-year project that will build climate-resilient livelihoods for the people in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha.
- The project also aligns well with the priorities of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, the State Action Plans, and the nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement.
- It establishes India as a leader on climate action, and marks an essential step for India to reach its goals outlined in the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," the UNDP said.

About Green Climate Fund

- The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund established within the framework of the UNFCCC to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.
- The GCF is based in the new Songdo district of Incheon, South Korea.
- The objective of the Green Climate Fund is to "support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties using thematic funding windows".

- It is intended that the Green Climate Fund be the centrepiece of efforts to raise Climate Finance under the UNFCCC.

Background of the GCF

- The Copenhagen Accord, established during the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-15) in Copenhagen mentioned the "Copenhagen Green Climate Fund".
- The fund was formally established during the 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun as a fund within the UNFCCC framework.
- Its governing instrument was adopted at the 2011 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 17) in Durban, South Africa.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source-PIB

2. Roadside air purifiers WAYU and HEPA failed to curb pollution in Capital

- Roadside air purifiers and those installed on the top of buses to combat pollution have failed in Delhi.

Related Information

About WAYU

- WAYU stands for Wind Augmentation Purifying Unit.
- The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute a Nagpur-based laboratory of the -Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), had developed WAYU.
- It is a part of the Technology Development Project being funded by the Department of Science and Technology.
- The device has the capacity to purify the air in an area of 500 meter square at traffic intersections and dense traffic zones.
- The device works on two principles mainly wind generation for dilution of air pollutants and Active Pollutants removal.

- It has filters for particulate matter removal and activated carbon (charcoal) and UV lamps for poisonous gases removal such as Volatile organic compounds and Carbon Monoxide.

About HEPA Filters

- HEPA stands for High-Efficiency Particulate Air filter.
- It filters sucks airborne contaminants and pushes out clean, fresh air.
- It can trap nearly 99.97% of particles that are 0.3 microns.

About Pariyayatra

- These were a fleet of 30 buses with air filter units mounted on the roof.
- As the vehicle moves, air passes through the holes in front of the device.
- The filters inside the unit trap the pollutants.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source-AIR

3. BHIM UPI goes global

- Recently a pilot demo of BHIM UPI QR-based payments began in Singapore with a live transaction at a merchant terminal at the FinTech Festival 2019.
- It is the first time that BHIM app has gone international.
- The project is being jointly developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the Network for Electronic Transfers (NETS) of Singapore.
- It is targeted to go fully live by February 2020 and cover thousands of terminals in Singapore, after the Reserve Bank of India's approval.

About BHIM App

- It is a mobile payments application based on NPCI's Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- BHIM is developed by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)—the umbrella organisation for all retail payments system in India in 2016.

- The app has three-point authentication via mobile number, device ID and UPI PIN.

BHIM 2.0

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched a new version of Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM) app i.e. BHIM 2.0 in October 2019.
- The new version of BHIM supports three additional languages -- Konkani, Bhojpuri and Haryanvi -- over and over the existing 13.
- Under BHIM 2.0, the existing cap of Rs. 20,000 has been increased to Rs. 1, 00,000, from verified merchants.
- Other features include a 'donation' gateway, linking multiple bank accounts, option of applying in Initial Public Offering (IPO), gifting money, etc.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source-Indian Express

4. Manual scavenging has gone underground in India: WHO

- World Health Organisation has recently released a report titled, Health, Safety and Dignity of Sanitation Workers — An Initial Assessment.
- The report, which has been jointly authored by the International Labour Organization, WaterAid, World Bank, and WHO.

Highlights of the report

- It features the plight and dehumanising working conditions of sanitation workers across nine lower and middle-income group countries— India, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda.
- Sanitation workers across the developing world often suffer because of weak legal protection and lack of enforcement of existing rules.
- The report also talks about how sanitation workers who are not protected by adequate health and safety measures risk injury, infection,

disease, mental health issues, and death.

Government effort to end manual scavenging

a. Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act.

- In 1993, the Government of India enacted this act to prohibit the employment of manual scavengers for manually cleaning dry latrines and also the construction of dry toilets (that do not operate with a flush).
- It provided for imprisonment of up to a year and a fine.

b. Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- It is wider in scope and importance, acknowledging the urgency of rehabilitating manual scavengers.
- The act seeks to reinforce this ban by prohibiting manual scavenging in all forms and ensures the rehabilitation of manual scavengers to be identified through a mandatory survey.
- It prohibits the construction or maintenance of insanitary toilets.
- Offences under the Act are cognizable and non-bailable.

c. Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers

- The scheme aims to rehabilitate manual scavengers and their dependents in alternative occupations, in a time-bound manner.

Note:

- Supreme Court order in March 2014, makes it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewerage work since 1993 and provide Rs.10 lakh each as compensation to their families.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance (Important Report)

Source-Down to Earth

5. IndiaSkills 2020

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has announced the opening of online registrations for IndiaSkills 2020.

About IndiaSkills 2020

- It is a biennial competition to scout talent from the country, offering them a platform to showcase their skills at national and international competitions.
- Winners of IndiaSkills will then get a chance to represent the country at the WorldSkills International Competition to be held in China in 2021.

Note:

- The last IndiaSkills competition was organized in 2018, wherein 22 states and more than 100 corporates participated, that gave 355 competitors a chance to display their skills across various skill competitions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-AIR

6. Sisseri River Bridge

- Defence Minister has inaugurated the Sisseri River bridge at Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh.

Related Information

About the Sisseri River Bridge

- It is a 200-metre long bridge between Jonai-Pasighat-Ranaghat-Roing roads will provide connectivity between Dibang Valley and Siang of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It was constructed under Project Brahmaputra of Border Roads Organisation.
- The government has built this bridge under Border Area Development Programme.
- It plays a significant role in the government Act East Policy which would open new doors of rapid infrastructural development in the North-East, especially Arunachal Pradesh.
- The strong infrastructure in Arunachal Pradesh would also act as a bridge between India and South-East Asian countries.

About Border Roads Organisation

- It was formed in 1960 to secure India's borders and develop

infrastructure in remote areas of the north and north-east states of the country.

- It functions under the control of the Ministry of Defence since 2015.
- It executes road construction and maintenance works along the northern and western frontiers primarily to meet the strategic requirements of the army and also help in the maintenance of these roads.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Geography

Source- Hindustan Times

7. Pushkaram Festival

- The Assam government is celebrating Pushkaram festival at Brahmaputra River.

About Pushkaram Festival

- It is an Indian festival dedicated to worshipping of rivers.
- The festival is also known as Pushkaralu (in Telugu), Pushkara (in Kannada) or Pushkar.
- It is celebrated at shrines along the banks of 12 major sacred rivers which are Ganga, Yamuna, Tapti, Godavari, Chenab, Krishna, Narmada, Chambal, Kaveri, Beas, Saraswati and Brahmaputra.
- The festival happens annually once in 12 years along each river.
- This year it is celebrated at Brahmaputra River so it is also called Brahmaputra Pushkaram Festival.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source-PIB

8. National Mission 'NISHTHA' launched in J&K

- National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) was launched in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

About National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement

- It is the largest teachers' training programme of its kind in the world.
- It is a National Mission aimed at improving learning outcomes at

Elementary level through integrated Teacher Training.

- The basic objective of this massive training programme 'NISHTHA' is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students.
- The initiative is first of its kind wherein standardized training modules are developed at the national level for all States and UTs.

About the Learning Management System

- It is based on MOODLE (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) have been developed by NCERT.
- It will be used for registration of Resource Persons and Teachers, dissemination of resources, training gap and impact analysis, monitoring, mentoring and measuring the progress online.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Education

Source-PIB

9. Winter-grade diesel for UT of Ladakh

- Union Home Minister has recently launched the first Winter-Grade Diesel outlet for Ladakh region.

About the winter grade diesel

- It is produced by Panipat Refinery of State-run Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC).
- It is a special winter-grade diesel that remains unfrozen up to minus 33 degree Celsius.
- It does not lose its fluidity function even in the extreme winter weather of the region unlike the normal grade of Diesel which becomes exceedingly difficult to utilize.
- Help in boosting tourism by providing smoothing the travel and transportation during the peak tourist season in extreme cold in Ladakh.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source-PIB

10. Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act Of 1991

- In its recent verdict of Ayodhya, the Supreme Court commended the enactment of Places of Worship Act, 1991 as one that preserved the constitutional value of secularism by not permitting the status of a place of worship to be changed.

Related Information

About Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act Of 1991

Objective of the Act

- The aim of the Act was to freeze the status of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947.
- It was also to provide for the maintenance of the religious character of such a place of worship as on that day.
- It was intended to pre-empt new claims by any group about the past status of any place of worship and attempts to reclaim the structures or the land on which they stood.
- It was hoped that the legislation would help the preservation of communal harmony in the long run.

Main features of the act

- The Act declares that the religious character of a place of worship shall continue to be the same as it was on August 15, 1947.
- It says no person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination into one of a different denomination or section.
- It declares that all suits, appeals or any other proceedings regarding converting the character of a place of worship, which are pending before any court or authority on August 15, 1947, will abate as soon as the law comes into force.
- No further legal proceedings can be instituted.
- However, there is an exception to the bar on instituting fresh proceedings with regard to suits that related to the conversion of status that happened after August 15, 1947.

- This saves legal proceedings, suits and appeals regarding the change of status that took place after the cut-off date.
- These provisions will not apply to ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remain that are covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- The Act does not apply to the place of worship commonly referred to as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

Penal provision in the Act

- The Act provides for imprisonment up to three years and a fine for anyone contravening the prohibition.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-The Hindu

11. Election Commission to set up visiting chair in memory of former CEC TN Seshan

- Election Commission will establish a visiting chair on Interdisciplinary Approach to Electoral Studies in memory of former Chief Election Commissioner T N Seshan.
- The visiting chair will be established in the Centre for Curriculum Development at India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, New Delhi from 2020-2025.
- The Chair will be mentored by former Chief Election Commissioner N Gopalaswami.
- The Visiting Chair programme will be targeted to young academics with a proven track record in fields relatable to electoral studies.

Related Information

About India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management

- In June 2011, the Election Commission of India (ECI) established the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM).

Objectives:

1. to advance its professional competence in election management
2. promote peoples participation
3. contribute to developing stronger democratic institutions
4. support the efforts of ECI in carrying out its mandate and functions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-AIR

12. First Night trial Agni-II conducted successfully

- India has successfully conducted the first night trial of Agni-II, its versatile surface-to-surface medium-range nuclear-capable missile from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast.

Related Information

About Agni-II

- The missile was developed by DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organization).
- It is an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM), has already been inducted into the armed forces.
- The missile is capable of striking range of 2, 0000 km.
- It can carry a payload of 1,000 kg and launch weight of 17 tonnes.
- It is 20 meters long and is a two-stage missile.
- AGNI Missile Agni II missile is a part of series of Agni missile with a range of 2,000 km.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source-The Hindu

13. Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation unit

- The Central Bureau of Investigation has set up an On-line Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation(OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation Unit at New Delhi under its Special Crime Zone.
- The newly specialized Unit will collect, collate and disseminate information regarding publication, transmission, creation, collection, seeking, browsing, downloading, advertising, promoting, exchanging, distribution of information relating to On-line child sexual abuse and exploitation.

- The investigation of such offences covered under provisions of

1. the Indian Penal Code (IPC) 1860
 2. the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 (32 of 2012)
 3. the Information Technology Act 2000 (21 of 2000)
- The territorial jurisdiction of the Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) Prevention/Investigation Unit of CBI will be throughout India.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-Rajya Sabha TV

19.11.2019

1. 250th session of Rajya Sabha

- On the occasion of 250th session of Rajya Sabha began Chairman Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu released a publication, titled "Rajya Sabha.

Related Information

Composition of Rajya Sabha

- The maximum strength of the Rajya Sabha is fixed at 250, out of which, 238 are to be the representatives of the states and union territories (elected indirectly) and 12 are nominated by the president.
- At present, the Rajya Sabha has 245 members. Of these, 225 members represent the states, 8 members represent the union territories and 12 members are nominated by the president. (From 31st October Onwards)
- The Fourth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the states and union territories
- Mahendra Prasad is serving the highest number of 7th term followed by Dr.Manmohan Singh serving 6th term.
- The representation of women in Rajya Sabha increased from 15 (6.94%) in 1952 increased to 31(12.76%) in 2014 and is now 26(10.83%) in 2019.

Some unique events relating to Rajya Sabha:

- a. Casting vote by the Chair:
 - The first and the only time when a Presiding Officer of Rajya Sabha cast his vote was when the Panel Chairman Shri M.A.Baby did so on 5.8.1991
- b. President Rule approved only by Rajya Sabha:
 - It happened only twice in respect of extension of President Rule in Tamilnadu and Nagaland in 1977 and in case of Haryana in 1991 when Lok Sabha was dissolved.
- c. Removal of a Judge:
 - The only time Rajya Sabha adopted a motion for removal of a Judge was in respect of Justice Soumitra Sen of Calcutta High Court on 18.8.2011 but he resigned before the motion was taken up in Lok Sabha.

Some firsts relating to Rajya Sabha:

- The first sitting of the House was held on 13.5.1952.
- First Bill passed: The Indian Tariff (Second Amendment) Bill, 1952
- First Bill concerning social change: The Special Marriages Bill, 1952
- First Constitution Amendment Bill passed by Rajya Sabha:
 - o The Constitution (Second Amendment) Bill, 1953 for readjustment of representation in Lok Sabha by increasing the size of population per constituency.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

2. Exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the Sea)

- Navies of India and Qatar have started a five-day bilateral maritime exercise Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of the Sea) at Doha.

Related Information

About the Exercise

- This bilateral maritime exercise would help to strengthen the robust defence co-operation between the two countries, especially in the fight

against terrorism, maritime piracy and security.

- The exercise will include a three-day harbour phase and two days of sea phase.
- The activities during the harbour phase will include a seminar, professional interaction, official visits, sports fixtures along with social and cultural events.
- The sea phase will include a tactical maritime exercise involving the domains of surface action, air defence, maritime surveillance and interdiction operation and anti-terrorism.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- Business Standard

3. Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks – Potential Pathways to Reform'

- Government think tank NITI Aayog released a report 'Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks— Potential Pathways to Reforms.'

Highlights of the report

- The report identified five focus areas of the future health system –
 - a. To deliver on unfinished public health agenda
 - b. Change health financing away from out of pocket so spend into large insurers
 - c. Integrate service delivery vertically and horizontally
 - d. Empower citizens to become better buyers of health
 - e. Harness the power of digital health.
- The report also highlights the need for a digital backbone - including patient records and health stack - as well as risk pooling to bring forth a systemic reform in healthcare in India.
- The report –is based on the data collected by Access Health International for the public sector and PriceWaterhouseCoopers for the private sector.
- The public health expenditure in India (total of centre and state governments) has remained constant

over years at Niti Aayog proposes 'strategic purchasing' of services, to reduce health expenditure approximately 1.4% of the GDP.

- The Aayog, with a mandate to chart India's road map towards meeting the targets under the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030 – particularly in social sectors like health and education, have already come up with a three-year action agenda and a seven-year strategy.
- Currently, it is working on a 15-year vision document for the country's development.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Business line

4. ISRO to launch Cartosat-3, 13 commercial nanosatellites

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C47 will launch Cartosat-3 and 13 commercial nanosatellites into Sun Synchronous orbit from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.
- The launch is tentatively scheduled on 25th November subject to weather conditions.
- PSLV-C47 is the 21st flight of PSLV in 'XL' configuration, that is with 6 solid strap-on motors.

Cartosat-3

- It an advanced earth imaging and mapping satellite.
- It will be flown on the PSLV-C47 vehicle.
- Cartosat-3, with an ISRO-best resolution of 25 cm, will be the first of a series of high resolution, third-generation satellites planned for observing the Earth.
- The satellite will be able to pick up objects of that size (25 cm) from its orbital perch about 509 km away.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science &Technology

Source- AIR

5. Ka-226 choppers

- India wants higher indigenous content in the Kamov-226T light utility choppers which are to be jointly built in the country with Russia.

- The Kamovs will serve as a replacement for the military's ageing Cheetah and Chetak helicopters.

Related Information

Kamov-226

- It is a small, twin-engine Russian utility helicopter.
- It is manufactured by Russian Helicopters which will replace the ageing Cheetah and Chetak choppers.
- It can carry up to one-ton payload and has a maximum speed of 220 Km/hr.
- It is capable of working in extreme and difficult weather conditions which includes hot climate, marine areas and high mountains.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- The Hindu

6. GI Tag For Darjeeling Green, White Tea

- Darjeeling Tea Association said green and white tea of the hills have been registered as a geographical indication (GI) products in the country.
- These two varieties of Darjeeling tea have been registered under Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999, with effect from October 2019.
- Of the total annual production of 8.5 million kilograms of Darjeeling tea, green tea comprises one million kilogram and white tea one lakh kilogram.

Related Information

Geographical Indications

- It is an intellectual property right which is a status accorded to a good which is unique to a particular region or area and is originated from there.
- In India, the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, along with the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002 govern GI registrations and goods.
- These laws were introduced after the ratification of the Agreement on

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- NDTV

7. Company Law Committee 2019

- The 11-member Company Law Committee (CLC), set up under the chairmanship of Injeti Srinivas in September 2019 has submitted its report to Finance Minister.

Recommendation of the committee

- The report recommended re-categorizing 23 offences out of the 66 remaining compoundable offences under the Companies Act, to be dealt with in the in-house adjudication framework wherein these defaults would be subject to a penalty levied by an adjudicating officer.
- The quanta of penalties recommended are lower than the quantum of fines presently provided in the Act.
- It has suggested retention of status-quo in case of the non-compoundable offences.
- The report is focused on bringing a slew of changes to company law as part of efforts to further decriminalise the provisions and take more measures to provide further Ease of Living for Corporates in the country.
- The committee proposing benches of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal;
- Providing power to enhance the thresholds which trigger the applicability of Corporate Social Responsibility provisions.
- Exempting certain private placement requirements for Qualified Institutional Placements (QIPs) after due consultation with SEBI.
- For this report, the Panel has adopted a principle-based approach to further remove criminality, in case of defaults which can be determined objectively, and which otherwise, lack the element of fraud or do not involve larger public interest.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics
Important Committee

Source- Economics Times

8. SAANS, a campaign aimed at reducing child mortality

- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Harsh Vardhan launched SAANS, a campaign aimed at reducing child mortality due to pneumonia, which contributes to around 15% deaths annually of children under the age of five.
- SAANS, short for 'Social Awareness and Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully' was launched by the Union Health Ministry to mobilise people to protect children from pneumonia, and train health personnel and other stakeholders to provide prioritised treatment to control the disease.
- As per HMIS (Health Management Information System data), the under-five mortality rate in the country is 37 per 1000 live births, of which 5.3 deaths are caused due to pneumonia.
- The government aims to achieve a target of reducing pneumonia deaths among children to less than three per 1,000 live births by 2025.
- The HMIS data for 2018-19 ranked Gujarat second in the number of child deaths due to pneumonia, after Madhya Pradesh.
- The State ranked fifth in infant mortality due to pneumonia.
- Under the campaign, a child suffering from pneumonia can be treated with pre-referral dose of anti-biotic amoxicillin by ASHA workers, and health and wellness centres can use pulse oximeter (device to monitor oxygen saturation) to identify low oxygen levels in the blood of a child, and if required, treat him by use of oxygen cylinders.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Policies

Source- The Hindu

9. Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh

- Union Government has announced Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh which is

a repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones for better nutritional outcomes.

- Ministry of Women and Child Development has collaborated with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for this project.
- The Kosh aims at reducing malnutrition through a multi-sectoral results-based framework, including agriculture, among women and children across the country.

Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh has five-point action programme

- Ensure a calorie-rich diet for women, especially pregnant women and children.
- Ensure protein intake in the form of pulses to eradicate protein hunger among women and children.
- Eradicate hidden hunger due to micro-nutrient deficiency such as vitamin A, vitamin B, Iron and Zinc.
- Ensure supply of clean drinking water.
- Spreading nutrition literacy in every village, especially among women with children less than 100 days' old.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- The Hindu

20.11.2019

1. Breaking carbon dioxide

- Scientists from the University of Connecticut in the US have found a novel nickel-iron catalyst that breaks down carbon dioxide into useful chemicals faster, cheaper, and more efficiently than the standard method.
- This nickel-iron catalyst replaces the uses a catalyst made of platinum, which is a rare, expensive metal.

Nickel-iron catalyst

- These are the electrochemical cell filled with a porous, foamy catalyst made of nickel and iron, metals which are cheap and abundant.
- When carbon dioxide gas enters the electrochemical cell, and a voltage is applied, the catalyst helps the CO₂ -- a carbon atom with two oxygen--

break off oxygen to form carbon monoxide, a carbon atom with one oxygen.

- The electrochemical cell using the nickel-iron catalyst gets almost 100 per cent efficiency, according to the researchers.
- It's a nickel iron hydroxide carbonate, with a porous structure that allows the carbon dioxide gas to flow through it, the researchers said.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and technology

Source- AIR + Business Standard

2. 2019 World Conference on Access to Medical Products: Achieving the SDGs 2030

- The 2019 World Conference on Access to Medical Products- Achieving the SDGs 2030 will be convened in New Delhi.
- It is being jointly organized by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the World Health Organization, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR); Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC); and Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI).
- The specific objectives of the conference are to:
 - Explore new approaches in the innovation landscape in medical products for achieving Universal Health Coverage and the SDG 2030 goals.
 - Identify regulatory mechanisms for improved access to quality and safe medical products.
 - Discuss the role of intellectual property and current trade agreements to promote access to medical products

About sustainable development goals

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all

people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030.

- The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability.
- The 2030 Agenda commits the global community to "achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions - economic, social and environmental -- in a balanced and integrated manner".



Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

3. Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh

- The Minister of State (Health and Family Welfare), stated in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha about the Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh.

About Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh

- It is an autonomous body under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, implemented the following schemes:
- Purna Scheme (for delaying marriage, childbirth and spacing),
- Santushti Scheme (Public Private Partnership for sterilization services), and
- National Helpline (for information on family planning).

STEPS BEING TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL POPULATION GROWTH:

A. Mission Parivar Vikas

- The Government has launched Mission Parivar Vikas for substantially increasing access to contraceptives and family planning services in 146 high fertility districts with Total

Fertility Rate (TFR) of 3 and above in seven high focus states.

- These districts are from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Assam that itself constitutes 44% of the country's population.

B. Compensation scheme for sterilization acceptors -

- Under the scheme MoHFW provides compensation for loss of wages to the beneficiary and also to the service provider (& team) for conducting sterilizations.

C. Clinical Outreach Teams (COT) Scheme –

- The scheme has been launched in 146 Mission ParivarVikas districts for providing Family planning services through mobile teams from accredited organizations in far-flung, underserved and geographically difficult areas.

D. Family Planning Logistic Management and Information System (FP-LMIS):

- It is dedicated software to ensure smooth forecasting, procurement and distribution of family planning commodities across all the levels of health facilities.

E. National Family Planning Indemnity Scheme (NFPIS) is under implementation under which clients are insured in the eventualities of death, complication and failure following sterilization.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- PIB

4. South Asia Safety Summit

- The Women and Child Development ministry and Facebook have announced an initiative where they will share content to promote safety of women and children and build digital literacy during 2nd South Asia Safety Summit in New Delhi.
- The 2nd edition of South Asia Safety Summit organized by the Ministry of WCD and FACEBOOK.

- The South Asia Safety Summit is being organized to highlight the issue of safety while individuals and communities are connected on the digital platform.
- Union Minister of WCD also launched the We Think Digital

About We Think Digital

- This website is an online education portal with interactive tutorials aimed at helping people think critically and share thoughtfully online.
- "We Think Digital" is a four-part course designed to empower students with the knowledge to use, understand, evaluate, communicate and create with digital technologies.
- The programme will focus on online safety, privacy and misinformation.
- It is also a global digital literacy program through which it plans to partner with agencies from both government and civil society with aims to train more than 5 million people by 2021.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Women Empowerment

Source- PIB

5. National Unity Award-2020

- The online nominations/recommendations process for Sardar Patel National Unity Award is on and the last date for nominations/recommendations is 30th November 2019.

About National Unity Award

- Government of India has instituted the highest civilian award in the field of contribution to the unity and integrity of India, in the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- The Award seeks to recognize notable and inspiring contributions to promote the cause of national unity and integrity and to reinforce the value of a strong and united India.
- The award will be announced on the occasion of the National Unity Day,

i.e. the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel on 31st October.

- An Award Committee would be constituted by the Prime Minister, which would include the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary to the President, Home Secretary as Members and three-four eminent persons selected by the Prime Minister.

Salient features of the award are

- The Award would consist of a medal and a citation.
- No monetary grant or cash award would be attached to this Award. Not more than three Awards would be given in a year.
- It would not be conferred posthumously except in very rare and highly deserving cases.

Eligibility

- All citizens, without distinction of religion, race caste, gender place of birth, age or occupation, and any institution/organization would be eligible for the Award.
- Any Indian national or institution or organization based in India would be able to nominate an individual for consideration for this Award.
- Individual may also nominate themselves.
- State Governments, UT Administrations and Ministries of Government of India may also send nominations.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- PIB

6. IMD World Talent Ranking Report

- According to the latest edition of International Institute for Management Development World Talent Ranking, India has slipped 6 places to 59 ranks on the global annual list of 63 countries.

About International Institute for Management Development

- International Institute for Management Development (IMD) is a

business education school located in Lausanne, Switzerland.

- The IMD World Talent Ranking is based on countries' performance in three main categories — investment and development, appeal and readiness.

Finding of the report

- Switzerland retained its title as the world's top talent hub, while Europe leads the way in fostering the best conditions for competitiveness in a skills-scarce global economy.
- The countries at the top of the rankings share strong levels of investment in education and a high quality of life
- Denmark was placed second and Sweden was in the third place.
- The Top 10 was completed by Austria (4th), Luxembourg (5th), Norway (6th), Iceland (7th), Finland (8th), the Netherlands (9th) and Singapore (10th).
- In Asia, Singapore, along with Hong Kong SAR (15th) and Taiwan (20th) lead in terms of talent competitiveness due to the readiness of talent pool.

India and Report

- India has slipped 6 places to 59 ranks on the global annual list of 63 countries.
- India is also lagging behind fellow BRICs countries - China ranked 42nd on the list, Russia (47th) and South Africa (50th).
- India also witnessed one of the sharpest declines among Asian economies owing to low quality of life, negative impact of brain drain, and the low priority of its economy on attracting and retaining talents.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Report

Source- The Hindu

7. National Intelligence Grid

- National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project will be operational by December 31, 2020, the Lok Sabha was informed

About NATGRID

- It is an intelligence-sharing network that collates data from the standalone databases of the various agencies and ministries of the Indian government.
- It is a counter-terrorism measure that collects and collates a host of information from government databases including tax and bank account details, credit card transactions, visa and immigration records and itineraries of rail and air travel.
- At least 10 Central government agencies, such as the Intelligence Bureau, the Research and Analysis Wing Central Bureau of Investigation, Financial intelligence unit, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Enforcement Directorate, Narcotics Control Bureau, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs and the Directorate General of GST Intelligence.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Internal Security

Source- The Hindu

8. Parliament passes Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill 2019

- Parliament has passed the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) bill which is yet to get president approval.
- Bill seeks to amend Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951 It has a provision to remove the President of the Congress party as a trustee and clarifies that when there is no Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, the leader of the single largest Opposition party will be the trustee.
- The Bill also allows the Central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of the period of his term, without assigning any reason

Topic- GS Paper 2- Polity

Source- AIR

21.11.2019

1. Industrial Relations Code Bill

- The Centre approved the Industrial Relation Code Bill, which is the third code under labour reforms.

- The government wants to codify 44 central labour laws into four broad codes.
- The draft code on Industrial Relations has been prepared after simplifying and rationalizing the relevant provisions of three Central Labour Acts.
 - a. the Trade Unions Act, 1926
 - b. the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946
 - c. the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Highlights of the bill

- The bill provides for setting up of a two-member tribunal (in place of one-member), thus introducing a concept that some of the important cases will be adjudicated jointly and the rest by a single-member resulting speedier disposal of cases.
- It also provides for imparting flexibility to the exit provisions relating to retrenchment and others, for which the threshold for prior approval of appropriate government has been kept unchanged at 100 employees, but added a provision for changing 'such number of employees' through notification (executive order).
- That means there would be no need for Parliament approval. The threshold can be changed by executive order.
- The bill also provides for the definition of Fixed Term Employment and that it would not lead to any notice period and payment of compensation on retrenchment excluded.
- It also provides for vesting of powers with the government officers for adjudication of disputes involving penalty as fines thereby lessening the burden on the tribunal.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- PIB

2. What is deposit insurance?

- Recently after the failure of the Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank reigniting the debate on the low level of insurance for deposits held by customers in banks in India, the central government now plans to raise the cover.

The insurance cover provided currently

- Currently, in case of a bank collapse, a depositor has a claim to a maximum of Rs 1 lakh per account as insurance cover — even if the deposit in their account far exceeds Rs 1 lakh and this amount is termed as deposit insurance.
- The cover of Rs 1 lakh per depositor is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a fully owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India.
- The Rs 1 lakh-cover is for deposits in commercial banks, regional rural banks (RRBs), local area banks (LABs), and cooperative banks.

About Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation

- It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reserve Bank of India.
- It was established on 15 July 1978 under the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961 for the purpose of providing insurance of deposits and guaranteeing of credit facilities.
- DICGC insures all bank deposits, such as saving, fixed current, recurring deposit for up to the limit of Rs. 100,000 of each deposit in a bank.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Economics (Banking System)

Source- The Hindu

3. Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

- The plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is being hosted by India in New Delhi.

About Kimberley Process

- It is a joint initiative involving the Government, the international diamond industry and civil society to stem the flow of Conflict Diamonds.
- Conflict Diamonds means rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments.

- It is also described in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions.
- At present, KPCS has 55 members representing 82 countries including EU with 28 members.
- Kimberley Process participants actively prevent 99.8% of the worldwide trade of conflict diamonds.

India and the KPCS

- India is one of the founder members of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and is actively involved in KP activities to ensure that almost 99% of the diamond trade in the world is conflict-free.
- India had earlier chaired KPCS in the year 2008.
- India is at the forefront in addressing the issue of differentiation between Natural Diamonds and Lab Grown Diamonds and ensures responsible business in this area.
- Currently, India exports around USD 24 billion cut and polished diamonds.
- Department of Commerce is the nodal Department and Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) is designated as the KPCS Importing and Exporting Authority in India.
- GJEPC is responsible for issuing KP Certificates and is also the custodian of KP Certificates received in the country.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International organisation

Source- PIB

4. National Institute of Sowa-Rigpa
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of the National Institute for Sowa-Rigpa in Leh as an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of AYUSH.
 - The institute will provide an impetus for the revival of Sowa-Rigpa in the Indian Sub-continent.

- It will also provide opportunities for students of Sowa-Rigpa not only in India but also from other countries.

About Sowa-Rigpa

- It is a traditional medical system of the Himalayan belt in India.
- It has been popularly practised in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Darjeeling (West Bengal), Himachal Pradesh, Union Territory of Ladakh and now all over India.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- PIB

5. Swachh Sarvekshan Grameen award 2019
 - The Union Minister of the Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers and the Union Minister of State of the Ministry of Jal Shakti recently conferred the Swachh Sarvekshan Grameen 2019 awards.
 - They had given this award to top-ranked states, union territories, and districts in the various categories on the occasion of World Toilet Day.

About Swachh Sarvekshan Grameen-2019

- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation had commissioned "Swachh Sarvekshan Grameen-2019" (SSG 2019) through an independent survey agency to develop a ranking of all districts of India on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters.
- This ranking was done based on a comprehensive set of parameters including surveys of public places like schools, Anganwadis, PHCs, Haat/Bazaars, Panchayat.
- The top-ranked States and Districts which received awards are as below:

Overall Ranking:

- Top 3 States – 1) Tamil Nadu, 2) Haryana, 3) Gujarat
- Top 3 Districts – 1) Peddapalli, Telangana, 2) Faridabad, Haryana, 3) Rewari, Haryana

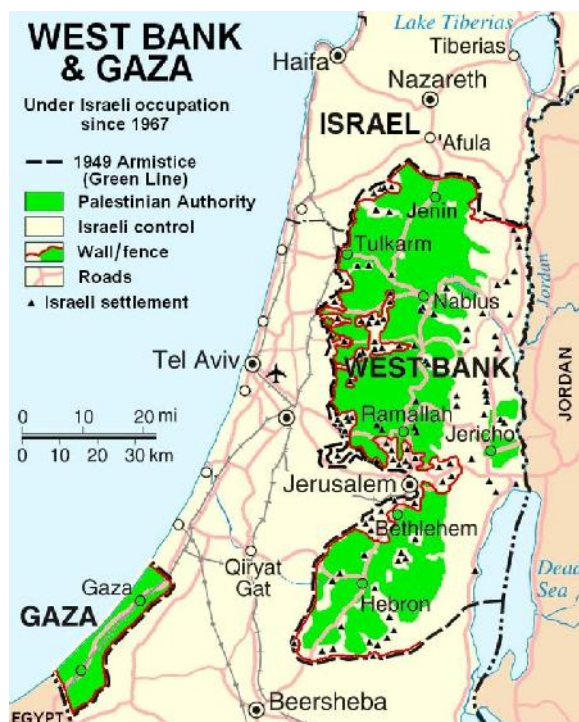
- State with maximum citizen participation – 1) Uttar Pradesh

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

6. West Bank

- The Trump administration declared recently that the United States does not consider Israeli settlements in the West Bank a violation of international law.
- The new US view is different from that of most countries' on this issue.



About the West Bank settlements

- The West Bank, a patch of land about one and a half times the size of Goa, was captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.
- Israel snatched it back during the Six-Day War of 1967 and has occupied it ever since.
- It has built some 130 formal settlements in the West Bank, and a similar number of smaller, informal settlements have mushroomed over the last 20-25 years.
- Over 4 lakh Israeli settlers — many of them religious Zionists who claim a Biblical birthright over this land — now live here, along with some 26 lakh Palestinians.

The legality of the Israeli settlements

- The United Nations General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the International Court of Justice have said that the West Bank settlements are violative of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power "shall not deport or transfer parts of its own

civilian population into the territory it occupies”.

- Under the Rome Statute that set up the International Criminal Court in 1998, such transfers constitute war crimes, as does the “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”.
- Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Relation

Source- Indian Express

7. Renaming Agra as ‘Agravan’
 - The government of Uttar Pradesh may be planning to change the name of Agra to Agravan.
 - The Department of History at the Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar University in Agra has been asked to examine whether the city was known by any other name in ancient times.

Background

- The Greek astronomer, mathematician and geographer Claudius Ptolemy who lived in the 2nd century AD in the city of Alexandria in the Roman province of Egypt, is believed to be the first person to refer to the city of “Agra”.
- He had written this in his well-known work ‘Geographia’ (The Geography), according to an 1885 translation by JW McCrindle titled, ‘Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy’.
- According to a thesis titled ‘City of Agra Under the Mughals From 1526-1707’ which was submitted to the Department of History at Aligarh Muslim University by Zeba Siddiqi in 2006, the earliest reference to Agra appears in the Mahabharata, where it is referred to as “Agravana”.
- The thesis argued that in sources predating the Mahabharata, the city has been referred to as Arya Griha, or the home of the Aryans.

- Agra was also known as Akbarabad during the Mughal Period.
- It served as the capital of the Delhi Sultanate in the early 16th century.

About Claudius Ptolemy

- He was a Greco-Egyptian writer of Alexandria who was known as a mathematician, astronomer, geographer, astrologer, and poet of a single epigram in the Greek Anthology.
- Ptolemy was the author of several scientific treatises.
 - a. Almagest
 - b. The Geography, which is a thorough discussion of the geographic knowledge of the Greco-Roman world.
 - c. Astrological treatise Tetrabiblos

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

8. Sri Lanka: Mahinda Rajapaksa to be sworn in as new PM

- In Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa will be sworn in as new Prime minister after Ranil Wickremesinghe decided to resign from his post to pave way for a caretaker government.
- Mr. Rajapaksa served as two-term President during which 2005 to 2015 and is the elder brother of current President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. He was barred from contesting Presidential elections because of two-term limit and will be staging a political comeback as Prime minister.
- A caretaker cabinet of 15 ministers is also expected to be sworn in. The caretaker government will carry routine work till parliamentary elections are held early next year.

Topic- GS Paper 2 -International Affairs

22.11.2019

1. Smart Safety Surveillance or 3S programme
 - The central government will expand the reach of the Smart Safety Surveillance, or 3S, programme, to

optimize post-marketing surveillance of priority drugs and vaccines.

- This will ensure the vaccines distributed under the universal immunization programme are safe.

About 3S project

- It was recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), considering the limited safety data on vaccines introduced in India.
- WHO has been prodding countries to adopt the 3S programme, with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to strengthen pharmacovigilance systems in developing nations

India and 3S Project

- As part of the 3S project, India is evaluating the recently-introduced rotavirus vaccines.
- It is also trying to strengthen the collaboration among key stakeholders, such as the ministry of health and Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), to ensure high levels of vigilance.
- The 3S project implemented in India allowed synthesis of multiple data sets, with high data quality from the sentinel surveillance systems, which provide reassurance regarding the safety of the Rotavac vaccine.
- The 3S priorities in India were to link pharmacovigilance activities between different stakeholders, for data sharing, signal detection, risk assessment, risk management, risk communication, and benefit harm evaluation for regulatory decision-making.
- Governments are plans of scaling up pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and introduction of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine and typhoid vaccines.
- The government is also planning to expand coverage of PCV that prevents pneumonia among children to all states by 2022.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- Live mint

2. Lok Sabha passes Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill 2019

- The Lok Sabha passed the Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2019 that seeks to streamline operations of chit funds in India and protect the interests of investors, mainly the economically weaker sections of the society.
- The Bill seeks to amend Chit Funds Act, 1982 which regulates chit funds and prohibits a fund from being created without the prior sanction of a State Government.
- Under the legislation, chit fund schemes operated by individuals can raise a maximum of Rs3 lakh, up from the existing Rs1 lakh.
- For firms, with four or more partners, the Centre had proposed to raise the amount from Rs6 lakh to Rs18 lakh.
- The proposed changes in the bill include raising the maximum commission of the person who manages the fund from 5% to 7% of the chit amount.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- PIB

3. Cabinet approves the proposal for enactment of Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for enactment of Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and accession to the Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009.

Benefits:

- The proposed Bill restricts and prohibits the use or installation of hazardous material, which applies irrespective of whether a ship is meant for recycling or not.
- For new ships, such restriction or prohibition on the use of hazardous material will be immediate, that is, from the date the legislation comes into force, while existing ships shall have a period of five years for compliance.
- Restriction or prohibition on the use of hazardous material would not be applied to warships and non-

commercial ships operated by Government.

- Ships shall be surveyed and certified on the inventory of hazardous material used in ships.
- The Bill also provides that ships shall be recycled in accordance with a ship-specific recycling plan.
- Ships to be recycled in India shall be required to obtain a Ready for Recycling Certificate in accordance with the HKC.
- The bill helps to provide for the regulation of recycling of ships by setting certain international standards and laying down the statutory mechanism for enforcement of such standards.
- When the Hong Kong International Convention for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 comes into force, its provisions will be implemented under the provisions of the Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019 and rules and regulations framed thereunder.

Background:

- India is the leader in the global ship recycling industry, with a share of over 30% of the market.
- As per United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report on Review of Maritime Transport, 2018, India had demolished 6323 tonnes in 2017, of known ship scrapping across the world.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organization

Source- PIB

4. Himayat Mission

- The Jammu and Kashmir administration has added 42 projects under the Himayat Mission.
- Under this project, they are provided free skill training for a duration ranging from 3 to 12 months.

Himayat Mission

- It is a placement linked skill training programme for unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir implemented in the State since 2011.

- The vision of this mission is to empower the youth of J&K by providing employment opportunities through vocational training programs.
- It is being implemented by the Himayat Mission Management Unit, J&K State Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKSRLM), Govt of J&K within the state.
- The scheme is part of the Skill Empowerment and Employment scheme of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Background

- The Programme is an outcome of the recommendations of Dr. C. Rangarajan Committee report submitted in 2011 which suggested a scheme of Skill Development for school/college dropouts.
- The Report suggested increasing employability of youth by improving their skill-sets and providing support for placement and self-employment.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Employment

Source- PIB

5. Patent Prosecution Highway programme

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for adoption of Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) programme by the Indian Patent Office (IPO).
- The PPH programme will initially commence between the Japan Patent Office (JPO) and the Indian Patent Office on pilot basis for a period of three years only.
- Under this Pilot programme, the Indian Patent Office may receive patent applications in certain specified technical fields only.

Benefits for the Indian IP office:

- Reduction in time to dispose of patent applications and reducing pendency.
- An opportunity for Indian inventors including MSMEs and Startups of India to get an accelerated examination of their patent applications in Japan.

- The patent offices will frame their own guidelines for implementation of the programme.

Indian Patent Office

- The Indian Patent Office is administered by the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks (CGPDTM).
- This is a subordinate office of the Government of India and administers the Indian law of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

6. Cabinet approves an extension of the pharmaceuticals purchase policy
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of Pharmaceuticals Purchase Policy (PPP) for pharmaceutical Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) till their closure or strategic disinvestment.
 - The extension or renewal of the policy would help the pharma CPSUs in optimum utilization of their existing facilities.

Pharmaceuticals Purchase Policy

- It was approved by the Cabinet in 2013 for five years in respect of 103 medicines manufactured by pharma CPSUs and their subsidiaries.
- The policy is applicable to purchases by central/ state government departments and their public sector undertakings.
- The pricing of the products is done by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).
- The term of the policy expired in 2018.

About the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

- It is an independent body under the Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- Its functions are to:
 - fix/revise the controlled bulk drugs prices and formulations,

- enforce prices and availability of the medicines under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995/2013,
- recover amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers
- monitor the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Issue

Source- PIB

7. Indian Performing Right Society

- The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai Police has registered an FIR against Yash Raj Films (YRF) Pvt Ltd. on a complaint by the Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS).
- This is the first criminal case initiated by the IPRS after it was re-registered as a copyright society in 2017.

About Indian Performing Right Society

- It is a representative body of artists, including music owners, composers, lyricists, and publishers of music, which collects royalties due to the artists if their work is used anywhere from a wedding to a New Year function or on radio or TV.
- The body was set up in 1969, and re-registered as a copyright society in 2017, following which it started functioning actively.

Background

- A 2012 amendment in The Copyright Act, 1957 laid down that artists would get 50% of royalties every time their work was used, even if the copyright remained with the production house or the music brand.
- The IPRS is responsible for collecting the 50% royalty that is due to artists involved in “literary work accompanied to music” — meaning lyricists, music composers, and publishers of music.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Important Organisation

Source- The Hindu

8. Idris Elba

- Scientists have given the name Idris Elba to a species of wasp that is again

a protector — of crops which are recently discovered in Mexico.

- The wasp was found living as a parasite in the eggs of another insect, known as the bagrada bug, which is a major pest of cruciferous vegetables.
- Species of Idris were previously known to only parasitize spider eggs.
- Other related wasps have been known to kill off spider eggs, but this is the first time scientists have seen a wasp act as a parasite toward stink bug eggs.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Science Daily

9. Avian botulism killed 18,000 birds at Sambhar: Govt report

- Avian botulism killed over 18,000 birds in and around Rajasthan's Sambhar Lake, the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, said in a report.

About Botulinum

- It is a natural toxin produced by a bacterium known as Clostridium botulin.
- It produces toxin when it starts reproducing.
- The bacteria is commonly found in the soil, river, and seawater.
- There are around eight types — A, B, C1, C2, D, E, F, and G — of botulinum toxin and they are distinguishable when diagnosed.

- But all types of toxins attack the neurons, which leads to muscle paralysis, states a study.
- Botulinum affects both humans and animals but the type of the toxin varies — botulinum C in birds and A, B and E in humans.
- The toxin has been recognised as a major cause of mortality in wild birds since the 1900s.

Environment Favorable for Bacteria Growth

- anaerobic (absence of oxygen) conditions; Basic conditions (pH ranged between 7.4- 9.84); the temperature of the water around 25 degree Celsius.
- It also requires a nutrient-rich substrate, like areas with large amounts of decaying plant or animal materials.
- According to reports, the bacteria is also found in the gills and digestive tracts of healthy fish.
- They are resistant to temperature changes and drying but under favourable conditions, the spores are activated.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

10. Israel PM Netanyahu charged with corruption in three separate cases

- Israel's attorney general has charged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in connection with three separate cases.
- Mr Netanyahu is alleged to have accepted gifts from wealthy businessmen and dispensed favours to try to get more positive press coverage.
- The prime minister described the charges as an attempted coup, blaming them on a tainted process. He has also insisted he will not resign and is not legally obliged to do so.
- The announcement comes amid a political stand-off in Israel following two inconclusive general elections in April and September.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Affairs



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