

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## Monthly Compilation

### for IAS/PCS Exams

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**March 2018**

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**01. 03. 2018**

**PM Modi holds talks with King of Jordan in New Delhi; two countries sign 12 agreements**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi held delegation-level talks with King of Jordan Abdullha II Bin Al Hussein in New Delhi. The two leaders discussed entire gamut of bilateral relations.
- The two countries signed 12 agreements after the delegation talks in the fields of defence, health, culture, visa, manpower and media.

Source- News on air

**CBDT achieves important milestone of 200 APAs**

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) entered into seven more Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs) during the month of February, 2018. All the seven are Unilateral APAs. With the signing of these Agreements, CBDT has crossed an important milestone of having signed 200 APAs.

**Related Information**

**Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs)**

- The APA provisions were introduced in the Income-tax Act, 1961 in 2012 and the “Rollback” provisions were introduced in 2014.
- The APA scheme endeavours to provide certainty to taxpayers in the domain of transfer pricing by specifying the methods of pricing and setting the prices of international transactions in advance.

Source- PIB

**National Science Day 2018: steps for a sustainable tomorrow**

- National Science Day is celebrated across India on February 28 to mark Dr. C.V. Raman’s discovery of the scattering of light, also known as the “Raman effect”.
- In honour of this discovery and as a mark of tribute to the scientist, National Science Day was marked for the first time on February 28, 1987.
- National Science Day is celebrated to spread the message about the importance of science used in the daily life of the people and popularise science and technology.
- The theme for National Science Day 2018 is "Science and Technology for a sustainable future."

Source- The Hindu

**Western Naval Command Concludes Exercise Paschim Leher (XPL-18)**

- The Western Naval Command of the Indian Navy concluded a large scale operational exercise in the Arabian Sea.
- The three-week long exercise termed Exercise ‘Paschim Leher’ (XPL), tested the operational readiness of the Western Naval Command and the execution of its operational plans.

- The XPL 2018 enabled testing and revalidation of operational plans and manoeuvres in a hostile maritime scenario on India's Western Seaboard.

Source- PIB

**02. 03. 2018**

1. **Cabinet approves Establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority**

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the proposal for establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA).
- NFRA will act as an independent regulator for the auditing profession which is one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act, 2013.

**Why was it needed?**

- The need for establishing NFRA has arisen on account of the need felt across various jurisdictions in the world, in the wake of accounting scams, to establish independent regulators, independent from those it regulates, for enforcement of auditing standards and ensuring the quality of audits to strengthen the independence of audit firms, quality of audits and, therefore, enhance investor and public confidence in financial disclosures of companies.

**Impact of NFRA:**

- The decision is expected to result in improved foreign/domestic investments,
- enhancement of economic growth,
- supporting the globalisation of business by meeting international practices, and
- assist in further development of audit profession.

**Jurisdiction of NFRA:**

- The jurisdiction of NFRA would extend to listed companies and large unlisted public companies.
- The Central Government can also refer such other entities for investigation where public interest would be involved.

**Will ICAI become redundant:**

- The inherent regulatory role of ICAI (The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India) as provided for in the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 shall continue.
- ICAI shall continue to play its advisory role with respect to accounting and auditing standards and policies by making its recommendations to NFRA.

*Topic: GS-II: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies*

Source: PIB

**Fugitive economic offenders Bill, 2018**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Finance to introduce the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 in Parliament.

- The Bill would help in laying down measures to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

### **Who is a 'fugitive economic offender'?**

According to Section 4 of the law, a 'fugitive economic offender' is "any individual against whom a warrant for arrest in relation to a scheduled offence has been issued by any court in India, who:

1. leaves or has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution; or
2. refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

### **Why was a bill needed?**

There have been several instances of economic offenders fleeing the jurisdiction of Indian courts, anticipating the commencement, or during the pendency, of criminal proceedings.

The absence of such offenders from Indian courts has several deleterious consequences –

- first, it hampers investigation in criminal cases;
- second, it wastes precious time of courts of law,
- third, it undermines the rule of law in India.
- Further, most such cases of economic offences involve non-repayment of bank loans thereby worsening the financial health of the banking sector in India.
- The existing civil and criminal provisions in law are not entirely adequate to deal with the severity of the problem.

### **Salient features of the Bill:**

- Application before the Special Court for a declaration that an individual is a fugitive economic offender;
- **Attachment** of the property of a fugitive economic offender;
- **Issue of a notice** by the Special Court to the individual alleged to be a fugitive economic offender;
- **Confiscation** of the property of an individual declared as a fugitive economic offender resulting from the proceeds of crime;
- **Confiscation** of other property belonging to such offender in India and abroad, including benami property;
- **Disentitlement** of the fugitive economic offender from defending any civil claim;

### **Impact of the Bill:**

- The Bill is expected to re-establish the rule of law with respect to the fugitive economic offenders as they would be forced to return to India to face trial for scheduled offences.
- This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults.

*Topic: GS-II: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies*

Source: PIB

### **Shatrughan Sinha wins lifetime achievement award in UK**

- Actor-politician Shatrughan Sinha has been honoured with a lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the fields of arts and politics at a ceremony in the UK's Parliament complex.
- The annual '**Political and Public Life Awards**' presented by Britain's Asian Voice weekly newspaper, now in its 12th year, recognises individuals who have made a significant impact on public life or made a difference in their local communities.

Source: Indian Express

#### 4. **Tiger Conservation Efforts**

- A rapid survey across 112 tiger conservation areas in 11 range countries has now shown that at least a third of these areas are at severe risk of losing their tigers due to poor management.
- Three countries, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia have lost all their tigers.
- The survey was carried out by **Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA | TS) support group** members, experts, and government officials.

Findings of the Survey:

- Just over half sites reported fairly strong management.
- In 87% of sites, tiger monitoring was being implemented.
- All sites surveyed in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal, and Russia had management plans, while several in Southeast Asia did not.
- Only 16 of 112 sites had intelligence-driven anti-poaching processes in place.
- Three-quarters of the surveyed sites had insufficient staff and lacked adequate management infrastructure

What happens now?

- The results are a "wake-up call" for all tiger range governments and stakeholders.

**Related Information:**

- In November 2010, the first "Tiger Summit" in St Petersburg, Russia, endorsed a Global Tiger Recovery Programme aimed at reversing the rapid decline of tigers, and doubling their numbers by 2022.
- India was one of the 13 tiger range countries that participated in the gathering, at which leaders committed to "drawing up action plans to strengthen reserves, crack down on poachers and provide financial assistance to maintain a thriving tiger population".

*Topic: GS-III: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment*

Source: The Indian Express

5. **Government readies social security scheme for 50 crore workers**

- The labour ministry has proposed a comprehensive social security system to provide retirement, health, oldage, disability, unemployment and maternity benefits to 50 crore workers in the country, a month after the government announced the National Health Protection Scheme announced in the Budget.
- The scheme will be implemented in four tiers with the government wholly financing the cost for people below the poverty line.
- The first phase will see all workers getting the bare minimum, which includes health security and retirement benefit.
- The second phase will see unemployment benefits being added to it while in the third phase, other welfare measures can be added

**Funds for the scheme:**

- The scheme will be largely funded from the Building and Construction Worker Cess and funds allocated to other scattered schemes through the National Stabilisation Fund set up for the purpose.

**Implementation Framework:**

- Its implementation would be regulated and monitored by an overarching regulatory body called the National Social Security Council to be chaired by the prime minister with finance minister, health minister and chief ministers of all states along with workers and employers as its members

**Related Information:**

- India's total workforce stands at around 500 million. A little over 10% of this is in the organised sector, where workers enjoy social security of some sort under EPFO and ESIC.
- But a major portion of the total workforce is still in the unorganised sector, where workers do not often get even the minimum wage and lack any kind of social security cover.

*Topic: GS-II: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes*

*Source: Economic Times*

**03. 03. 2018**

1. **India, Russia, Bangladesh signed pact for Rooppur atomic plant**

- India, Bangladesh and Russia signed an agreement to allow Indian firms in construction and installation works in the “non-critical” category for the Rooppur nuclear power plant project in northwest Bangladesh.
- The Rooppur project is the first initiative under an Indo-Russian deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.
- This will also be the first-time Indian companies will be able to participate in a nuclear power project abroad.

- India is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and hence cannot participate directly in construction of atomic power reactors.

### **Related Information**

#### **NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty)**

- The NPT is an international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to foster the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of disarmament.
- Opened for signature in 1968, the treaty entered into force in 1970.
- Four UN member states have never accepted the NPT, these are India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.
- Currently there are 190 members after North Korea acceded in 1985.

#### **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**

- It is a group of 48 nuclear supplier countries that seek to prevent nuclear proliferation by controlling the export of materials, equipment and technology that can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.
- The NSG was founded in response to the Indian nuclear test in May 1974 and first met in November 1975.

*Source- Livemint*

#### **2. What is the Kuthiyottam ritual and why is it in the news?**

- On February 28, 2018, the Kerala State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights registered a suo motu case in connection with the Kuthiyottam ritual.
- The commission said it would examine if the ritual, reportedly involving piercing children's sides with a hook, violated child rights in any manner.

#### **What is the Pongala festival?**

- The Kuthiyottam ritual is usually performed every year during the Pongala festival at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- The Attukal Pongala festival is the largest congregation of women for a festival in the world.
- The ritual can only be performed by women, and the streets of the city are known to be jam packed with devotees during the festival.

#### **What does the Kuthiyottam ritual involve?**

- Nearly 1,000 young boys undertake a seven-day penance before Pongala day.
- These boys are said to represent the wounded soldiers of the goddess.
- The boys have to observe strict discipline and stay inside the temple for seven days.

#### **Issues**

- The ritual reportedly involves piercing the child's side with a small hook and knotting a thread through it to symbolise their bond with the Goddess.
- Then hooks are pulled out and ash roughly applied on the wounds.
- Parents may feel relieved that their boys will now grow up to be disciplined kids and do well in their studies.

Source- *The Hindu*

3. **World's largest solar park Shakti Sthala launched in Karnataka**

- The Karnataka government inaugurated the first phase of a 2,000 megawatts (MW) solar park in the drought-prone Pavagada region of Tumkur district, about 180km from Bengaluru.
- The first phase of the Rs16,500 crore park called "Shakti Sthala" will generate 600MW, while the balance 1,400MW is expected to be commissioned by the end of this year.
- The solar project, touted as the largest in the world, is spread over 13,000 acres and five villages.
- It is part of the "Karnataka Solar Policy 2014-2021" which aims to decrease dependence on traditional power sources and move to environmentally friendly ones to meet the growing power needs of the state.
- The park ties in with the centre's scheme to generate 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar power by 2020.

Source- *Livemint*

4. **Chilika lake largest habitat of Irrawaddy dolphins globally**

- The Chilika lake in Odisha has emerged as the single largest habitat of Irrawaddy dolphins in the world with the spotting of 155 such animals.
- The use of zero nets for fishing has also been reduced significantly, but they still pose the maximum threats to the eco-system of the lake as they increase siltation.

**Irrawaddy dolphin**

- The Irrawaddy dolphin is a euryhaline species of oceanic dolphin.
- It is found in discontinuous subpopulations near sea coasts and in estuaries and rivers in parts of the Bay of Bengal and Southeast Asia.

Source- *DD News*

5. **Mumbai to become 1st Indian city to join World Cities Culture Forum**

- Mumbai is set to be the newest member and the first Indian city on the World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF), a platform for cities to share their culture.

**Related Information**

**World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF)**

- The WCCF enables the policy makers of member cities to share research and intelligence, while exploring the vital role of culture in prosperity.
- Forum members collaborate via a program of events including themed symposia, regional summits and workshops.
- The forum, which began in 2012 with eight members, is a network of 32 key cities.

Source- Hindustan Times

**05. 03. 2018**

1. **US' reciprocal taxes threat to WTO principle**

- The United States' plan to impose reciprocal taxes against countries, including U.S. allies, that levy tariffs on American products.
- It will be an outright departure from global trade norms that enable developed countries to give differential and more favourable treatment to developing countries.
- Reciprocal Taxes will allow the US to charge the other countries as they charge US.
- US expect developing countries to grant higher trade concessions to developed countries like itself.
- This will contradict the WTO's concept of non-reciprocity in trade negotiations between developed and developing countries.

**Related Information**

**WTO (World Trade Organization)**

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that regulates international trade.
- The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
- It is the largest international economic organization in the world.
- The WTO has 164 members and 22 observer governments.
- The highest decision-making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which usually meets every two years.
- **Uruguay Round-eighth GATT round-** It was the biggest negotiating mandate on trade ever agreed. The talks were going to extend the trading system into several new areas.
- **Marrakesh Agreement-** The Final Act concluding the Uruguay Round and officially establishing the WTO regime was signed 15 April 1994, during the ministerial meeting at Marrakesh, Morocco, and hence is known as the Marrakesh Agreement.
- **Doha Round-** launched at the fourth ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar in November 2001. This was to be an ambitious effort to make globalization more inclusive and help the world's poor, particularly by slashing barriers and subsidies in farming.

### Subsidies related to WTO

- **Green Box subsidies**- which are no or least market distorting includes measures decoupled from output such as income-support payments (decoupled income support), safety – net programs, payments under environmental programs, and agricultural research and-development subsidies.
- **Blue Box subsidies**- Only ‘Production limiting Subsidies’ under this are allowed. They cover payments based on acreage, yield, or number of livestock in a base year.
- **Amber Box subsidies** – Those subsidies which are trade distorting and need to be curbed.

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

- It is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- It sets down minimum standards for the regulation by national governments of many forms of intellectual property (IP) as applied to nationals of other WTO member nations.
- TRIPS was negotiated at the end of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1994 and is administered by the WTO.

### Peace Clause

- Trade negotiators generally refer to Article 13 of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture as the Peace Clause.
- Article 13 holds that domestic support measures and export subsidies of a WTO Member that are legal under the provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture cannot be challenged by other WTO Members on grounds of being illegal under the provisions of another WTO agreement.

### Reciprocity

- The principle of reciprocity states that favours, benefits, or penalties that are granted by one state to the citizens or legal entities of another, should be returned in kind.

*Topic- GS-1- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

*Source- Economic Times*

#### 2. UNEP “Renewable Global Status Report 2017” spotlight on Kerala’s energy-positive campus

- The ‘Renewable Global Status Report 2017: Towards a zero-emission, efficient, and resilient buildings and construction sector,’ has listed the EMC campus as one of the recent achievements in the deployment of key technologies for energy-efficiency in buildings.
- The Energy Management Centre (EMC), an autonomous institution under the Kerala government, has grabbed the global spotlight for its energy-positive campus, located at Sreekaryam in the Thiruvananthapuram.
- The report is published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

## Related information

### United Nations Environment Programme

- The United Nations Environment Programme is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was founded as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972.
- It is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.
- UN Environment has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.
- The World Meteorological Organization and UN Environment established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988.
- UN Environment is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.

*Topic- GS-3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.*

*GS-2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

*Source- The Hindu*

### 3. World wildlife day

- Every year March 3 is celebrated as World Wildlife Day to raise awareness about our planet's flora and fauna.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was finalised on March 3 and the day has been celebrated as World Wildlife Day since 2014.
- This year the theme is "**Big cats — predators under threat.**"

## Related Information

### CITES

- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the **Washington Convention**) is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The convention was opened for signature in 1973 and CITES entered into force on 1 July 1975.
- Each protected species or population is included in one of **three lists**, called appendices.
- Currently, 183 countries are signatory to the CITES.

*Topic- GS-3-Environment*

*Source- The Hindu*

4. **1.5 million penguins discovered on Danger Islands of Antarctic**

- A thriving “hotspot” of 1.5 million Adelie penguins has been discovered on Dangerislands off the Antarctic Peninsula.

**Related Information**

**Danger Islands**

- The Danger Islands is a group of islands lying 24 km east-south-east of Joinville Island near the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula.
- The Danger Islands have been identified as an "important bird area" by BirdLife International because it supports Adélie penguin colonies and seabirds.

**Penguins**

- Penguins are a group of aquatics, flightless birds.
- They live almost exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere, with only one species, the Galapagos penguin, found north of the equator.

**BirdLife International**

- BirdLife International is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.
- It is the world's largest partnership of conservation organisations, with over 120 partner organisations.
- The group’s headquarters are located in Cambridge, UK.

*Topic- GS-3-Environment*

*Source- The Hindu + Wiki*

5. **Odisha govt launches 'Ama Gaon, Ama Vikas' programme**

- The Odisha government has launched a programme Ama Gaon, Ama Vikas (Our Village, our development) to reach out to the people in rural areas and involve themselves in the developmental activities.
- Through these Wi-Fi enabled latest technology video wall vans, people can directly send their grievances to the Chief Minister’s Office.

*Topic-GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- AIR*

6. **OSCAR Awards 2018 (90<sup>th</sup> Acedemy Awards ceremony)**

- The 90th Academy Awards ceremony, presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) took place at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California.

Important Awardees are-

<b>Award Category</b>	<b>WINNER</b>	<b>Description</b>
Best Picture	The Shape Of Water Crew	For the movie "The Shape Of Water"
Best Director	Guillermo del Toro	For the movie "The Shape Of Water"
Best Actor	Gary Oldman	For acted in movie "Darkest Hour"
Best Actress	Frances McDormand	For acted in the movie "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"

*Topic- Important for PCS Exams*

*Source- oscar.go.com*

**06. 03. 2018**

**1. India's child marriage numbers dropped sharply– UNICEF**

- According to the latest report of UNICEF, the proportion of girls getting married in India has nearly halved in a decade (2006-16) which has contributed significantly to a global decline in child marriage.
- UNICEF said 25 million child marriages were prevented worldwide in the last decade, with the largest reduction seen in South Asia – where India was at the forefront.
- India constitutes more than 20 percent of the world's adolescent population and accounts for the highest number of child marriages in South Asia.
- In the current trend, 27 percent of girls, or nearly 1.5 million girls, get married before they turn 18 in India.
- This is a sharp decline from 47 percent a decade ago.
- Child marriage adds to health, education and abuse risks, and increases the chance of intergenerational poverty.
- UNICEF estimates that 12 million girls a year are married globally.
- UNICEF also stressed to end the practice by 2030 – the target set under the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals.

**Related information**

**UNICEF**

- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is a United Nations (UN) programme that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.
- It is headquartered in New York City.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group.

*Topic- GS-2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

*Source- Indian Express*

2. **Marshall Islands became the first Country to Adopt a Cryptocurrency as Its Official Currency**

- The Pacific island nation “Marshall Islands” became the first Country in the world to Adopt a Cryptocurrency as Its Official Currency.
- Its official currency is named as “Sovereign,” or SOV.

**Related Information**

- In February 2018, Venezuela became the first country to launch its own cryptocurrency when it launched the virtual **Petro**, backed by crude oil reserves.

**Marshall Islands**

- The Republic of the Marshall Islands is an island country located near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, slightly west of the International Date Line.
- Geographically, the country is part of the larger island group of Micronesia.

**Micronesia**

- Micronesia is a sub-region of Oceania, composed of thousands of small islands in the western Pacific Ocean.
- It has a shared cultural history with two other island regions, Polynesia to the east and Melanesia to the south.
- The Micronesia region encompasses five sovereign, independent nations—the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, and Nauru.

**Cryptocurrency**

- A cryptocurrency is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange using cryptography to secure the transactions and to control the creation of additional units of the currency.
- Cryptocurrencies are classified as a subset of digital currencies and are also classified as a subset of alternative currencies and virtual currencies.
- Bitcoin became the first decentralized cryptocurrency in 2009.

*Topic- GS-2-Economic Development*

*GS-1- World Geography*

*Source- DD News*

3. **13 Intangible Cultural Heritage elements from India inscribed on UNESCO’s List**

- A total of 13 Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements from India have been inscribed till date on the UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

- For inclusion of an element in the list, the state parties are required to submit nomination dossier on the relevant element for evaluation and examination of the UNESCO Committee.
- The Ministry of Culture has appointed the **Sangeet Natak Akademi**, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture, **as nodal office** for matters relating to the intangible cultural heritage.

### Related Information

#### Complete List of Intangible Cultural Heritage elements from India

- 1 Koodiyattam- Sanskrit Theatre, Kerala
- 2 Mudiyyett- a ritual theatre of Kerala
- 3 The Tradition of Vedic Chanting
- 4 Ramlila- the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana
- 5 Ramman- religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas
- 6 Kalbelia- folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
- 7 Chhau dance- a tradition from eastern India
- 8 Buddhist chanting of Ladakh
- 9 Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur
- 10 Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab
- 11 Yoga
- 12 Nowruz Navruz
- 13 Kumbh Mela (Recently added in 2017)

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- PIB*

#### 4. **Premium Tag for Coffee grown in Araku Valley**

- The Coffee Board applied for registration of Araku coffee under Geographical Indications to protect the unique identity of the coffee grown by the tribal communities of Araku Valley.
- The Coffee Board, is promoting production of coffee in Araku Valley by implementing the **“Integrated Coffee Development Project”**.
- The scheme includes extending financial support for replanting and expansion, creation of water harvesting and irrigation infrastructures and mechanisation of coffee estate operations.

### Related information

#### Araku Valley

- The Araku Valley is located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.

- It is a valley in the Eastern Ghats inhabited by different tribes.

### GI Tag

- A geographical indication (GI) is a name or sign used on certain products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region, or country).
- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 has come into force with effect from 15 September 2003.
- This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also Registrar of Geographical Indications.
- GIs have been defined under Article 22(1) of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.
- Darjeeling tea became the first GI tagged product in India.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- PIB*

#### 5. **The 80:20 Scheme: What is it and who benefitted from it?**

- Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad alleged the 80:20 (gold import) Scheme that was introduced by the UPA government in August 2013, was designed to help jewellers such as Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

#### **What was the 80:20 scheme?**

- The scheme was introduced in August 2013 to curb the import of gold.
- During this period, the country's macroeconomic indicators, especially the current account deficit (the excess of imports over exports), were weak.
- While 80% of gold imports under the scheme (India is one of the biggest importers of gold globally) could be sold in the country, at least 20% of imports had to be exported before importers could bring in new consignments.
- The permission to import the next lot was to be given upon the fulfillment of the export obligation.
- The policy aimed to discourage gold imports to rein in the widening current account deficit.

#### **Why were the rules eased in May 2014?**

- The 80:20 scheme was relaxed in May 2014 by the RBI at the behest of the Finance Ministry.
- Jewellers, bullion dealers, authorised dealer banks and trade bodies had approached the Ministry requesting a relaxation of the policy.
- The easing of rules allowed more agencies to import gold.
- Initially, only state-owned banks and firms were permitted to import gold.
- Later, six to seven private sector trading firms were also permitted to import gold under the scheme.

- These private firms accounted for 40% of the total gold imports in April-September that year.

#### **When was the scheme scrapped?**

- On November 28, 2014, the scheme was scrapped.
- It has been decided by the Government of India to withdraw the 20:80 scheme and restrictions placed on the import of gold.
- Over three years later, last week, a sub-committee of the PAC (Public Account committee) reportedly asked the Revenue Department to share details of the scheme and its alleged link with the Punjab National Bank fraud case.

*Topic- GS-3-Indian Economy*

*Source- Indian Express*

**07. 03. 2018**

#### **1. WTO to set up compliance panel in solar dispute between India, US**

- WTO dispute settlement body has agreed to set up a panel to determine whether India has complied with its ruling in a case against the US regarding domestic content requirements for solar cells and modules.

#### **Background**

- On 11 January 2010, India had launched its national solar policy, named Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission.
- The country has an ambitious target of generating 20,000 megawatt (MW) of solar power by 2022.
- The US complained before the WTO in 2014 and alleged that a clause relating to domestic content requirement for the procurement of solar cells and modules under Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission were discriminatory to American solar power developers.
- In 2016, New Delhi had lost a case against the US at the WTO after the global trade body stated that power purchase agreements signed by the Indian government with solar firms for its National Solar Mission did not meet international trade norms.
- The US, which is of the opinion that New Delhi continues to apply the “WTO-inconsistent measures”, had in December 2017 approached the WTO demanding action against India for non-compliance of the WTO ruling.
- India, however, has been maintaining that it has complied with the WTO’s ruling.
- India had requested the WTO to set up a panel to determine its compliance with the rulings of the dispute.

#### **Related Information**

##### **Dispute Settlement Body of WTO**

- The General Council convenes as the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to deal with disputes between WTO members.

- Such disputes may arise with respect to any agreement contained in the **Final Act of the Uruguay Round** that is subject to the Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU).
- The DSB has authority to establish dispute settlement panels, refer matters to arbitration, adopt panel, Appellate Body and arbitration reports, maintain surveillance over the implementation of recommendations and rulings contained in such reports etc.

### **General Council of WTO**

- The General Council is the WTO's highest-level decision-making body in Geneva, meeting regularly to carry out the functions of the WTO.
- It has representatives from all member governments and has the authority to act on behalf of the ministerial conference which only meets about every two years.
- The Ministerial Conference can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.

*Topic- GS-2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

*Source- Livemint + WTO*

#### **2. Global Firepower ranks India's military as fourth strongest**

- India's military is placed at fourth on a Global Firepower (GFP) list 2017.
- There are 133 countries included in the Global Firepower (GFP) list 2017 on the basis of their global military powers.
- Pakistan ranked 13th in the Global Firepower (GFP) list 2017.
- India has managed to maintain its position among the top five military powers in the world.
- The list is topped by the US followed by Russia and China respectfully.

*Topic- GS-3- Defence*

*Source- Indian Express*

#### **3. Special category status for Andhra Pradesh**

- Andhra Pradesh Governor asked the Centre to expedite resolution of all provisions in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, including according special category status to the state.

### **Background**

- The demand was raised after erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated.
- Following the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, Andhra lost a large volume of its revenue due to Hyderabad remaining the capital of Telangana.
- In a debate in the Rajya Sabha on the A.P. Reorganisation Act on February 20, 2014, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had said that SCS would be "extended to the successor State of Andhra Pradesh for a period of five years."

### **Related Information**

### What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

- The Constitution does not include any provision for categorisation of any State in India as a Special Category Status (SCS) State.
- The NDC (National Development Council) granted this status based on a number of features of the States which include-
  - (a) Hilly and difficult terrain
  - (b) Low population density or the presence of sizeable tribal population
  - (c) Strategic location along international borders
  - (d) Economic and infrastructural backwardness
  - (e) Non-viable nature of State finances.

### What kind of assistance do SCS States receive?

- The central government allocates 30 percent of its plan expenditure to these States as late as 2009-10. (Gadgil-Mukherjee formula).
- Following the constitution of the NITI Aayog and the recommendation Central plan assistance to SCS States has been subsumed in an increased devolution of the divisible pool to all States (from 32% in the 13th FC recommendations to 42%) and do not any longer appear in plan expenditure.
- The 14 FC also recommended variables such as “forest cover” to be included in devolution, with a weightage of 7.5 in the criteria and which could benefit north-eastern States that were previously given SCS assistance.
- Assistance to Centrally Sponsored Schemes for SCS States was given with 90% Central share and 10% State share.

### What other States are seeking SCS status?

- Apart from Andhra Pradesh, **Bihar and Odisha** also demanding SCS status but they have not been granted the same as they did not meet the criteria.

### How many states have been provided SCS status?

- NDC has accorded 11 states, out of 29 states, the status of "Special Category States" to target the fund flow for better balanced growth.
- They are-
  - (a) Seven States of North-Eastern region (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura)
  - (b) Sikkim
  - (c) Jammu & Kashmir
  - (d) Himachal Pradesh
  - (e) Uttarakhand.

*Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity*

*Source- The Hindu*

4. **Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana expected to benefit 20 lakh farmers**

- The Government is implementing the Central Sector Scheme – PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA (PMKSY) with an allocation of Rs. 6,000 crores for the period 2016-20.
- The scheme is expected to benefit 20 lakh farmers and generate 5,30,500 direct/ indirect employments by the year 2019-20.

### Related Information

#### PRADHAN MANTRI KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA (PMKSY)

- In May 2017, the CCEA had approved the central scheme called **SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters)** by clubbing all ongoing schemes related to food processing.
- Later the scheme is renamed as **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)**.
- The PMKSY has the following schemes:
  - (i) Mega Food Parks
  - (ii) Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure
  - (iii) Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters etc.

*Topic- GS-3-Agriculture*

*Source- PIB*

**08. 03. 2018**

#### 1. **Multilateral lender EBRD approved India's membership**

- India is all set to become the 69th member of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) after shareholders of the international financial institution gave their nod to the country's candidature.
- The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.

#### **EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development)**

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution founded in 1991.
- As a multilateral developmental investment bank, the EBRD uses investment as a tool to build market economies.
- It is Headquartered in London.
- The EBRD is owned by 66 countries, the European Union and the European Investment Bank.
- Each shareholder is represented individually on the Board of Governors of the EBRD which has overall authority over the Bank.
- In 2017, the EBRD signed a pact with the International Solar Alliance, which was unveiled in 2015 in Paris.
- The largest shareholder in EBRD is U.S.

- Despite its public-sector shareholders, it invests mainly in private enterprises, together with commercial partners.

*Topic- GS-3-Economic Development*

*Source- The Hindu*

## 2. **Swachh Shakti 2018**

- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in association with the Government of Uttar Pradesh organized a Women’s Convention – called Swachh Shakti 2018 on International Women’s Day (8 March).
- It was organized at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- 8000 women sarpanches, 3000 women Swachhagrahis, 2000 mahilasamakhyas from Uttar Pradesh and women sarpanches from across the country invited to recognize their outstanding contribution towards making Swachh Bharat a reality in rural India.

### **Related Information**

#### **Swachh Bharat Mission-**

- The Swachh Bharat Mission was launched on 2 October 2014 at the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The Mission is aimed at achieving a clean and open defecation free (ODF) India.
- The mission was divided into two parts — urban and rural.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission Urban is managed by the Ministry of Urban Development, while the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (Rural) is led by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

#### **Achievement**

- With all-round efforts, 314 districts and 3.23 lakh villages have been declared ODF.
- Since the mission’s launch in 2014, the states and Union Territories of Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Haryana, Chandigarh and Daman & Diu have been declared ODF (Open defecation free).
- Sikkim was declared first ODF state.
- The sanitation coverage has more than doubled from 38.70% to 78.98% since the Swachh Bharat Mission was launched.

*Topic- GS-2-Governance*

*Source- PIB*

## 3. **46th Edition of “Know India Programme”**

- Forty participants of Indian Origin from Nine Countries attended the 46<sup>th</sup> edition of Know India Programme (KIP).
- The KIP – a 25-day orientation programme is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with one or two States for 10 days orientation programme.

- As part of the 46th KIP, the participants visited Madhya Pradesh as the Partner State.

### Related information

#### Know India Programme (KIP)

- Know India Programme abbreviated as KIP is a government initiative by the **Ministry of External Affairs** for the **Indian diaspora (excluding NRIs)** between the **age group of 18 to 30 years**.
- It was launched on January 8, 2014, on the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi.
- The purpose of the Know India Programme is to help Persons of Indian Origin youths familiarize with their roots and contemporary India and provide them an exposure to the country of their origin.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian diaspora*

*Source- PIB + Wiki*

#### 4. Centre sanctions Rs 1,000 crore for research and innovation scheme IMPRINT India

- The Union Government announced a grant of Rs 1,000 crore for the second phase of the Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT) India programme.
- Under the IMPRINT-II, a fund is being created by the Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of Human Resource Development together, in which participation will come from industry and other interested Ministries.
- These projects will cover crucial domains like security and defence, information technology, energy, sustainable habitat, advance materials, health care, nano technology, climate change, etc.

### Related information

#### IMPRINT India

- 'IMPRINT India', a Pan-IIT and IISc joint initiative to develop a roadmap for research to solve major engineering and technology challenges in ten technology domains (including security and defence, information technology, energy etc).
- It was launched in November 2015.
- The objectives of programme are-
  - (1) Identify areas of immediate relevance to society requiring innovation
  - (2) Direct scientific research into identified areas
  - (3) Ensure higher funding support for research into these areas and
  - (4) Measure outcomes of the research effort with reference to impact on the standard of living in the rural/urban areas.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- PIB + Business Standard*

#### 5. National Mission for Preservation of Manuscripts (NMM)

- The project National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) was launched by the Ministry of Culture in the year 2003.
- The mission was launched with the objectives to survey, document, and conserve/preserve, digitize and publish the Indian Manuscripts and establish a digital manuscripts library at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi.
- The budget allocation for the financial year 2018-19 has been increased to Rs. 1500.00 lakh against the budget allocation of Rs. 1200.00 lakh for the financial year 2017-18.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- PIB*

6. **Swatantra Sainik Samman Yojana (SSSY)**

- The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of Swatantra Sainik Samman Yojana (SSSY) during 2017-2020 beyond the 12th Five Year Plan which ended on 31/03/2017.
- The approval provides for a monthly Samman Pension to freedom fighters, as a token of respect for their contribution in the national freedom struggle and on their demise, to their eligible dependents as per prescribed eligibility norms and procedure.

**Background**

- Government of India introduced the 'Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners Pension Scheme' in 1969 to honour the freedom fighters who had been incarcerated in the Cellular Jail at Port Blair.
- In 1972, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Independence, a regular scheme for grant of freedom fighters' pension was introduced.
- Thereafter, with effect from 01.08.1980, a liberalized scheme, namely the 'Swatantrata Sainik Samman Pension Scheme, 1980' is being implemented.
- From the financial year 2017-18 onwards, the nomenclature of the Scheme has been changed as 'Swatantrata Sainik Samman Yojana'.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare schemes*

*Source- PIB*

7. **Architect Balkrishna Doshi first Indian to win Pritzker Prize**

- Indian Architect and educator, Balkrishna V Doshi became the first Indian to win the Pritzker Prize.
- The Pritzker Prize is regarded as architecture's equivalent to the Nobel Prize.
- He has created projects for public administrations and utilities, educational and cultural institutions, and residences for private clients, among others.

**Related Information**

**Pritzker Architecture Prize**

- The Prize is awarded annually to honour a living architect whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.
- The laureate receives USD 100,000 and also a bronze medallion.
- The award is funded by the Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation.

*Topic-* Important for PCS Exams

*Source-* Indian Express

#### 8. **Prime Minister inaugurated pan-India expansion of 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' programme**

- Prime Minister inaugurated the pan-India expansion of flagship programme “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” from Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan, to save and educate the girl child.
- The programme has been expanded from the present 161 districts to 640 all over the country.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the National Nutrition Mission to reduce under-nutrition and low birth weight, bring down anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls.

#### **Related information**

##### **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**

- Launched by the Prime Minister on January 22, 2015, at Panipat, Haryana.
- Objective- Improve Child Sex Ratio, Protection and education of girl child.
- Three ministries are involved which are -Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.
- Enforcement of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCP&DT) Act, 1994.

*Topic-* GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States

*Source-* Indian Express

**09 03. 2018**

#### 1. **Supreme Court recognises 'living will' of terminally ill patients, allows passive euthanasia**

- The Supreme Court's five-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra has allowed the 'living will' made by terminally-ill patients for passive euthanasia.
- The apex court laid down guidelines for the same, including who would execute the will and how nod for passive euthanasia would be granted by the medical board.

#### **Background**

- **In Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug vs Union of India case (March 7, 2011) case-**

The Supreme Court permitted passive euthanasia and laid down comprehensive guidelines.

- The 2012 Law Commission Report recommended legislation on passive euthanasia and drew up a draft Bill — The Medical Treatment of Terminally Ill Patients (Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill.
- In 2016 Health Ministry had released the draft Bill “The Medical Treatment of Terminally Ill Patients (Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill” to permit passive euthanasia.

#### **What does the proposed Bill say?**

- It seeks to allow a patient faced with terminal illness to decide whether he/she wishes to continue medical treatment in the form of life support or medication.
- A “competent person” aged 16 or more can decide, with the consent of spouse or parents.
- The medical practitioner is supposed to inform the patient of all treatment options and can provide palliative care to make the end of life less painful.

#### **How is the new law expected to work?**

- In a situation where a patient cannot make a competent decision on continuing or withdrawing treatment, the Bill is expected to allow a doctor, hospital or relative to approach a court to withhold treatment.
- The court will appoint a panel that would dispose of the matter in a month

Issue- Doctors said the legal road may delay the process.

#### **Related Information**

##### **What is a Living Will?**

- Also termed as “advance medical directive”, it is defined as a direction issued by an individual that “he or she shall or shall not be given medical treatment in future when or he she becomes terminally ill”.

##### **Euthanasia**

- Euthanasia is the practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering.

##### **Active and passive euthanasia**

- Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug vs Union of India case (March 7, 2011)-

The Supreme Court distinguished between “active” and “passive” euthanasia:

(a) **Active euthanasia** entails the use of lethal substances or forces to kill a person, e.g. a lethal injection.

(b) **Passive euthanasia** entails withholding of medical treatment for continuance of life, e.g. withholding of antibiotics where without giving it a patient is likely to die.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- Indian Express*

#### **2. Animal Welfare Board of India headquarters shifted from Chennai to Haryana**

- The headquarters of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has been shifted from Chennai to Haryana's Ballabgarh.

- It has been done for "better coordination" between the environment ministry and the board.

### Related Information

#### Animal Welfare Board of India

- It is a statutory advisory body on Animal Welfare Laws and promotes animal welfare in the country.
- It was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- The Board was initially within the jurisdiction of the Government of India's Ministry of Food and Agriculture.
- In 1990, the subject of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was transferred to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change, where it now resides.
- Important functions of the boards are-
  - (a) Recognition of Animal Welfare Organisations
  - (b) Financial assistance
  - (c) Animal welfare Laws and Rules
  - (d) Raising awareness

*Topic- GS-3-Environment*

*Source- New Indian Express + Animal Welfare Board of India*

#### 3. **Udyam Sakhi Portal Launched for Women Entrepreneurs**

- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched a portal for women entrepreneurs of India on International Women's Day, March 8.
- India has around 8 million women who have started and are running their own businesses and the women in India can play a vital role in the growth of the Indian economy.
- The portal is a network for nurturing entrepreneurship and creating business models for low cost products and services in order to empower women and make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.

*Topic- GS-3-Economic Development*

*Source- Business Standards*

#### 4. **Madhya Pradesh CM announced 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Kosh' scheme**

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister on Women's day announced 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Kosh' scheme under which women **who aren't married and are above the age of 50** will be given pension.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare schemes*

*Source- ANI News*

#### 5. **Scientists discover antibiotic-producing bacterium**

- A novel species of a bacterium that produces antibiotic has been discovered by a professor Venkata Ramana of the University of Hyderabad and his researchers.
- The newly discovered bacterium, **Planctopirus hydrillae**, may provide a solution to the problem of diseases becoming resistant to a majority of known drugs.
- The new bacteria would also clean up ammonia waste, a growing environmental concern.

### Background

- Scientists have been striving hard to find drugs to overcome the challenge of antimicrobial resistance in the wake of disease-causing germs failing to respond to even the most potent antibiotics.

### Related Information

- This is the first group from India to develop the art of cultivating these bacteria which are very useful even for environmental issues particularly for the treatment of ammonia waste.
- The bacterium was isolated from aquatic plant Hydrilla.
- The bacteria are called as “**Anamox (Anaerobic ammonia oxidising) bacteria**.”

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- The Hindu*

#### 6. **Karnataka govt unveiled state flag for Karnataka**

- Karnataka Chief Minister unveiled the proposed official state flag for Karnataka.
- It would be sent to the central government for approval.
- The ‘**Naada Dwaja**’ (state’s flag) in hues of yellow, white and red, has the state’s emblem ‘**Gandaberunda**’ or the two-headed mythological bird, at its centre.

### Background

- A committee formed by the state government last year had recommended the separate flag for Karnataka, discounting any constitutional or legal hurdles for it.

*Topic-GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source-Indian Express*

**10. 03. 2018**

#### 1. **ILO projects unemployment rate at 3.5% in 2018**

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) projected unemployment in India at 18.6 million in 2018, higher than 18.3 million in 2017 in its report.
- It was stated in a report "World Employment and Social Outlook Trends - 2018" released by ILO.
- As per the report, number of unemployed persons in India is expected to rise from 18.3 million in 2017 to 18.6 million in 2018 and 18.9 million by 2019.

- At the same time, unemployment rate is expected to remain static at 3.5 percent during the same period.

### Related Information

#### ILO (International Labour Organization)

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency dealing with labour problems, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- The ILO was founded in 1919.
- The ILO has 187-member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO.
- The ILO organises the International Labour Conference in Geneva every year in June. It is also known as “Parliament of Labour”.
- The **ILO Recommendations** do not have the binding force of conventions and are not subject to ratification.
- If the **ILO conventions** are ratified by enough governments, they become in force. However, ILO conventions are considered international labour standards regardless of ratification.
- When a convention comes into force, it creates a legal obligation for ratifying nations to apply its provisions.

#### Unemployment

- It is a situation in which people are ready and willing to work at the existing rate of wages but still, they cannot get work.

#### Unemployment in India

- Measurement unemployment and employment are done by NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) in India.
- NSSO divide people into the following three categories -
  - (a) Working people (engaged in an economic activity)
  - (b) Not working (looking for work)
  - (c) Neither working nor looking for work
- People in category (a) are called workforce.  
People in category (b) are called unemployed.  
People in categories (a) and (b) are called Labour force.  
People in category (c) are called not in the Labour force.
- Number of unemployed = Labour force – Workforce
- Unemployment data in India are kept under the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

*Topic- GS-3-Indian Economy*

*Source- Economic Times*

2. **Buddhist Community of Itanagar celebrated the silver jubilee of the Losar Festival**

- The Buddhist Community of Itanagar celebrated the silver jubilee of the Losar Festival.
- For the Buddhist community, the festival is termed as the 'New Year' according to their Buddhist calendar.
- The Losar festival which is celebrated as the New Year by the Buddhist community has entered into 2145 Earth Dog year as per the Buddhist calendar.

#### **Related Information**

- Losar festival, which has its origin in the 15th century, celebrates the Ladakhi or Tibetan New Year.
- It is said to last 15 days, but the first 3 days are the most important ones.
- Losar is characterized especially by dancing, music, and a general spirit of merrymaking.

Topic-GS-1-Indian Culture

Source- Business Standard

#### **3. Govt announced the launch of 'SUVIDHA' scheme**

- Government announced the launch of 'Suvidha', the 100% Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).
- The affordable sanitary napkin will be available for Rs. 2.50 per padat over 3200 Janaushadhi Kendras across India.
- And it would ensure 'Swachhta, Swasthya and Suvidha' for the underprivileged Women of India.
- SUVIDHA napkins would be physically available at all Janaushadhi Kendras in the country by May 28, 2018 – World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

#### **Related Information**

- According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16-

(a) About 58 percent of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons.

(b) Further, about 78 percent women in urban areas use hygienic methods of protection during menstrual period.

(c) Only 48 percent women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)**

- It is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.
- The medicine will provide to masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK).
- PMBJK have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

Topic- GS-2 Welfare Schemes

Source- PIB

4. **Cabinet approved the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018**

- The Union Cabinet approved the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018 for introduction in the Parliament.
- It is a part of the efforts of the Govt to encourage institutional arbitration for settlement of disputes and make India a centre of robust Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.

**Benefits**

- The Amendments in the Act of 1996 will facilitate achieving the goal of improving institutional arbitration by-
  - (a) Establishing an independent body to lay down standards
  - (b) Make arbitration process more party friendly
  - (c) Cost effective and ensure timely disposal of arbitration cases.

**Salient features**

- To facilitate speedy appointment of arbitrators through designated arbitral institutions by the Supreme Court or the High Court, without having any requirement to approach the court in this regard.
- It is envisaged that parties may directly approach arbitral institutions designated by the Supreme Court for International Commercial arbitration and in other cases the concerned High Courts.
- The amendment provides for creation of an independent body namely the Arbitration Council of India (ACI).
- The body will grade arbitral institution and accredit arbitrators by laying down norms and take all such steps as may be necessary to promote and encourage arbitration, conciliation, mediation and other ADR Mechanism.
- The Council shall also maintain an electronic depository of all arbitral awards,
- The Chairperson of ACI shall be a person who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice or Judge of any High Court or any eminent person.

**Background**

- The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, was amended by the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015 in order to make arbitration process user friendly, cost effective and ensure speedy disposal and neutrality of arbitrators.
- However, to give a boost to institutional, arbitration vis-a-vis ad hoc arbitration and to remove some practical difficulties in applicability of the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015, a High-Level Committee was constituted by the Central Government.
- The committee submitted its Report on 30th July, 2017 and has recommended for amendments in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

*Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures*

Source- PIB

#### 5. Anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka

- The Sri Lankan government has imposed an island-wide emergency in the wake of anti-Muslim violence in Kandy, a city in the central highlands in Ampara district on March 4-5.
- The district has almost equal population of Muslims and Sinhala-Buddhists on the country's eastern coast.
- A Sinhala-Buddhist extremist group is suspected to be behind the violence.

#### Background

- An emergency was in force in Sri Lanka for 40 years from 1971 during the civil war over the Tamil demand for a separate state.
- This is the first time it has been reimposed after it was withdrawn in 2011, and it underlines the new political and ethnic dynamics in Sri Lanka.
- The incidents of the last few days are the latest in a series of violent episodes targeting the Muslim community that Sri Lanka has witnessed in the post-war years.
- They are a direct fallout of the triumphalism and majoritarianism that took hold in sections of the Sinhala Buddhist majority community after the military defeat of the LTTE, encouraged by the Mahinda Rajapakse regime.
- Since then, a raft of groups openly professing hatred for Muslims, as well as Christians, has come up, some of them using social media to spread their venom.
- But the incidents began occurring again towards the end of 2016, when some Muslims, who had been displaced from northern Sri Lanka during the war, began going back to reclaim their lands in villages.

#### Sri Lanka's Muslims

- According to the 2011 Census of Sri Lanka, Muslims are slightly more than 9% of Sri Lanka's 20.3 million population; Sinhala Buddhists are 75%, and Tamils 11%.
- The language of Sri Lanka's Muslims is Tamil.
- The majority of Muslims, most of whom are businessmen or traders, still live in the East, which was part of the LTTE's Eelam vision.
- Until 1990, the Muslims believed they had common cause with Tamil political aspirations.
- But that year, a newly resurgent LTTE following the IPKF's departure from Sri Lanka, drove out nearly 100,000 Muslims from their northern citadel of Jaffna and other parts of northern Sri Lanka under its control.
- That was when the Sri Lankan Muslim found a new political consciousness, and within a decade of its formation, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress was seen by Sinhala political parties as a "kingmaker" party.
- Once the war against the LTTE was over, it was almost as if Sinhala-Buddhist extremism, which conflates religion with territory and language, needed a new enemy.

## **IPKF- Indian Peace Keeping Force**

*Topic- GS-3-International Issues*

*Source- Indian Express*

**12. 03. 2018**

### **Existing return filing system extended; e-way bill rollout in April**

- The existing system of filing [GST returns](#) has been extended by another three months, finance minister Arun Jaitley, after the 26th [GST](#) council meeting held in Delhi.
- The council could not decide on a simplified GST return form and entrusted the Group of Ministers (GoM) under Sushil Modi to chalk out a single-page form which is simpler and evasion-proof.
- "E-way bill will be implemented from April 1 for inter-state movement of goods," Jaitley said.
- Intra-state e-way bill, on the other hand, will be rolled out from April 15 in a staggered manner and the entire country will be covered by June 1.

### **Related Information**

#### **EWay Bill-**

- EWay Bill is an electronic way bill for movement of goods which can be generated on the eWay Bill Portal. Transport of goods of more than Rs. 50,000 in value in a vehicle cannot be made by a registered person without an e-way bill.
- eWay bill will be generated when there is a movement of goods in a vehicle/ conveyance of value more than Rs. 50,000( either each Invoice or in aggregate of all Invoices in a vehicle/ Conveyance ) .
- A registered person, unregistered person and a transporter should generate an e-way bill.

#### **GST-**

- GST is an Indirect Tax which has replaced many Indirect Taxes in India. The Goods and Service Tax Act was passed in the Parliament on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The Act came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017.

#### **GST Council-**

- The GST is governed by a GST Council, chaired by the Finance Minister of India.

#### **Composition of GST council**

1. Union minister of Finance
2. Union minister of state in charge of finance
3. Finance ministers of each state governments

Source- Times of India

### **India, France boost defence ties, new confidentiality agreement among 14 pacts signed**

- India and France signed a pact that will enable their defence forces to access each other's facilities and extend logistical support on a reciprocal basis, after bilateral talk between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting French President Emmanuel Macron.
- Signed by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and French Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly, the pact will facilitate reciprocal provision of logistics support, supplies and services between the armed forces of the two countries during authorised port visits, joint exercises, joint training, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.
- The two sides also made common cause on maritime security, as they signed a joint strategic vision on the Indian Ocean Region to counter more proactive and assertive Chinese activities in the area.

Source – Indian Express

### **India plans to generate 100 GW of solar power by 2022**

- At the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said India has set a target of achieving 100 GW of solar power by 2022, which will be out of the total 175 GW the country plans to produce from renewable sources.
- India will generate 175 GW of electricity from renewable sources of energy by 2022, of which 100 GW will be from solar power.
- India has already achieved 20 GW installed solar power.
- India will contribute \$27 million to the ISA for creating the corpus, building infrastructure and recurring expenditure over a 5-year duration from 2016-17 to 2020-21.
- The Summit was attended by 23 heads of state and several other top level officials from many countries.

### **Related Information**

#### **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

- The ISA is an Indian initiative, jointly launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi and the President of France on 30th November 2015 in Paris, on the side-lines of COP-21, the UN Climate Conference.
- The ISA, headquartered in India, has its Secretariat located in the Gwalpahari, Gurgaon, Haryana.
- India has offered to meet ISA Secretariat expenses for initial five years.
- ISA is an alliance of more than 121 countries, most of them being sunshine countries, which come either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- The alliance's primary objective is work for efficient exploitation of solar energy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

#### **Programmes by ISA**

- **Current Programme**  
(1) Scaling Solar Applications for Agriculture Use

(2) Affordable Finance at Scale

(3) Scaling Solar Mini-grids

- **Future Programme**

(1) Scaling Solar Rooftops

(2) Scaling Solar E-mobility and Storage.

(3) **Common Risk Mitigating Mechanism (CRMM)** for de-risking and reducing the financial cost of solar projects in the ISA member countries

(4) **Digital Infopedia** which will serve as a platform to enable policy makers, Ministers and corporate leaders from ISA countries to interact, connect, communicate and collaborate with one another.

Source- Hindustan Business line

India Won "Best Exhibitor Award" at ITB – Berlin

- India has won the "Best Exhibitor Award " at ITB – Berlin at 'ITB- Berlin World Tourist Meet'.
- India was represented by the Minister of State (Independent charge) for Tourism Mr K. J. Alphons along with couple of Tourism Ministry officials.
- More than 100 countries participated in the ITB- Berlin meet with their respective Tourism Ministers.
- India's Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism) presented a short film named "Yogi of the Racetrack " in the meet.

Source- PIB

NCRB celebrates its 33rd Inception Day & releases "Citizen Services" Mobile APP

- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) celebrated its *33<sup>rd</sup> Inception Day*, on **March 11, 2018** in their newly constructed Complex at Mahipalpur, New Delhi and released "Citizen Services" Mobile APP.
- This single App is a bouquet of various essential police related services to the citizen.
- The App can be used by citizen for various services such as Complaint Registration & Status Check, View FIR Detail, Locate Police Stations, Vahan-Samanvay, Emergency Contact List, Police Stations Telephone Directory etc.

Source- PIB

**Mauritius can serve as hub for Indian companies looking to reach out to mainland Africa: President**

- President Ram Nath Kovind says, Mauritius can serve as a hub for Indian companies looking to reach out to mainland Africa during his visit to Mauritius on the eve of 50th anniversary of Mauritian Independence Day.
- Mauritius is a gateway to the Indian Ocean region and to Africa.

Source-newsonair

**13. 03. 2018**

1. **What is the forest land issue in Maharashtra & what farmers were demanding?**

- More than 30,000 farmers and tribals who had gathered in Mumbai at the end of a “Kisan long march” called off their stir after Maharashtra govt promised to-
  - (a) Clear all pending claims made by tribals under the Forest Rights Act within six months
  - (b) Waive loans taken by farmers up to June 2017
  - (c) Implementation of Minimum Support Price as prescribed by the Swaminathan Committee

**Issues over land**

- Thousands of people who marched to Mumbai were tribals from Thane, Palghar, Nashik and Nandurbar, and had stories of applying under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 for rights over such land.
- They have been tilling since pre-Independence, but frustrated either by the slow pace of approvals, or by their applications rejected or appeals kept pending.
- In many places, Community Forest Rights and Individual Forest Rights titles have been given but found to be faulty.
- Other areas have CFR areas recognised but limited to smaller areas than claimed.

**Government promised under agreement between govt and farmers**

- Multiple members of a single family can now avail the loan waiver, subject to the ceiling of Rs 1.5 lakh.
- Tribal with farm loans dating back to 2001-2008 will now be included in the scheme, announced earlier for the 2009-2016 period.
- Implementation of Minimum Support Price as prescribed by the Swaminathan Committee.
- Farmer’s concerns on water conservation projects and the Nar-Par and Damanganga and Girnar river-linking projects were also taken into account.

*Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity*

*Source- Indian Express*

2. **Centre forms Tribunal to solve Mahanadi Water dispute between Odisha & Chhattisgarh**

- The Centre has constituted a three-member Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal to adjudicate the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over sharing the river's water.
- The three-member panel is headed by Supreme Court Judge AM Khanwilkar.
- The Tribunal, which will have its headquarters in Delhi.

**Background**

- In the January 2018, the Supreme Court has directed the Centre to set up a tribunal within a month to resolve the dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over the sharing of water from river Mahanadi.

- The river Mahanadi flows through the states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- Odisha has been opposing Chhattisgarh's plans to build 13 barrages and seven pick up weirs across Mahanadi, in a plan to extract more water.
- The apex court had sought to refer the dispute to a Tribunal for adjudication under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

### Related Information

#### Inter-state Water Dispute Act, 1956-

- Under the Inter State Water Dispute Act, 1956, which provides legal framework to address such issues, a tribunal can be formed after a state government approaches the Union government with such a request and the Centre is convinced of the need to form the tribunal.
- There is no time-limit for adjudication by a tribunal.

### Other water disputes

#### Mahadayi River water dispute

- The river rises in the Western Ghats, in **Karnataka's** Belagavi district, and flows in westerly direction, entering Goa in the Sattari taluk of North **Goa**
- The dispute started in the 80s and escalated through the early 90s, as Karnataka designed a chain of dams and canals to channel the Mahadayi's water to the basin of the Malaprabha, tributary of the Krishna.
- In 2002, Goa sought the setting up of a Tribunal to adjudicate the dispute.
- In 2006, it moved the Supreme Court to press its demand.
- After attempts at negotiation failed, the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up on November 16, 2010.

#### Kaveri River water dispute

- The sharing of waters of the Kaveri River has been the source of a serious conflict between the two states of **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**.
- Tamil Nadu has been accusing Karnataka of not releasing its due share of water.
- Whereas, Karnataka has expressed its inability to release the stipulated quantum of water owing to the drought situation in the state.
- **Kerala and Puducherry** are the other two states party to the dispute.

#### Ravi-Beas River Water Dispute

- Ravi- Beas Waters Tribunal was constituted in 1986 for verification of the quantum of usage of water claimed by **Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan** regarding their shares in remaining waters.

*Topic- GS-2- Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies*

*Source- AIR*

3. **Maharashtra govt proposes to make Samruddhi 'zero fatality' corridor**

- Maharashtra government announced that it will begin construction of the Maharashtra Samruddhi Corridor from April 2018.

**Samruddhi Corridor**

- The 701-km corridor, providing faster connectivity between **Nagpur and Mumbai**, is also planned as a 'Zero Fatality' corridor.
- Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) proposes to include several safety measures in the corridor.
- The safety measures include a wider median, greater minimum radius and a longer sight distance among others.
- It will also have CCTV surveillance and free telephone booths every five km to allow commuters contact emergency services.
- The corridor will also have the state's longest tunnel at 7.754 km from Nandgaon Sado in Nashik district to Fugale in Thane district.

*Topic-GS-3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.*

*Source- Indian Express*

4. **Monkey fever infects 35 people in Goa**

- At least 35 people in Goa have tested positive in current year for the Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), or the 'monkey fever'.

**Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) or the 'monkey fever'**

- KFD, referred to as Makad Taap in local language, is a tick-borne viral hemorrhagic fever endemic to South Asia.
- The disease is caused by a virus belonging to the family Flaviviridae, which also includes yellow fever and dengue fever.
- The disease was first detected in 1957 at the Kyasanur forest in Karnataka's Shimoga district and was later named after the place.
- The disease first manifested as an epizootic outbreak among monkeys killing several of them in the year 1957.
- Hence the disease is also locally known as monkey disease or monkey fever.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- Indian Express*

5. **West Bengal tops in rural job scheme**

- West Bengal became the best performing State both in terms of allotting jobs and utilising funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- According to statistics, West Bengal generated more than 28.21 crore work days under the scheme so far in 2017-18 and spent more than ₹7,335.31 crores for it.

- Tamil Nadu occupied the second spot with 22.17 crore work days and spent ₹5,981.75 crores.
- Andhra Pradesh was third with 18.16 crore work days, and funds worth ₹5054.17 crore.
- Goa is ranked at the bottom of the list with 94,000 work days and spent funds worth ₹2.47 crore.

### Related Information

#### MGNREGA

- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (later renamed as the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act", MGNREGA), is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'.
- It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid.
- If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance.
- MGNREGA is to be implemented mainly by gram panchayats.

#### Fundamental Rights and MGNREGA

- The Article 21 of the Constitution of India that guarantees the right to life with dignity to every citizen of India, this act imparts dignity to the rural people through an assurance of livelihood security.
- Article 16 of the Constitution of India guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

#### Directive Principles of State Policy and MGNREGA

- Article 41 that directs the State to secure to all citizens the right to work.
- MGNREGA also seeks to protect the environment through rural works which is consistent with Article 48A that directs the State to protect the environment.

*Topic-GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes*

*Source- The Hindu*

**14. 03. 2018**

#### 1. **India was the world's largest importer of major arms in 2013-17**

- India was the world's largest importer of major arms in 2013-17 and accounted for 12% of the global total.
- It was stated in Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report.

- Russia continued to be India's largest arms supplier, accounting for 62% of India's arms imports between 2013 and 2017.
- **USA has become India's second largest supplier followed by Israel.**
- Pakistan is emerged as the largest recipient of Chinese arms exports.
- China's arms imports fell by 19 percent between 2008-12 and 2013-17.
- China was the world's fifth largest arms importer in 2013-17, China has also emerged as the fifth largest arms exporter.

### Related Information

#### Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- SIPRI is an international institute, dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in 1966.
- It is based in Stockholm, Sweden.

*Topic- GS-3-Defence*

*Source- The Hindu*

#### 2. **PM launches campaign to eradicate TB from India by 2025**

- Prime Minister launched a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) from India by 2025, five years ahead of a globally-set deadline.
- A target has been set to end TB globally by 2030.
- According to The Global TB Report 2017 released by the WHO, India topped the list of seven countries, accounting for 64 percent of the 10.4 million new tuberculosis (TB) cases worldwide in 2016.
- The Global Report said that India was followed by Indonesia, China, Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria and South Africa.

### Related Information

#### Tuberculosis (TB)

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB).
- Tuberculosis generally affects the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body.
- Tuberculosis is spread through the air when people who have active TB in their lungs cough, spit, speak, or sneeze.

#### Mission Indradhanush

- Mission Indradhanush is a health mission of the government of India.
- It was launched on 25 December 2014.

- It aims to immunize all children under the age of 2 years, as well as all pregnant women, against seven vaccine preventable diseases.
- The diseases being targeted are **diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, measles and Hepatitis B.**
- In 2016, four new diseases have been made namely **Rubella, Japanese Encephalitis, Injectable Polio Vaccine Bivalent and Rotavirus.**
- In 2017, **pneumonia** was added to the Mission by incorporating Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine under Universal Immunization Programme.

*Topic-GS-2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Human Resources etc.*

*Source- Indian Express*

3. **President inaugurated World Hindi Secretariat building in Mauritius**
  - President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the World Hindi Secretariat building in Mauritius.

### **Related Information**

#### **World Hindi Secretariat (WHS)**

- The World Hindi Secretariat is the name of an international organisation representing countries and regions where Hindi is the first ("mother") or customary language.
- The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language.
- The organisation was set up by the governments of India and Mauritius to promote Hindi across the world.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*GS-2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*

*Source- Business Standard + Wiki*

4. **RBI stops letters issuance of undertaking for import trade credits**
  - RBI asked banks to discontinue issuance of LoU/Letter of Comfort (LoC) for trade credits for imports into India with immediate effect.
  - The decision was taken by RBI after the fraudulent letter of undertaking (LoU) scam aggregating ₹12,600 crores at Punjab National Bank shaking the banking system.
  - Bankers say the scrapping of LoU/LoC is unlikely to impact trade credit as banks can issue Letters of Credit (LC) and Bank Guarantees for trade credits for imports.

### **Related Information**

#### **Letter of undertaking (LoU)**

- An LoU is a document whereby the issuing bank guarantees its payment to overseas supplier, on behalf of Bank's customer.

### Letter of comfort (LoC)

- A letter of comfort is typically provided by a bank to assure the financial soundness of its customer to repay its debt.

### Letters of Credit (LC)

- An LC ensures that a bank honours the financial obligation of a buyer if he fails to pay the seller.
- A bank guarantee is a kind of surety given by a bank to a third party on behalf of its customer, assuring the beneficiary that it will affect payment on default of obligation.

### Difference between LoU and LC

- The LoU is useful to give undertaking in banks/ financial institutions/ organisations.
- However, LC offers facility to trade partners to transact with unknown partners or in newly established trade relationships.

*Topic-GS-3- Indian Economy*

*Source- The Hindu Business Line*

#### 5. **Country's 'tallest' flag unfurled in Belagavi**

- The country's tallest 9,600 sq.ft national flag on a 110 m flag pole was unfurled in Belagavi, Karnataka.
- It is taller than the post in Pune (107 m) and the one at the Indo-Pak border at Attari (105 m).

*Topic- Important for PCS Exams*

*Source- The Hindu*

#### 6. **British scientist Stephen Hawking passed away at 76**

- British scientist Stephen Hawking passed away at his home in Cambridge.
- He was 76.
- The British theoretical physicist is known for his ground-breaking work with **black holes and relativity**.
- He was author of several popular science books including '**A Brief History of Time**'.
- His life story was the subject of the 2014 film '**The Theory of Everything**', starring Eddie Redmayne.

*Topic- Important for PCS Exams*

*Source- AIR*

#### 7. **Bidya Devi Bhandari re-elected President of Nepal for second term**

- Nepal's first woman President Bidya Devi Bhandari has been re-elected for a second term.

- Fifty-six-year old Bhandari, the Left alliance's candidate, defeated her Nepali Congress rival Kumari Laxmi Rai in the election.
- She became Nepal's first woman President in 2015.

*Topic-* Important for PCS Exams

*Source-* AIR

**15. 03. 2018**

1. **India is ranked at 133 in Global happiness index 2018**

- The World Happiness ranked 156 countries on happiness levels, based on factors such as life expectancy, social support and corruption.
- The annual report is published by the U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- India is placed at 133 and has slipped 11 places from last year.
- Finland has emerged as the happiest place to live. It is followed by Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland respectively.
- Burundi is placed at the last in the index.
- The report also evaluated 117 countries by the happiness and well-being of their immigrants.

**Related Information**

**Nordic Countries**

- The Nordic countries or the Nordics are a geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic, where they are most commonly known as Norden (literally "the North").
- The Nordic countries are generally considered to refer to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, including their associated territories (Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands).

**Scandinavian countries**

- The term Scandinavia in local usage covers the three kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
- After inclusion of the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland and Iceland etc. in Scandinavian countries, the broader region is known as Nordic countries.

**Important reports published by Various organization**

**Name of the Reports**

**International Organization**

World Economic Outlook

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Global Financial Stability Report

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Global Money Laundering Report

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Global Economic Prospects	The World Bank
World Development Report	The World Bank
Ease of Doing Business	The World Bank
Environmental Performance Index	World Economic Forum
Global Competitive Index	World Economic Forum
Global Gender Gap Report	World Economic Forum
The Global Risk Report	World Economic Forum
Human Capital Report	World Economic Forum
Human Development Index	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Sustainable development Goals	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Gender Inequality Index	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Global Hunger Index	International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
World Happiness Report	Sustainable Development Solution Network (SDSN)

*Topic- GS-2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate*

*Source- Economic Times*

## 2. Philippines to withdraw from International Criminal Court

- The Philippines announced to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC), a month after the judicial body started an inquiry into President Rodrigo Duterte's controversial war on drugs.
- Human Rights groups have long accused Duterte of gross human rights violations in his anti-drug campaign, which Human Rights Watch estimates has claimed the lives of 12,000 people since June 2016.
- Duterte has long denied the accusations of human rights abuses and contends the drug issue is one for domestic law enforcement.

### **Related Information**

#### **International Criminal Court (ICC)**

- The International Criminal Court is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal which has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
- its headquarter is in The Hague, Netherlands.
- The ICC, currently have 123-member states.
- The Rome Statute is a multilateral treaty which serves as the ICC's foundational and governing document.

- Burundi became the first country to withdraw its membership in October 2017.

*Topic- GS-2-Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

*Source- CNN*

### 3. **Newton-Bhabha Fund for arsenic research in Ganga basin**

- An India-UK Joint Team won the Newton-Bhabha Fund for a project on Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin.
- The Department of Science and Technology has undertaken the project with the Natural Environment Research Council, UK, to find solutions to the water challenges faced in the pervasively arsenic-affected Ganga River Basin.
- **The Newton Bhabha Fund, provided by the British Council**, aims to bring together the UK and Indian scientific research and innovation sectors to find joint solutions to the challenges facing India in economic development and social welfare.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- Business Standards*

### 4. **Neutrino project in Bodi hills (Theni district, Tamilnadu) gets environmental clearance**

- The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) project got a fresh environmental clearance to set up the lab in Bodi West hills (Theni district, Tamilnadu).
- The previous Environment Clearance granted in 2011 was quashed by the courts.

## **Related Information**

### **Neutrino**

- A neutrino is a subatomic particle that is very similar to an electron but has **no electrical charge and a very small mass, which might even be zero.**
- Neutrinos are one of the fundamental particles which make up the universe.
- These are only particle other than gravitational waves that can zip through the universe at speeds very close to that of light.
- The largest nuclear reactor that most life on earth derives energy from is the sun.
- Like all nuclear reactors, in addition to giving out energy, the sun also emits neutrinos.
- There are three types of neutrinos differing based on mass, these are-
  - (a) Electron neutrinos ( $\nu_e$ )
  - (b) Muon neutrinos( $\nu_\mu$ )
  - (c) tau neutrinos( $\nu_\tau$ )

### **India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO)**

- Aims to observe muon neutrinos that are continuously produced in the atmosphere when cosmic rays strike the earth.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

Source- *The Hindu*

5. **World Consumer Rights Day**

- World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated across the world on 15 March.
- It is an awareness day and theme for this year is '**Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer**'.
- The day is an opportunity to promote basic rights of all consumers, demanding that those rights are respected and protected.

**Note:**

- In India, besides the World Consumer Rights Day, the National Consumer Day is observed on 24th of December every year.

Topic- *Important for PCS Exams*

Source- *AIR*

6. **Govt to release annual reports on state of nutrition in India**

- The Centre will for the first time release annual reports on the state of nutrition in the country.

**Related Information**

**POSHAN (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment) scheme**

- POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched by the Prime Minister in Jhunjhunu on 8th March 2018.
- The Executive Committee is the Apex body under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- National Council on India's nutritional challenges under, NITI Aayog, also has been set up under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- National Council on India's nutritional challenges under chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, has been set up under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan has been set up with a three-year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18.
- All States and Union Territories to be targeted in a phased manner.
- The following nutrition strategies and interventions includes under Abhiyaan-
  - (a) Supplementary nutrition
  - (b) Adolescent nutrition
  - (c) IYCF (Infant and Young Child Feeding) immunisation
  - (d) Maternal health etc.

Topic- *GS-2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

Source- *Indian Express*

**16. 03. 2018**

1. **LaQshya program launched to benefit pregnant woman and new-born delivering in public health institutions**

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced to launch of program 'LaQshya', aimed at improving quality of care in labour room and maternity Operation Theatre (OT).
- The Program will improve quality of care for pregnant women in labour room, maternity Operation Theatre and Obstetrics Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and High Dependency Units (HDUs).
- The LaQshya program is being implemented at
  - (i) All Medical College Hospitals
  - (ii) District Hospitals
  - (iii) First Referral Unit (FRU)
  - (iv) Community Health Center (CHCs)
- The Program will-
  - (a) Reduce maternal and new-born morbidity and mortality
  - (b) Improve quality of care during delivery and immediate post-partum period
- The Quality Improvement in labour room and maternity OT will be assessed through NQAS (National Quality Assurance Standards).

**Related Information**

- India has reduced Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 301 maternal deaths in 2001-03 to 167 in year 2011-13, an impressive decline of 45% in a decade.
- India is further committed to ensuring safe motherhood to every pregnant woman in the country.

**Infant mortality rate**

- The number of deaths of children less than 1 year old per 1,000 live births.

**Maternal mortality rate**

- The number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 women of reproductive age in the population (generally defined as 15–44 years of age).

**Child mortality rate**

- The number of deaths of children less than 5 years old per 1,000 live births.

**Neonatal mortality**

- It is defined as death within the first four weeks of life.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- PIB*

2. **India ranked at 78th on WEF energy transition index**

- India has been ranked at 78th, lower than its emerging market peers like Brazil and China, among 114 countries on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) energy transition index.
- The index was topped by Sweden.
- The report titled Fostering Effective Energy Transition, ranks countries on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability.
- According to the report India has taken "bold measures" to improve energy access, energy efficiency, and to improve the deployment of renewable sources of energy.
- However, energy transition in the country will require "large investments, and an enabling environment and robust regulatory frameworks to support the transition".
- Among its emerging market peers Brazil stood at the 38th place, Russia at 70th and China at 76th place.
- India has the largest government-mandated renewable energy programme, with a target of 175GW renewable energy capacity by 2022, and it announced plans to shift completely to electric vehicles by 2030.

## Related Information

### International Energy Agency

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) is a **Paris-based** autonomous intergovernmental organization established in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.
- IEA member countries are required to maintain total oil stock levels equivalent to at least 90 days of the previous year's net imports.
- Currently there are 29 states are part of it.
- India is not a member of it.

### International Energy Forum (IEF)

- It is the world's largest recurring gathering of energy ministers.
- It is unique in that participants not only include IEA and OPEC countries, but also key international actors such as Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, and South Africa.
- The IEF is promoted by a permanent Secretariat based in the Diplomatic Quarter of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

*Topic- GS-3-Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.*

*Source- Livemint*

### 3. **Cyber Gram Project for Digital Literacy of Minority Communities**

- The Ministry of Minority Affairs launched a pilot project for minority Cyber Gram for digital literacy in a minority dominated village Chandauli in Alwar district of Rajasthan.

- Under this initiative, students of minority communities are provided hands on training in computers to enable them to-
  - (a) Acquire basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills to become digitally literate and
  - (b) Actively participate in knowledge-based activities, access financial, social and government services and to use internet for communications.
- The initiative covers students of Class VI to Class X belonging to notified minority communities residing in minority concentration areas identified under Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MsDP).
- The project is being implemented through Common Service Centre (CSC) with support of States/UTs.
- The funds per candidate sanctioned under the programme is Rs.1555/- which is shared by Central Government and State.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- PIB*

4. **Pune tops urban governance survey of 23 major Indian cities**
  - Pune came on top in the fifth edition of the Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS), edging out Thiruvananthapuram which had topped the previous two editions of the survey.
  - Bengaluru was ranked at the bottom.
  - The Janaagraha survey has been done in 23 cities spread across 20 states.
  - The survey evaluated the quality of governance in India's cities by assessing laws, policies and institutional processes currently in place.
  - Only 9 of the 23 cities had a citizen's charter, a powerful tool for accountability and grievance redress.

*Topic- GS-2-Governance*

*Source- Livemint*

5. **Swadhar Greh Scheme**
  - The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Swadhar Greh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.
  - The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.

### **Related Information**

#### **Other government scheme of government for Women**

##### **(a) Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**

- Implemented to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum.

**(b) Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**

- Maternity Benefit Programme has been contributing towards better enabling environment by providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.

**(c) Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme**

- Promote community participation through involvement of Student Volunteers for empowerment of rural women.

**(d) Scheme for Adolescent Girls**

- Aims at girls in the age group 11-18, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training.

**(e) National Creche Scheme**

- To provide day care facilities to children of age group of 6 months to 6 years of working women who are employed.

**(f) Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**

- Provide micro-credit to poor women for various livelihood support and income generating activities at concessional terms in a client-friendly procedure to bring about their socio-economic development.

**(g) Ujjawala**

- A Comprehensive Scheme for prevention of trafficking and for rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.

**(h) Working Women Hostels**

- For ensuring safe accommodation for women working away from their place of residence.

**(i) Schemes of One Stop Centre (OSC) and Women Helpline (WH)**

- Implemented to facilitate access to an integrated range of services including medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/ case management, psychosocial counselling and temporary support services to women affected by violence.

*Topic- GS-3-Welfare Schemes*

*Source- PIB*

**6. KUSUM Scheme – harnessing solar power for rural India**

- The Government of India is in the process of formulating a Scheme 'Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (KUSUM)'.
  - The scheme will provide-
    - (a) Installation of grid-connected solar power plants each of capacity up to 2 MW in the rural areas
    - (b) Installation of standalone off-grid solar water pumps to fulfil irrigation needs of farmers not connected to grid
    - (c) Solarization of existing grid-connected agriculture pumps to make farmers independent

of grid supply and also enable them to sell surplus solar power generated to DISCOM and get extra income

(d) Solarization of tube-wells and lift irrigation projects of Government sector.

*Topic-GS-2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors*

*GS-3- Infrastructure: Energy*

*Source- PIB*

**17. 03. 2018**

1. **Arunachal government passed a bill to have 2-tier Panchayati Raj**

- Arunachal Pradesh Assembly passed a bill **to do away with Anchal Samiti**, the intermediate level of the three-tier Panchayati raj system and set up a two-tier system in the state.
- The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution allows a state having less than 20 lakh population not to have the intermediate level of the Panchayati raj system.
- Arunachal Pradesh has a population of 13.84 lakh.

**Arunachal govt seeking following benefits after the adoption of two-tier Panchayati raj system**

- Execution of schemes would be faster in a two-tier Panchayati raj system, as there would be direct connection between Gram Panchayats and Zilla Parishads, the village and district levels of the Panchayati raj system.
- In a two-tier system, the strength of elected members would be reduced, thus helping in saving money for conducting polls and functional costs on Intermediate level.

**Related Information**

**Panchayati Raj system in India**

- The Panchayati Raj system was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution.
- The acts of 1992 added two new parts to the constitution which are-
  - (i) Parts IX and
  - (ii) Parts IX-A
- The act also added two new schedules which contains the lists of functional items of Panchayats and Municipalities. These are
  - (a) Schedule 11 and
  - (b) Schedule 12
- The system has three levels
  - (a) Gram Panchayat (village level),
  - (b) Mandal Parishad or Block Samiti or Panchayat Samiti (Intermediate level)
  - (c) Zila Parishad (district level)
- In 1959 Rajasthan became the first state to adopt the Panchayati raj system, followed by Andhra Pradesh in the same year.

**Important committees on Panchayati Raj**

### **Balwant Rai Mehta (1957)**

- Important recommendation was-

(a) Establishment of a three-tier Panchayati Raj system in India

### **Ashok Mehta Committee (1978)**

- Important recommendations were-

(a) Three-tier system to be replaced by a two-tier system.

(b) Constitutional recognition to be given to Panchayati Raj institutions.

### **G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985)**

### **Dr. L.M. Singhvi Committee (1986)**

- Important recommendations were-

(a) Constitutional recognition for PRI institutions

(b) Nyaya Panchayats to be established for clusters of villages

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- Business Standards*

### **2. Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017**

- The Lok Sabha passed a bill that seeks to increase the maximum limit of gratuity of employees in the private and public sector from the present Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh.
- The bill seeks to increase the maximum limit of gratuity of employees who are not covered under Central Civil Service (Pension) Rules, at par with the central government employees.
- Before implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission, the ceiling under CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972 was Rs 10 lakh but it was doubled to Rs 20 lakhs from January 1, 2016.

### **Other Features of Bill**

- The bill empowers the Central Government to notify the proposed ceiling so that the limit can be revised from time to time keeping in view the increase in wage and inflation, and future Pay Commissions without having to amend the Act.
- It also seeks to amend Section 2A of the Act so as to empower the government to notify the period of maternity leave in case of female employee as deemed to be in continuous service in place of existing twelve weeks.

### **Related Information**

- The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 was enacted to provide for a scheme for the payment of gratuity to employees who have rendered a minimum five years of continuous service with an establishment employing ten or more persons.

*Topic- GS-2- Parliament and State Legislatures*

*Source- PRS India*

### **3. India's second cloned male "Sach-Gaurav" produced by CIRB**

- According to the Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes (CIRB), a cloned Assamese buffalo male calf has been born for the first time in Hisar, Haryana.
- The cloned is named as “Sach-Gaurav”.
- The calf was born to a Murrah buffalo.
- It was the second cloned male produced by ICAR-CIRB after Hisar-Gaurav, born December 11, 2015.
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research-CIRB is a central institute and it has a mandate to conserve superior animals of all buffalo breeds.

### Related Information

#### Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is an autonomous body responsible for co-ordinating agricultural education and research in India.
- It reports to the Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture.

#### Important ICAR institutions

Indian Agricultural Research Institute	New Delhi
Indian Veterinary Research Institute	Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh
National Dairy Research Institute	Karnal, Haryana
Central Institute of Fisheries Education	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Central Institute for Research on Buffaloes	Hissar, Haryana
Central Institute of Cotton Research	Nagpur, Maharashtra
Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute	Avikanagar, Rajasthan
Indian Institute of Horticultural Research	Bengaluru, Karnataka
Indian Institute of Spices Research	Calicut, Kerala
Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- Hindustan Times*

#### 4. New species of water strider found in Nagaland

- Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered a new species of water strider from Nagaland.
- The species, named Ptilomera nagalanda Jehamalar and Chandra, was found in the river Intanki, Peren district.
- Water striders are a group of insects adapted to life on the surface of water, using surface tension to their advantage.

- Other than being a good indicator of water quality, water striders also play an important role in the food chain by feeding on mosquito larvae.

*Topic- GS-3-Biodiversity*

*Source- The Hindu*

5. **Cabinet approves continuation of ongoing urea subsidy scheme beyond 12th Five Year Plan**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the proposal of Department of Fertilizers to continue Urea Subsidy Scheme up to 2019-20 at a total estimated cost of Rs. 1,64,935 crores and for disbursement of fertilizer subsidy.
- This decision implies that there will be no increase in price of urea, till 2020.

**Urea Subsidy**

- Urea Subsidy is a part of Central Sector Scheme of Department of Fertilizers with effective from 1st April, 2017.
- It is wholly financed by the Government of India through Budgetary Support.
- The continuation of Urea Subsidy Scheme will ensure the timely payment of subsidy to the urea manufacturers resulting in timely availability of urea to farmers.
- Urea subsidy also includes Imported Urea subsidy which is directed towards import to bridge the gap between assessed demand and indigenous production of urea in the country.
- It also includes freight subsidy for movement of urea across the country.

**Related information**

**Neem Coated Urea**

- Only about 30 to 40% of N<sub>2</sub> in the urea is utilized by the plants.
- Coating of neem oil helps in gradual release of nitrates into soil.
- From 2015, the Centre made it mandatory on the part all indigenous producers of urea to produce 100% of their total production of subsidised urea with neem coating.
- Effects of Neem Coating of Urea as follows-
  - (a) Improvement in soil health.
  - (b) Reduction in costs with respect to plant protection chemicals.
  - (c) Reduction in pest and disease attack.
  - (d) An increase in yield of the crops
  - (e) It reduces consumption of urea by 10-15%.

*Topic- GS-3-Agriculture*

*Source- PIB*

6. **IBBI, RBI sign MoU for better implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code**

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the RBI for enhancing cooperation between the two regulators to ensure better implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- While RBI is the banking regulator, the IBBI regulates insolvency professionals, insolvency professional agencies and information utilities.
- The IBBI writes and enforces rules for processes like corporate insolvency resolution, corporate liquidation, individual insolvency resolution and individual bankruptcy under IBC.
- RBI and IBBI will also be working together to raise awareness among financial creditors about the necessity of swift resolution of firms in distress.

### Related Information

#### IBBI (The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India)

- IBBI is the regulator for overseeing insolvency proceedings and entities like Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPA), Insolvency Professionals (IP) and Information Utilities (IU) in India.
- It covers Individuals, Companies, Limited Liability Partnerships and Partnership firms.
- It handles the cases using **two tribunals like NCLT (National company law tribunal) and Debt recovery tribunal.**

#### Bankruptcy

- Bankruptcy is a legal status of a person or other entity that cannot repay the debts it owes to creditors.

#### SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)

- The SWIFT is a global member-owned cooperative that is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.
- It was founded in 1973 by a group of 239 banks from 15 countries which formed a co-operative utility to develop a **secure electronic messaging service** and common standards to facilitate cross-border payments.

*Topic- GS-3-Indian Economy*

**19. 03. 2018**

#### 1. What does the word “Guillotine” mean which is related Indian Parliament?

- In legislative parlance, to “guillotine” means to bunch together and fast-track the passage of financial business.
- It is a fairly common procedural exercise in Lok Sabha during the Budget Session.
- After the Budget is presented, Parliament goes into recess for about three weeks, during which time the House Standing Committees examine Demands for Grants for various Ministries and prepare reports.
- After Parliament reassembles, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) draws up a schedule for discussions on the Demands for Grants.

- Given the limitation of time, the House cannot take up the expenditure demands of all Ministries; therefore, the BAC identifies some important Ministries for discussions.
- It usually lists Demands for Grants of the Ministries of Home, Defence, External Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development and Human Resource Development.
- Members utilise the opportunity to discuss the policies and working of Ministries.
- Once the House is done with these debates, the Speaker applies the “guillotine”, and all outstanding demands for grants are put to vote at once.
- This usually happens on the last day earmarked for the discussion on the Budget.
- The intention is to ensure timely passage of the Finance Bill, marking the completion of the legislative exercise with regard to the Budget.

### Related information

#### Motions in Parliament

- During the time of voting on the demand for grants, Members of Parliament can also move motions to reduce any demand for grant.
- Such motions are
  1. **Policy Cut Motion:** - It represents the disapproval of the policy underlying the demand and the amount of the demand be reduced to Re 1.
  2. **Economy Cut Motion:** - In this amount of the demand is reduced by a specified amount.
  3. **Token Cut Motion:** - In this motion the amount of the demand reduced to Rs.100 to ventilate a specific grievance, which is within the sphere of responsibility of the Government of India.

#### Appropriation Bill

- It is introduced in Lok Sabha After passing of demand for grants to give authority to Government to incur expenditure from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
- No money shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of India except under appropriation made by law (Article- 266).

#### Finance Bill

- It is introduced in Lok Sabha after passing of Appropriation Bill to give effect to the Government’s taxation proposals which are introduced in Lok Sabha immediately after the presentation of the General Budget

#### Type of Finance Bill

##### Money Bills

- These are financial bills which contain provisions related to matters listed in Article-110 (1) (a).
- It required the prior recommendation of President of before presented in Lok Sabha.
- Only Minister can introduce it in Lok Sabha.

- Lok Sabha only having the power to Vote in case of Money Bill. Rajya Sabha only can advise Lok Sabha.
- There is no provision of Joint sitting in case of Money Bills.

#### **Finance Bills category-I**

- It required the prior recommendation of President of before presented in Lok Sabha.
- But in this case, Rajya Sabha has the power to reject this bill.
- There is a provision of Joint sitting in these types of Bills.

#### **Finance Bills category-I**

- These are financial bills which do not contain provisions related to matters listed in Article-110.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- Indian Express + gradeup*

#### **2. WTO ministerial: India hosted informal WTO Ministerial gathering in New Delhi**

- Representatives from 50 countries gathered in New Delhi on 19-20 March for an informal World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting.
- All Representatives from 50 countries will engage in free and frank discussions on global trade to explore the options for resolving various issues and re-invigorating the WTO.

#### **Background**

##### **India in 11th Ministerial Conference (December 2017) in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

- India submitted a document **opposing** any talks on **cross-border digital trade** at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the EU, Canada and Australia, among others, have upped the ante and proposed negotiations on the trade aspect of e-commerce.
- India said that it is not ready for talks to set up a global regime for new issues such as e-commerce, until its concerns related to public stockholding and fixing earlier disparities in the global trading system are addressed.
- India has repeatedly resisted the inclusion of issues such as e-commerce to investment facilitation.
- Currently India, for instance, does not allow business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce, prompting companies such as Amazon to operate “marketplaces” with restrictions on how much a vendor can sell.
- India also said that the Doha Development Round was an important beginning but somehow lost its way.

#### **Related information**

##### **WTO (World Trade Organization)**

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that regulates international trade.

- The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
- It is the largest international economic organization in the world.
- The WTO has 164 members and 22 observer governments.
- The highest decision-making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which usually meets every two years.
- **Uruguay Round-eighth GATT round-** It was the biggest negotiating mandate on trade ever agreed. The talks were going to extend the trading system into several new areas.
- **Marrakesh Agreement-** The Final Act concluding the Uruguay Round and officially establishing the WTO regime was signed 15 April 1994, during the ministerial meeting at Marrakesh, Morocco, and hence is known as the Marrakesh Agreement.
- **Doha Round-** launched at the fourth ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar in November 2001. This was to be an ambitious effort to make globalization more inclusive and help the world's poor, particularly by slashing barriers and subsidies in farming.

#### Peace Clause

- Trade negotiators generally refer to Article 13 of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture as the Peace Clause.
- Article 13 holds that domestic support measures and export subsidies of a WTO Member that is legal under the provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture cannot be challenged by other WTO Members on grounds of being illegal under the provisions of another WTO agreement.

#### Subsidies related to WTO

- **Green Box subsidies-** which are no or least market distorting includes measures decoupled from output such as income-support payments (decoupled income support), safety – net programs, payments under environmental programs, and agricultural research and development subsidies.
- **Blue Box subsidies-** Only 'Production limiting Subsidies' under this are allowed. They cover payments based on acreage, yield, or number of livestock in a base year.
- **Amber Box subsidies** – Those subsidies which are trade distorting and need to be curbed.

*Topic-* GS-2-Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

*Source-* Economic Times

#### 3. Odisha to have integrated multi-hazard early warning system

- The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES), a UN-registered agency would collaborate with Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) to strengthen its quality, prediction ability and response capacity.

- The agency will provide technical support to OSDMA regarding-analysis of data to be generated through automatic weather stations being installed in all the gram panchayats, validation of the forecast, early warning and preparedness for lightning, heat wave, flood, drought and Tsunami.

### **Related Information**

#### **Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES)**

- RIMES, an inter-governmental body registered under the United Nations, is owned and managed by 45 collaborating countries in the Asia Pacific and African Region.
- It was established on 30 April 2009 to provide user-relevant early warning services to its Member States and others.
- It is governed by a Council, composed of heads of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) presently chaired by India.
- Council decisions are carried out by the RIMES Administrative Secretariat, which is currently the Maldives.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- Times of India*

#### **4. Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) of RBI on Public Sector Banks (PSBs)**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework to maintain the sound financial health of banks.
- It facilitates banks in breach of risk thresholds for identified areas of monitoring, viz., capital, asset quality (which is tracked in terms of the net Non-Performing Assets ratio) and profitability, to take corrective measures in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health.
- Thus, it is intended to encourage banks to eschew certain riskier activities, improve operational efficiency and focus on conserving capital to strengthen them.

### **Related Information**

#### **What is Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)?**

- A prompt Corrective action is a qualitative tool introduced by the Reserve Bank of India under which direct action is taken on weak banks to ensure the financial health of a bank is maintained and it does not go bust.
- It does so by putting some trigger points that will help in assessing, monitoring, controlling and taking corrective measures on troubled banks.

#### **Need for Prompt Corrective Action**

- During the financial crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s, many banks and financial institutions suffered monetary loss around the globe.
- The need for appropriate supervisory strategy (Prompt Corrective action) arose to avoid banks and financial institutions from such events.

- In India, it was first introduced in 2002. It is applicable to all the Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) except RRB.
- It also does not take into its ambit the payment banks, NBFCs and MUDRA banks.

*Topic- GS-3-Indian Economy*

*Source- PIB + gradeup*

**20. 03. 2018**

1. **HAMMER to deal with asteroids heading for earth**

- Scientists from NASA, the National Nuclear Security Administration, and two other national laboratories in the USA have conceptualised **an asteroid deflector** to deal with asteroids heading for earth.
- They also theoretically studied the impact of the deflector on a near-Earth asteroid -- 101955 Benu.
- Named **HAMMER (Hypervelocity Asteroid Mitigation Mission for Emergency Response vehicle)**, the deflector is nine metres tall and weighs more than 8000 kg.
- HAMMER can be used as a kinetic impactor (spacecraft at high speed to give the push), or as a carrier for some other nuclear device which can do the same job.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- The Hindu*

2. **Indian Navy to host Bilateral Exercise 'Varuna' with French Navy**

- The Indian Navy and the French Navy have conducted bilateral maritime exercises since May 1993.
- Since 2001, the exercises have been named VARUNA and there have been fifteen editions of the same till date.
- The last edition of VARUNA was conducted off the French Coast in April 2017
- This year VARUNA-18 would be conducted in three sea areas, namely, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and South Western Indian Ocean.

**Related Information**

**Other Defence Exercise between India and Other countries**

<b>Exercise Name</b>	<b>India and Other Countries</b>
Yudh Aabyas	United States
Vajra Prahar	United States
Nomadic Elephant	Mongolia
Indra	Russia
Hand in Hand	China

Ajeya Warrior	United Kingdom
Ekuverin	Maldives
Surya Kiran	Nepal
Shakti	France
Sampriti	Bangladesh
Garud Shakti	Indonesia
Mitra Shakti	Sri Lanka
Al Nagah	Oman
Maitree	Thailand
Prabal Dostyk	Kazakhstan
Vinbax	Vietnam

*Topic- GS-3- Defence*

*Source- PIB*

3. **Saksham Scholarship Scheme for economically weaker differently abled students to pursue technical education**

- Saksham Scholarship Scheme was launched in 2014-15, with the objective of encouraging economically weaker differently abled students to pursue technical education at Diploma and Degree levels.
- Scholarship amount of Rs. 30,000 is provided towards tuition fee reimbursement and Rs. 20000 as contingency allowance.
- Under the scheme, 1000 scholarships per annum are available.

*Topic- GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- PIB*

4. **Initiatives taken by government to promote Quality Education**

**GIAN (Global Initiative for Academic Networks)**

- It is an initiative of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) which encourages participation of foreign faculty in delivering Short or Semester-long Courses in IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc Bangalore, IISERs, NITs etc.
- The proposed GIAN is envisaged to achieve the following objectives-

(a) To increase the footfalls of reputed international faculty in the Indian academic institutes.

(b) Provide opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge and teaching skills in cutting edge areas.

- (c) To provide opportunity to our students to seek knowledge and experience from reputed International faculty.
- (d) To create avenue for possible collaborative research with the international faculty
- (e) To increase participation and presence of international students in the academic Institutes.
- (f) Provide opportunity for the technical persons from Indian Industry to improve understandings and update their knowledge in relevant areas. Etc.

#### **Higher Educational Financing Agency (HEFA)**

- HEFA was approved in September 2016 as a Special Purpose Vehicle.
- HEFA provide funding for world-class infrastructure at the IITs, IIMs, the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and such other institutions.
- The agency is also expected to mobilise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from public sector units (PSUs) and corporates.
- These would be released as grants to eligible institutions for promoting research and innovation.
- HEFA has been set up to finance civil and laboratory infrastructure projects through 10-year loans.
- The principal portion of the loan will be repaid through internal accruals, to be earned by the institutions through fee receipts and research earnings.

#### **IMPRINT India**

- 'IMPRINT India', a Pan-IIT and IISc joint initiative to develop a roadmap for research to solve major engineering and technology challenges in ten technology domains (including security and defence, information technology, energy etc).
- It was launched in November 2015.
- The objectives of programme are-
  - (1) Identify areas of immediate relevance to society requiring innovation
  - (2) Direct scientific research into identified areas
  - (3) Ensure higher funding support for research into these areas and
  - (4) Measure outcomes of the research effort with reference to impact on the standard of living in the rural/urban areas.

#### **Other Schemes**

- (a) National Digital Library
- (b) National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)
- (c) National Academic Depository (NAD)
- (d) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme
- (e) Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- (f) Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (CSSTE)
- (g) Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan
- (h) SWAYAM PRABHA channels for educational programmes

*Topic- GS-2-Schemes and Programmes*

*Source- PIB*

5. **Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative to Ensure Toilets in All Government Schools**

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development had taken Swachh Vidyalaya initiative to provide separate toilets for girls and boys in all Government schools within one-year up to 15th August, 2015 under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- The target fixed under the initiative was achieved with construction/re-construction of 4,17,796 toilets in 2,61,400 Government elementary and secondary schools.

*Topic- GS-2-Schemes and Programmes*

*Source- PIB*

6. **LPG connection to every household**

**Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat**

- 'Pradhan Mantri LPG Panchayat' was launched in **Mota Ishanpur village, Gandhinagar (Gujarat)** to provide free LPG connection to a beneficiary of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.
- LPG Panchayat will serve as an interactive platform between those who received LPG cylinders under PMUY, officials, LPG distributors and NGOs.

**PMUY (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana)**

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched by Prime Minister on May 1st, 2016 in **Ballia, Uttar Pradesh**.
- It is an ambitious social welfare scheme which aims to provide free LPG connections to BPL households in the country.
- The scheme is aimed at replacing the unclean cooking fuels mostly used in the rural India with the clean and more efficient LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas).

*Topic- GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- PIB*

7. **Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure**

- Government has Proposed Budgetary allocation in 2018-2019 for "Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure" is Rs.3700 lakh.
- The Scheme has the following two components: -
  - (a) Financial Assistance for Building Grants including Studio Theatres.
  - (b) Financial Assistance for Tagore Cultural Complexes (TCC).
- Central financial assistance under the Scheme is provided to-

(i) Reputed not-for-profit cultural organizations

(ii) Central/State Govt./ Union Territories agencies/bodies etc.

for creation of appropriately equipped training, rehearsal & performance spaces, various cultural spaces, studio theatres, Tagore Cultural Complexes etc.

- The implementing agency of the projects under the Scheme at State/UT level is State Govt./UT Administration.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- PIB*

#### 8. Museum Grant Scheme

- Ministry of Culture operates “Museum Grant Scheme”, under which financial assistance is provided to State Governments, voluntary institutions, Societies and trusts registered as a society under the Indian Societies Act of 1860 (XXI) or a similar legislation of the state governments for modernization and development of existing museums.
- There are **six national level museums**, namely-
  - (i) National Museum (New Delhi)
  - (ii) National Gallery of Modern Art (branches at Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai)
  - (iii) Indian Museum (Kolkata)
  - (iv) Victoria Memorial Hall (Kolkata)
  - (v) Salar Jung Museum (Hyderabad)
  - (vi) Allahabad Museum (Allahabad)

which are under the administrative control of the Ministry of Culture.

- These museums are providing visitor friendly facilities such as sitting arrangement, drinking water, cafeteria, toilets, lifts, ramp, wheel chairs for disabled persons etc.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- PIB*

**21. 03. 2018**

#### 1. Karnataka govt recommended religious minority tag to Lingayat, Veerashaiva Lingayat community

- The issue of granting **religious minority tag** to the Lingayat and Veerashaiva Lingayat community will be examined as and when the Home Ministry receives the proposal from the Karnataka government.
- The Home Ministry is expected to forward the proposal to the Registrar General & Census Commissioner for a detailed examination and suggestions.
- The Karnataka government took the decision following a recommendation of an expert panel set up by the state government on the issue.

#### **Background**

- Lingayats and Veerashaiva Lingayats are those who believe in the philosophy of Basaveshwara, 12th century social reformer.

- The demand for a separate religion tag to Veerashaiva/ Lingayat faiths has surfaced from the community, amidst resentment from within over projecting the two communities as the same.

(a) One section led by Akhila Bharata Veerashaiva Mahasabha has asserted that Veerashaiva and Lingayats are the same and religious status be given to them.

(b) The other group wants it only for Lingayats as they believe that Veerashaivas are one among the seven sects of Shaivas, which is part of Hinduism.

### Related Information

#### Lingayatism

- Lingayatism is a distinct Shaivite religious tradition in India.
- Its worship is centered on Hindu god Shiva as the universal god in the iconographic form of Ishtalinga.
- The adherents of this faith are known as Lingayats.
- Lingayatism was founded by the 12th-century philosopher and statesman Basava and spread by his followers, called Sharanas.
- Lingayatism emphasizes qualified monism and bhakti (loving devotion) to Shiva.
- The terms Lingayatism and Veerashaivism have been used synonymously, and Lingayats also referred to as Veerashaivas.
- Lingayatism shares beliefs with Indian religions, such as about reincarnation, samsara and karma.

#### Minority Communities in India

- The following communities have been notified as minority communities by the Government of India, Ministry of Minority Affairs-
  - (a) Sikhs
  - (b) Muslims
  - (c) Christians
  - (d) Zoroastrians
  - (e) Buddhists
  - (f) Jains

**Note-** Question related to Lingayat this came in UPSC 2016 Prelims

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*Source- Indian Express*

#### 2. Over 4 lakh beggars in India: Bengal ranked at top

- According to the government, there are over 4 lakh beggars in India.
- West Bengal has the highest number of beggars in India followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively.

- 4,13,670 beggars are residing in India, which consists of 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females, according to the 2011 census.
- However, there are least number of beggars in Union Territories. The national capital has the largest number of beggars, 2,187 followed by 121 in Chandigarh.
- Among the north-eastern states, Assam topped the list with 22,116 beggars while Mizoram ranked lowest with 53.

*Topic- GS-2-Social Issues*

*Source- Indian Express*

### 3. Various schemes being implemented by the govt for development of the tribal population

#### **(a) Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS)**

- It is a 100% grant from Government of India (since 1977-78).
- It is charged to Consolidated Fund of India (except grants for North Eastern States, a voted item) and is an additive to State Plan funds and efforts for Tribal Development.
- This grant is utilized for economic development of Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) Pockets and Clusters, PVTGs and dispersed tribal population.

#### **(b) Grants-in-Aid under Article 275(1) of the Constitution**

- It is a 100% annual grant from Government of India to States for tribal development.

#### **(c) Scheme of Grant-in-Aid to Voluntary Organizations working for the Welfare of Scheduled Tribes**

- The Scheme was launched in 1953-54 and was last revised w.e.f. 1st April 2008.
- The prime objective of the scheme is to enhance the reach of welfare schemes of Government and fill the gaps in service deficient tribal areas
- Funds are generally provided to the extent of 90% by the Government.
- The voluntary organization is expected to bear the remaining 10% balance from its own resources.

#### **(d) Scheme of Strengthening Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts**

- It is a Central Sector gender specific scheme and the Ministry provides 100% funding.
- The grants are provided to the eligible NGOs on an application (in the prescribed format) duly recommended by the multidisciplinary State Level Committee of the concerned State Government / UT Administration.

#### **(e) Scheme of Vocational Training in Tribal Areas**

- The main aim of the Scheme is to develop the skills of the ST youth for a variety of jobs as well as self-employment and to improve their socio-economic condition by enhancing their income.
- 100% grants under the scheme are provided to the States, Union Territories and other Associations implementing the Scheme.

**(f) Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**

- In 1998-99, a 100% Central Sector Scheme for exclusive development of PVTGs was started.
- The scheme covers only the 75 identified Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

**(g) Scheme of Girls & Boys Hostels for STs**

- Under the scheme, Central assistance is given to States/UTs/Universities for construction of new hostel buildings and/or extension of existing hostels.
- The funding pattern for the other Boys' Hostel to State Governments is on 50:50 basis. In
- n case of UTs, the Central Government bears the entire cost.

**(h) Scheme of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub-Plan Area**

- The objective of the scheme is to provide residential schools for STs in an environment conducive to learning to increase the literacy rate among the tribal students and to bring them at par with other population of the country.

**(i) Support to Tribal Research Institute (TRIs)**

- Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have been set up by various State Governments.
- The basic objective of the scheme is to strengthen the Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) in their infrastructural needs, Research & Documentation activities and Training & Capacity Building programmes, etc.

**(j) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC)**

- Extends financial assistance at concessional rates of interest to Scheduled Tribes for undertaking income generation activities.

**(k) Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY)**

- Under the scheme, Scheduled Tribes women can undertake any income generation activity.
- Loans upto 90% for scheme costing upto ₹1 lakh are provided at a concessional rate of interest of 4% p.a.

**(l) Micro Credit Scheme for Self Help Groups**

- The Corporation provides loans upto ₹50,000/- per member and RS. 5 Lakhs per Self Help Group (SHG). The interest rate chargeable is 6% p.a.

**(m) Adivasi Shiksha Rin Yojana**

- Under this scheme, financial assistance upto ₹5.00 lakh at concessional rate of interest of 6% per annum is provided to ST students for pursuing professional/ technical education including Ph.D. in India.

Topic- GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States

Source- PIB

4. **NCPCR initiates exercise for conducting social audit of Child Care Institutions**

- The exercise of conducting social audit of Child Care Institutions has been initiated by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).
- This is in pursuance of the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the matter of Exploitation of Children in Orphanages in State of Tamil Nadu vs. UOI & Ors.
- The Government has enacted the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 replacing the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 in order to further improve and strengthen the condition of rehabilitation homes.
- The primary responsibility in execution of the JJ Act lies with the State Governments.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- PIB*

5. **Canadian mathematician Langlands wins Abel Prize**

- Canadian mathematician Robert Langlands won the prestigious Abel Prize for developing a programme connecting representation theory to number theory.
- The so-called Langlands programme dates back to 1967, when the then-associate professor at Princeton University wrote a letter to renowned French mathematician Andre Weil outlining his new theory.
- It suggested deep links between two areas, number theory and harmonic analysis, which had previously been considered unrelated.

**Abel Prize**

- Named after the 19th century Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel, the prize was established by the Norwegian government in 2002.
- These awards are presented to honour outstanding scientific work in the field of mathematics.

*Topic- Important for PCS Exams*

*Source- The Hindu*

**22. 03. 2018**

1. **Union Cabinet approved the launch of Ayushman Bharat Scheme**

- Ayushman Bharat or National Health Protection Mission, which was announced by Finance Minister in year 2018-19 Budget.

**Related Information**

**Ayushman Bharat**

- The Government announced **two major initiatives** in the health sector, **as part of Ayushman Bharat programme**.
- The initiatives are-
  - (i) **Health and Wellness Centre**
  - (ii) **National Health Protection Scheme**

- The scheme will subsume the ongoing centrally sponsored schemes-  
(a) Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)  
(b) Senior citizen health insurance scheme (SCHIS)

### **National Health Protection Scheme**

- The National Health Protection Scheme that will **cover** over 10 crore **poor and vulnerable families**, or around 50 crore people.
- The scheme, set to be the world's largest government-funded healthcare programme.
- The **coverage of up to ₹5 lakh a family a year** will be provided for secondary- and tertiary-care hospitalisation.
- The scheme will also include pre- and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- Benefits of the scheme will be portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under Ayushman Bharat will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- For rural areas, the families, included in the scheme, will need to match one of the following conditions-  
(a) Households without shelter (b) Destitute (c) Living on alms (d) Manual scavenger families (e) Primitive tribal groups (f) Legally released bonded labour.
- For urban areas, there are 11 defined occupational categories that will be entitled under the scheme.

### **Health and Wellness Centre**

- National Health Policy, 2017 has envisioned Health and Wellness Centres as the foundation of India's health system.
- Under this 1.5 lakh centres will bring health care system closer to the homes of people.
- These centres will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
- These centres will also provide free essential drugs and diagnostic services.
- The Budget has allocated Rs.1200 crore for this flagship programme.

*Topic- GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- Indian Express + PIB*

#### **2. India, Hong Kong sign double taxation avoidance pact**

- Aim is **to facilitate investment flow** between both countries and **prevent tax evasion**.

### **Related Information**

#### **What is DTAA?**

- A DTAA is a tax treaty signed between two or more countries.
- Its key objective is that tax-payers in these countries **can avoid being taxed twice** for the same income.

- A DTAA applies in cases where a tax-payer resides in one country and earns income in another.
- DTAAs can either be comprehensive to cover all sources of income or be limited to certain areas such as taxing of income from shipping, air transport, inheritance, etc.

#### Why is it important?

- DTAAs are intended **to make a country an attractive investment destination** by providing relief on dual taxation.
- Such relief is provided by exempting income earned abroad from tax in the resident country or providing credit to the extent taxes have already been paid abroad.
- DTAAs also provide for concessional rates of tax in some cases.

#### Problems with the DTAAs

- DTAAs can become an incentive for even legitimate investors to route investments through low-tax regimes to avoid taxation.
- This leads to loss of tax revenue for the country.

#### General Anti Avoidance Rule (GAAR)

- GAAR is an anti-tax avoidance Rule of India.
- It is framed by the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance.
- It is made **to prevent intentional tax avoidance** by manipulating tax laws.
- It empowers the Income Tax dept. to investigate any deal or joint ventures which involves huge capital.
- It prevents tax evaders, from routing investments through tax havens like Mauritius, Luxemburg, Switzerland.

#### Tax Havens countries

- Tax havens are countries or regions which have zero or low tax regimes which provide individuals and business opportunities for tax avoidance or tax evasion.

#### Tax Evasion

- It is the **illegal practice** of not paying taxes, by not reporting income, reporting expenses etc.

#### Tax avoidance

- It is the **legitimate minimizing of taxes**, using methods included in the tax code.

Topic-GS-3- Indian Economy

Source- The Hindu Business Line + Investopedia

### 3. Military drills "Gulf Shield 1" begin in Saudi Arabia

- The Gulf Shield 1 Joint drills, organised by Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry, has kicked off in the eastern region in participation with military forces from 23 countries as well as Saudi forces.
- The training aims to raise the military readiness of participating countries, modernise joint mechanisms and enhance coordination and cooperation.

*Topic- GS-3-International Affairs*

*Source- Business Standards*

#### 4. **Water crisis in Bengaluru**

- Bengaluru is among the 10 cities in the world that might be on the verge of an imminent acute water crisis just **as the one faced by Cape Town in South Africa**.
- The number of waterbodies in Bengaluru has reduced by 79 percent due to unplanned urbanisation and encroachment.
- The water table in Bengaluru has shrunk drastically and the number of extraction wells has gone up.
- Cape Town in South Africa is facing the prospect of all its taps running dry by June-July this year.
- The report said that 10 cities across the world are facing '**Day Zero**' (when taps are expected to run dry). These cities are-

(a) Bengaluru (India) (b) Beijing (China) (c) Mexico City (Mexico) (d) Nairobi (Kenya) (e) Karachi (Pakistan) (f) Kabul (Afghanistan) (g) Istanbul (Turkey) (h) Sanaa (Yemen) (i) Buenos Aires (Argentina) (j) Sao Paulo (Brazil)

### **Related Information**

#### **World Water Day**

- The day is observed on **22 March** every year, to raise awareness about the importance of water.
- The theme this year is, 'Nature for Water' - exploring nature-based solutions to the water challenges the world faces in the 21st century.

*Topic- GS-3- Environment Conservation*

*Source- Economic Times + AIR*

#### 5. **Two new dog-faced bat species discovered**

- The dog-faced bats are a fast-flying, insectivorous species that are highly difficult to spot.
- These are names as-  
(a) **Cynomops freemani**  
(b) **Cynomops tonkigui-**

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- The Hindu*

## 6. Centre announced scheme for Northeast India Industrialisation

- The Cabinet approved the **North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS)**, 2017 with financial outlay of Rs 3,000 crores up to March, 2020.
- The aims of the scheme to promote employment in the North East States by primarily incentivizing the MSME Sector through this scheme.

Topic- GS-3- Infrastructure

Source- Economics Times

**23. 03. 2018**

## 1. Facebook-Cambridge Analytica controversy

- Facebook and Twitter have over the past decade become important platforms for any political campaign.
- But we now know that the use of these social media platforms is not limited to just airing rhetoric.

### **So how can data from Facebook potentially help in a political campaign?**

- The platform has enough data about your likes and dislikes. It knows the kind of people you follow, the types of news sources you read and the range of actions and reactions these posts elicit from you.
- All these data points in combination are good enough to know your political affiliation, or a lack of such inclination.

### **How is this data used?**

- There is a Facebook ad preferences page that tells you how the social network sees you in reference to serving ads.
- It is not a perfect science at all but based on your likes and dislikes Facebook lists the topics, people and interests which it thinks are good enough to push ads to you.

### **What type of data used by Cambridge Analytica?**

- Cambridge Analytica used data from an app called 'thisisyourdigitallife' to gather information about users.
- The firm acquired the data from **Aleksandr Kogan**, who had created this quiz app to tap into personal profiles on Facebook.
- Given that this app was a personality quiz, the questions would have been designed to glean behaviour that gave away much more details on political leanings and other related aspects.
- This data would have given more granular details about what would be potential voters.

### **So how can this data be used to target voters?**

- With ads of all kinds, Facebook allows a good degree of targeting.
- The more targeted a campaign, the lower its reach and the costlier it gets.

- Usually, the targeting is based on age, location and interests.
- But with the kind of data Cambridge Analytica had, they would have been able to target, let's say, the 12 voters in Riverdale, Arkansas, who it gathered had not made up their minds on whom to vote for, but had a high probability of moving.
- Or let's say it could target the pro-Trump campaign to a set of people it was sure were disgruntled with the economic slowdown and resultant jobs.
- Pushing a certain kind of narrative to these voters over a period of time could certainly help them make up their minds.

#### **How has Facebook responded?**

- Facebook has said that Kogan violated its policies in transferring the data.

*Topic- GS-3-International Issues*

*Source- Indian Express*

2. **Congress to move privilege motion against Sushma Swaraj for 'misleading' Rajya Sabha on death of Indians in Iraq**
  - The Congress decided to move a privilege motion against External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in the Rajya Sabha for "misleading" the House on the issue of the death of 39 Indians who were kidnapped in Iraq's Mosul town in 2014.

#### **Related Information**

##### **Various type of Motions in Parliament**

##### **Substantive Motion**

- It is a self-contained, independent proposal made in reference to a subject which the mover wishes to bring forward.
- All resolutions, motions for election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and Motion of Thanks on the Address by the President etc are examples of substantive motions.

##### **Substitute Motion**

- It is a motion that is moved in substitution of an original motion and proposes an alternative to it.
  - If adopted by the House, it supersedes the original motion.

##### **Subsidiary Motion**

- It is a motion, by itself it has no meaning and is not capable of stating the decision of the House without reference to the original motion or proceedings of the House.
- It is divided into three subcategories:

**(a) Ancillary Motion:** It is used as the regular way of proceeding with various kinds of business.

**(b) Superseding Motion:** It is moved in the course of debate on another issue and seeks to

supersede that issue.

**(c) Amendment:** It seeks to modify or substitute only a part of the original motion.

#### **Privilege Motion**

- It is concerned with the breach of parliamentary privileges by a minister.
- It is moved by a member when he feels that a minister has committed a breach of privilege of the House or one or more of its members by withholding facts of a case or by giving wrong or distorted facts.
- Its purpose is to censure the concerned minister.

#### **Adjournment Motion**

- It is introduced in the Parliament to draw attention of the House to a definite matter of urgent public importance and needs the support of 50 members to be admitted.
- As it interrupts the normal business of the House, it is regarded as an extraordinary device.
- It involves an element of censure against the government and hence Rajya Sabha is not permitted to make use of this device.

#### **No-Confidence Motion**

- The Lok Sabha can remove the ministry from office by passing a no-confidence motion.
- The motion needs the support of 50 members to be admitted.

#### **Censure Motion**

- This motion can be moved only in the Lok Sabha and by the Opposition of the House.
- It can be moved against the Council of Ministers or an individual Minister or a group of Ministers for their failure to act or not to act or for their policy and may express regret, indignation or surprise of the House at the failure of the Minister or Ministers.
- If the Censure Motion is passed, the Council of Ministers is bound to seek the confidence of the Lok Sabha as early as possible.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- Indian Express + Indian Polity by Lakshmikant*

#### **3. Cabinet approves closure of India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians**

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for closure of **India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI)** to enhance synergies in channelizing Diaspora's contributions to Government of India's flagship programmes.

#### **Related Information**

##### **India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI)**

- IDF-OI was set up by Government of India with the approval of Cabinet in 2008 as an autonomous not-for-profit Trust, to facilitate Overseas Indian philanthropy into social and development projects in India.

- Promotion of Government of India's Flagship programmes -
  - (a) National Mission for Clean Ganga and Swachh Bharat Mission
  - (b) Social and Development projects identified by State Governments

was added to the mandate of IDF-OI.

- Although, between April 2015 and March 2018, the Trust received Rs.10.16 crore.
- Most of the contribution received were for either projects related to National Mission for Clean Ganga or Swachh Bharat Mission, which are separately administered by their respective Administrative Agencies.
- In order to enhance synergies, improve efficiencies and avoid duplication of work, it was decided by the 9th Meeting of Board of Trustees of the IDF-OI that the Trust would be closed down by March 31, 2018.

*Topic- GS-2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Source- PIB*

### 3. **India likely to emerge unscathed from El Nino: Government official**

- Monsoon rains in India are likely to be unaffected by the El Nino weather pattern, which is likely to set in only after the four-month rainy season ends in September.
- Monsoon season delivers about 70 percent of India's annual rainfall and is key to the success of the farm sector.
- Farm sector accounts for about 15 percent of India's \$2 trillion economy but sustains nearly two thirds of the country's 1.3 billion people.
- In 2017 monsoon rains were 95 percent of a long-term average compared with the India meteorological department's forecast of 98 percent.

## **Related Information**

### **El Nino-**

- El Nino is a periodic climate event that causes waters to warm up in east-central Pacific **Ocean**, which in turn causes huge changes in wind directions bringing less rain to south-east Asia and the Indian subcontinent, while increasing rain in other parts of the world.
- El Nino is accompanied by **high air pressure in the western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern Pacific**.
- The cool phase of ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) is called "**La Niña**" with SST (Sea surface temperature) in the **eastern Pacific below average and air pressures high in the eastern and low in western Pacific**.
- The ENSO cycle, both El Niño and La Niña, cause global changes of both temperatures and rainfall.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Geography*

*GS-3-Agriculture*

*Source- Economic Times*

4. **India Joined Europe's Copernicus Programme**

- India joined European public-private consortium of sharing free, full and open access data from Earth observation satellite constellation, called **Copernicus – The European Earth Observation Programme**.
- The Copernicus was previously known as GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security).
- Based out of Europe, it provides a wide range of services and solutions such as climate monitoring, land, ocean, and atmosphere monitoring as well as support in forecasting, management, and mitigation of natural disasters.
- India has twice made use of its services in the recent years—first when a tropical storm hit Odisha coast in 2013, and when floods hit Andhra Pradesh in October 2014.
- Under the pact, the European Commission will provide India free, full and open access data from its Copernicus Sentinel family of six satellites.
- In return, India will provide the European partners of the Copernicus program - free access to the data - gathered by India's earth observation satellites (Like Oceansat-2, Megha-Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) including historical data sets.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- indrastra*

5. **Navy warship INS Ganga decommissioned**

- INS Ganga, an indigenously built frigate of the Indian Navy, was decommissioned in Mumbai, after over three decades of service.
- It was commissioned on December 30, 1985, the ship represented a big step forward in the nation's warship building capability.

*Topic- GS-3-Defence*

*Source- AIR*

6. **Andhra Government launches NAIPUNYA RATHAM or World on Wheels**

- The Andhra Pradesh Government launched, NAIPUNYA RATHAM or World on Wheels, a multi-utility vehicle which aims to bring technology to the remote corners.
- As part of the Smart Village Smart Ward Programme, the Naipunya Rathaams will facilitate and look to improve digital literacy, digital skills and create an awareness on various government schemes that are underway in the new state of Andhra Pradesh.

*Topic- GS-2-Governance*

*Source- AIR*

**24. 03. 2018**

1. **How are members elected to Rajya Sabha?**

- The Rajya Sabha elections for 16 states covering 58 seats of the 245-member House was held recently.
- Unlike the Lok Sabha, members of the Upper House are not directly elected by the public but by elected representatives of states and Union Territories.
- The allocation of seats for Rajya Sabha is made on the basis of the population of each state.

**Election of Rajya Sabha**

- It allowing for rank- based voting.
- The election follows the “**system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote**”, which basically means that the single **vote cast by an MLA is transferable from one candidate to another in two scenarios-**

**(a)** One is when a candidate obtains more than what is required for their win and therefore has an unnecessary surplus and

**(b)** The other is when a candidate polls so few votes that they have absolutely no chance.

- In both the cases, the votes are transferred so that there is no wastage.

**How the election process works?**

- The ballot paper bears the names of the candidates and the MLA marks his preferences for the candidates with the figures 1,2,3,4 and so on against the names chosen by him and this marking is understood to be alternative in the order indicated.
- The candidate that gets rank 1 from an MLA secures a “**first preference**” vote.
- In order to win, any candidate requires a specific number of such “first preference votes”.
- This number depends on the strength of the state Assembly and the number of MPs it sends to Rajya Sabha.
- To win a Rajya Sabha seat, a candidate should get a required number of votes which is known as quota or preference vote.

$$\text{Preference vote} = \left[ \frac{\text{Total number of votes}}{\text{Number of Rajya Sabha seats} + 1} \right] + 1$$

**Example-**

In case of Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha elections, the preference vote can be calculated using the above-mentioned formula.

$$\text{Preference vote} = \left( \frac{403}{10+1} \right) + 1 = 37 \text{ votes}$$

**Conditions when a ballot paper is considered invalid**

- There are certain conditions when a ballot paper is deemed invalid. These include figure 1 not being marked or if figure 1 is assigned to the names of more than one candidate or is placed in a confusing manner.
- Other reasons include assigning two figures to one candidate or if there is any mark or writing by which the elector can be identified.

Topic-GS-2-Indian Polity

Source- Indian Express

## 2. **Delhi High Court sets aside Centre's notification disqualifying 20 AAP MLAs**

- The Delhi High Court set aside the Centre's notification disqualifying 20 AAP MLAs in the office-of-profit case.
- The bench of High court vitiated the Election Commission's recommendation and said there was a violation of natural justice and no oral hearing was given to the MLAs before disqualifying them as legislators of the Delhi Assembly.

### **Background**

- In January 2018, the Election Commission recommended the disqualification of 20 AAP MLAs finding them guilty of holding an 'office of profit'.
- The 20 AAP legislators were accused of being unconstitutionally appointed as parliamentary secretaries to assist various ministers of the Delhi government.

### **Related Information**

#### **What is 'office of profit'?**

- The word 'office' has not been defined in the Constitution or the Representation of the People Act of 1951.
- But different courts have interpreted it to mean a position with certain duties that are more or less of public character.

#### **What are the basic criteria to disqualify an MP or MLA?**

- Basic disqualification criteria for an MP are laid down in Article 102 of the Constitution, and for an MLA in Article 191.
- They can be disqualified for:
  - (a) Holding an office of profit under government of India or state government
  - (b) Being of unsound mind
  - (c) Being an undischarged insolvent
  - (d) Not being an Indian citizen or for acquiring citizenship of another country

#### **Did AAP's parliamentary secretaries enjoy office of profit?**

- According to the Constitution, Members of Parliament or legislators are prohibited from accepting government positions which carry some financial remuneration or any other benefit such as office space, accommodation, or even a car.
- Any violation of this provision attracts disqualification of the legislator for holding an office of profit.
- The aim of this provision is to preserve the independence of the legislature by keeping its members away from any temptations from the executive.

#### **What was the first office of profit case referred to the EC?**

- One of the earliest cases was in 1953.

- The EC had to decide whether MLAs of the Vindhya Pradesh Assembly should be disqualified for appointment as members of the district advisory council.
- The EC was of the opinion that only members living in the district headquarters and receiving allowance were deemed to hold office of profit, and 12 of 60 were disqualified.

#### **What are the recent instances of disqualification of legislators for holding office of profit?**

- In March 2006, President APJ Abdul Kalam disqualified Jaya Bachchan of the SP from Rajya Sabha with retrospective effect from July 14, 2004, for holding an office of profit as chairperson of the UP-Film Development Council.
- In January 2015, UP MLAs Bajrang Bahadur Singh (BJP) and Uma Shankar Singh (BSP) were disqualified from the assembly after they were indicted by the Lokayukta for bagging government construction contracts by misusing their position.

*Topic- GS-2-Indian Polity*

*Source- AIR + Indian Express*

#### **3. Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment launched first Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary**

- Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot launched the first Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary of three thousand words in New Delhi.
- The basic aim of developing the ISL Dictionary is to remove communications barriers between the deaf and hearing communities as it is focused on providing more information in Indian sign language.
- Its aim is to give deaf people the constitutional right to speech and opportunity of freedom of expression and also bringing them into the mainstream of the society.
- The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre under Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States*

*Source- AIR*

#### **4. World Tuberculosis Day**

- The "World Tuberculosis Day" observed every year on 24th March to fight tuberculosis and eradicate this deadly disease that has been claiming millions of lives.
- World TB Day is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- The theme for World Tuberculosis Day 2018 is "Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world".

#### **Related Information**

##### **Tuberculosis (TB)**

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB).

- Tuberculosis is spread through the air when people who have active TB in their lungs a cough, spit, speak, or sneeze.

### **India and Tuberculosis**

- It claims more than 1.7 million lives every year all over the world and India contributes to about 25% of these deaths.
- According to The Global TB Report 2017 released by the WHO, India topped the list of seven countries, accounting for 64 percent of the 10.4 million new tuberculosis (TB) cases worldwide in 2016.
- The Global Report said that India was followed by Indonesia, China, Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria and South Africa.
- Tuberculosis also included in the Universal Immunization Programme of Health Ministry.
- In March 2018, Prime Minister launched a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) from India by 2025, five years ahead of a globally-set deadline (2030).

*Topic- GS-2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.*

*Source- WHO*

#### **5. Jan Suraksha Yojana**

- It was launched on 9th May 2015.
- Following programs have been launched under Jan Suraksha Yojana-

#### **(i) PRADHAN MANTRI JEEVAN JYOTI BIMA YOJANA (PMJJBY)**

- PMJJBY is a one-year life insurance scheme.
- Renewable from year to year, offering coverage for death due to any reason and is available to people in the age group of 18 to 50 years
- Premium of Rs.330/- per annum per member
- life cover of Rs. 2 lakhs

#### **(ii) PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHA BIMA YOJANA-**

- Premium of Rs.12 per year
- Age group 18 to 70 years
- Under it, risk coverage available will be Rs.2 lakh for accidental death and permanent total disability and Rs. 1 lakh for permanent partial disability

#### **(iii) Atal Pension Yojana-**

- Launched in 2015 and replaced 'Swavalamban Scheme'.
- Open to all bank account holders who are not members of any statutory social security scheme.

- Focussed on all citizens in the unorganised sector
- Age Criterion-  
Minimum age- 18 years  
Maximum age- 40 years
- The Union Govt. would also co-contribute 50% of the subscriber's contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower.
- Subscribers would receive the fixed pension at the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare Schemes*

*Source- PIB*

**26. 03. 2018**

1. **GSAT-6A to give armed forces a shot in the arm**

- GSAT-6A, the second predominantly S-band communications satellite, is set to be launched from Sriharikota on March 29.
- It will complement GSAT-6, which has been orbiting since August 2015 at 83 degrees East longitude.
- Its weight is 2000 Kg and costing about ₹270 crores.
- It is designated for the use of the Armed Forces and will not add any transponder capacity for general uses.
- A special feature of the GSAT-6A is its 6-metre-wide umbrella-like antenna, which will be unfurled in once it is in space.

**Issues with smaller antenna-**

Regular communication satellites with smaller antenna require much larger ground stations.

- The S-band's antenna was developed by ISRO's Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad.
- GSAT-6A will also have a smaller 0.8-metre antenna for communication in the C band.

**Related Information**

**Different Bands in satellite communication-**

**(a) L-band (Frequency range- 1–2 GHz)**

- It is used for low earth orbit satellites, military satellites, and terrestrial wireless connections like GSM mobile phones, GPS.

**(b) S-band (2–4 GHz)**

- Weather radar, surface ship radar, and some communications satellites

**(c) C-band (4–8 GHz)**

- Primarily used for satellite communications, for full-time satellite TV networks or raw satellite feeds.

**(d) X-band (8 - 12 GHz)**

- Primarily used by the military.
- Used in radar applications including continuous-wave, pulsed, single-polarisation, dual-polarisation, synthetic aperture radar and phased arrays.

**(e) Ku band (12–18 GHz)**

- Used for satellite communications.
- Used for direct broadcast satellite services.

**(f) Ka band (26-40 GHz)**

- High-resolution, close-range targeting radars on military aircraft.

**GSAT**

- The GSAT series of geosynchronous satellites is a system developed by ISRO with an objective to make India self-reliant in broadcasting services.

**Geosynchronous satellite**

- A geosynchronous satellite is a satellite in geosynchronous orbit, with an orbital period the same as the Earth's rotation period.
- A special case of geosynchronous satellite is the **geostationary satellite**, which has a geostationary orbit– a circular geosynchronous orbit **directly above the Earth's equator**.
- Geostationary satellites have the special property of remaining permanently fixed in exactly the same position in the sky, as viewed from any location on Earth, meaning that ground-based antennas do not need to track them but can remain fixed in one direction.
- Such satellites are often used for communication purposes.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- The Hindu + European Space Agency + The Hindu*

2. **Cabinet approves "Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry" for sericulture sector**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for Central Sector Scheme "Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry" for the next three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- The scheme aims to achieve self-sufficiency in silk production by 2022.
- The Scheme has four components –
  - (a) Research & Development (R&D), Training, Transfer of Technology and IT Initiatives
  - (b) Seed Organizations and farmers extension centres
  - (c) Coordination and Market Development for seed, yarn and silk products and

(d) Quality Certification System (QCS) by creating amongst others a chain of Silk Testing facilities, Farm based & post-cocoon Technology Up-gradation, and Export Brand Promotion.

- The scheme will be implemented by the Ministry through Central Silk Board (CSB).
- The scheme will promote Women Empowerment and livelihood opportunities to SC/ST and other weaker sections of the society.
- The scheme will help to increase productive employment from 85 lakhs to 1 crore persons by 2020.

*Topic- GS-2-Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Source- PIB*

### 3. World's longest sandstone cave "Krem Puri" discovered in Meghalaya

- **The world's longest sandstone cave named Krem Puri** was discovered near Laitsohum village, located in the Mawsynram area in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district.
- It has a staggering length of 24.58 km, almost three times the height of Mount Everest, and contains some dinosaur fossils from 66-76 million years ago as well.
- 'Krem' means 'cave' in Khasi language.

#### **Related Information**

- The North-Eastern Indian state of Meghalaya is renowned for its complex cave systems underneath the many hills.
- It has more than 1650 known caves and cave locations of which 1000 have been partially or fully explored.
- Meghalaya is also home to **India's longest cave in the general category - the Krem Liat Prah-Umim-Labit limestone cave** system located in Jaintia Hills.
- It measures over 31 km in length.
- Krem Puri is now the second longest cave system in the general category after this.

*Topic- GS-1-Indian Culture*

*GS-1-Indian Geography*

*Source- India Today*

### 4. Bio-medical Waste Management Rules Amended to Protect Human Health

- Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules 2016 have been amended to improve compliance and strengthen the implementation of environmentally sound management of biomedical waste in India.

Salient features of **Bio-Medical Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018** –

- Bio-medical waste generators including hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, dispensaries, veterinary institutions, animal houses, pathological laboratories, blood banks, health care

facilities etc. will have to phase out chlorinated plastic bags (excluding blood bags) and gloves by March 27, 2019.

- All healthcare facilities shall make available the annual report on its website within a period of two years from the date of publication of the Bio-Medical Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018.
- Operators of common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facilities shall establish bar coding and global positioning system for handling of bio-medical waste
- The State Pollution Control Boards have to compile, review and analyse the information received and send this district-wise bio-medical waste generation, information on Health Care Facilities etc. to Central Pollution control board.
- Every occupier, i.e. a person having administrative control over the institution have to follow WHO guidelines on the safe management of wastes from health care.

*Topic- GS-3-Environment*

*Source- PIB*

5. **What 'autonomy' will bring for UGC's chosen ones**

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has granted autonomy to 60 universities and colleges across the country.

**How it all began**

- The UGC's ambitious plan to liberate educational institutions from regulatory control was first proposed by the NITI Aayog.
- In June 2017, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) appointed a committee headed by the former vice-chairman of NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya, to suggest reforms in higher education.
- The panel submitted its report in August 2017.
- The UGC's new regulation on graded autonomy (formally known as Categorisation of Universities for Grant of Graded Autonomy Regulations, 2018), notified in February 2018, was among the panel's recommendations.
- Under these rules, central, state, deemed, and private universities will be graded into three groups, with a different degree of autonomy for each category.
- The categorisation hinges on an institution's performance in either reputed global rankings or the assessment done by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
- The NAAC assesses institutions on seven parameters —
  - (a) Curriculum
  - (b) Teaching-learning and evaluation
  - (c) Research
  - (d) Infrastructure
  - (e) Student support
  - (f) Governance and leadership
  - (g) Institutional values

### Three graded categories

- Category-I institutions will be free to start new programmes, departments, schools, and off-campus centres without UGC approval.
- Category-II universities will need the UGC's permission to sign MoUs with foreign universities.
- The remaining will fall in Category-III, and they will be regulated by the UGC. These institutions will not enjoy any of the exemptions granted to the other categories.

*Topic-GS-2- Governance*

*Source- Indian Express*

**27. 03. 2018**

#### 1. **Brazzaville Declaration signed to protect the world's largest tropical peatland**

- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo and Indonesia jointly signed the Brazzaville declaration.
- The agreement was signed **to protect the Cuvette Centrale region in the Congo Basin, the world's largest tropical peatlands**, from unregulated land use and prevent its drainage and degradation, that promotes better management and conservation of this globally important carbon store.
- The declaration recognizes the importance of the scientific breakthrough of mapping the world's largest tropical peatland area.
- The declaration aims to implement coordination and cooperation between different government sectors to protect the benefits provided by peatland ecosystems.

### Related Information

#### Peatlands

- Peatlands are wetlands that contain a mixture of decomposed organic material, partially submerged in a layer of water, lacking oxygen.
- The complex biodiversity of the peatlands means they are home to a variety of species, but their **high carbon content** makes them uniquely vulnerable to incineration if they are drained.
- The equivalent of three years of global greenhouse gas emissions is stored in the Congo peatlands.

#### Wetland-

- A wetland is a land area that is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally, such that it takes on the characteristics of a distinct ecosystem.

#### Ramsar convention on wetlands-

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

- It is also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the Convention was signed in 1971.
- The Ramsar Convention works closely with six other organisations known as International Organization Partners (IOPs). These are:
  - (a) Birdlife International
  - (b) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
  - (c) International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
  - (d) Wetlands International
  - (e) WWF International
  - (f) Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)

*Topic- GS-3- Environment Conservation*

*Source- UN Environment*

## 2. **Union Home Ministry may relax protected area permit rules**

- The Union home ministry is examining whether to relax the six-decade-old Restricted Area Permit regime and allow foreigners to visit such places and in turn give tourism a further boost.
- Under which foreigners must obtain a special permission to visit Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir among others.
- So far foreign tourists require a special permit from the home ministry to visit such locations.

### **Related Information**

#### **Protected area permit (PAP)**

- As per the existing provisions of the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order 1958, some areas which are between the “Inner Line” and the international border in a few states are identified as protected areas, and foreigners (except Bhutan) require special permits from the home ministry to travel there.
- This requirement is in addition to getting an Indian visa.
- Such restriction is in place due to security reasons.
- Even Indian citizens who are not residents of those areas require an **Inner Line Permit (ILP)** to enter these places. The Inner Line Permit is significantly easier to get.
- However, NRIs (Indians who are staying abroad for more than 6 months), PIO Card holders, and OCI holders are not eligible for Inner Line Permit.

#### **Restricted Area Permit (RAP)**

- Under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, no foreigner can enter or stay in the 'Restricted Areas' without obtaining a permit from the competent authorities.

#### **Inner Line Permit**

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to allow inward travel of an **Indian citizen** into a protected area for a limited period.
- It is obligatory for Indian citizens from outside those states to obtain a permit for entering into the protected state.
- Despite the fact that the ILP was originally created by the British to safeguard their commercial interests, it continues to be used in India, officially to protect tribal cultures in north-eastern India.
- Currently, there are 3 states have a provision of Inner Line Permit. These states are- Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland.

*Topic- GS-2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Source- Deccan Chronicle + Ministry of Development of N-E region*

### 3. **National Conference on Down Syndrome' was held in New Delhi**

- A 'National Conference on Down Syndrome' was organised by the National Trust under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in New Delhi.
- The objective of this conference was to provide excellent opportunities to the parents to obtain information about latest development in education and skilling and inclusive living of persons with Down Syndrome.
- The United Nations observed every year 21st March as World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) to create awareness about people with Down Syndrome.

## **Related Information**

### **Down Syndrome**

- Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring chromosomal abnormality, resulting when an individual possesses three, rather than the usual two, copies of the 21st chromosome.
- This excess genetic material affects a person's physical and cognitive development.
- People with Down syndrome will have some degree of Intellectual Disability, usually in the mild to moderate range.
- There are many characteristics associated with Down syndrome, including low muscle tone, an enlarged tongue, a flat facial profile, and increased risk of related medical conditions.
- There is not a vaccine to prevent or cure Down syndrome.
- The medical name for Down syndrome is Trisomy 21.

### **National Trust**

- The National Trust is a statutory body set up by an Act of Parliament for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

Source- PIB

4. **India became 3rd largest electricity producer ahead of Russia, Japan**

- India's electricity production grew 34% over seven years up to 2017.
- India became 3<sup>rd</sup> largest electricity producer ahead of Russia, Japan.
- Electricity production stood at 1,003.525 BU (billion units) between April 2017-January 2018. **Note-** One BU is enough to power 10 million households (one household using an average of about 3 units per day)
- It was stated in a report by India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), a trust established by the commerce ministry.
- In FY 2016, India was the third largest producer and the third largest consumer of electricity in the world, behind China and the United States.
- **With an annual growth rate of 22.6% capacity addition over a decade to FY 2017, renewables beat other power sources**—thermal, hydro and nuclear.
- Renewables, however, made up only 18.79% of India's energy. About 65% of installed capacity continues to be thermal.
- The Power sector has a 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) permit, which boosted FDI inflows in the sector.

**Related Information**

- India will set up a \$350 million fund to finance solar projects, as the country steps up efforts to achieve its ambitious target of adding 175 gigawatts (GW) in renewable energy by 2022 under the Jawahar Lal Nehru **National Solar Mission**.

Topic- GS-3- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Source- Business Standards

5. **JS Rajput nominated India's Representative to UNESCO's Executive Board**

- Professor JS Rajput has been nominated India's Representative to UNESCO's Executive Board.
- The elections of Members of the Executive Board for the term 2017-21 took place on 8th November 2017.

**Related Information**

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris.
- Its objective is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms.
- It has 195-member states and ten associate members.

**Note:** The United States announced its intention to withdraw from UNESCO on 12 October 2017, accusing it of "anti-Israel bias". Later, Israel also announced it would also be leaving UNESCO.

- UNESCO implements its activities through the five programme areas: education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, and communication and information.

### UNESCO Executive Board

- The Executive Board has a **four-year term of office and 58 seats**.
- The executive board is one of the constitutional organs of UNESCO and is **elected by the General Conference**.
- The executive board examines the work of the organization and the corresponding budget estimates.
- In practice, the executive board is the main organ responsible for all policies and programmes of UNESCO.

*Topic- GS-2- Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.*

*Source- DD News*

**28. 03. 2018**

#### 1. NASA's "TESS" spacecraft for the search of life outside Earth

- The search for the cosmic real estate is about to begin anew with **NASA and SpaceX** joining hands for their all-new **combined mission**.
- NASA's "Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite" (TESS) spacecraft will ascend on a Falcon 9 rocket of the SpaceX to go up in the space.
- TESS, abound with cameras and ambition, would be staying between the moon and the Earth for at least two years, scanning the sky for alien worlds.

### Related Information

- NASA's spacecraft, Kepler, discovered near about 4,000 possible planets in the Milky Way galaxy, after it was launched in 2009.
- Astronomers now believe there are other potentially habitable planets in our galaxy, meaning the nearest one could be as close as 10 to 15 light-years from here.
- After having spent nine years in space, Kepler is now running out of fuel.
- So now, the mission is passed on to TESS.

*Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology*

*Source- Financial Express*

#### 2. A thin film "sun shield" to save Great Barrier Reef

- Scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Biology have made a floating "**sun shield**" made of calcium carbonate.
- An ultra-fine biodegradable film some 50,000 times thinner than a human hair could be enlisted to protect the Great Barrier Reef from environmental degradation.

- It's designed to sit on the surface of the water above the corals, rather than directly on the corals, to provide an effective barrier against the sun.

### Related Information

#### Coral reefs-

- The Corals are marine invertebrates in the class Anthozoa of phylum Cnidaria.
- They typically live in compact colonies of many identical individual polyps.
- The Coral reefs are built by and made up of thousands of tiny animals—coral “polyps”—that are related to anemones and jellyfish.

#### Coral bleaching-

- The Coral bleaching occurs when coral polyps expel algae that live in their tissues.
- Normally, coral polyps live in an endosymbiotic relationship with the algae and that relationship is crucial for the coral and hence for the health of the whole reef.
- Bleached corals continue to live. But as the algae provide the coral with 90% of its energy, after expelling the algae the coral begins to starve.
- Above-average sea water temperatures caused by global warming have been identified as a leading cause of coral bleaching worldwide.

#### Great Barrier Reef

- The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs.
- The reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.

*Topic- GS-3-Environment*

*Source- The Hindu*

#### 3. Ministry of Power joins hands with Skill India to support electrification scheme 'Saubhagya'

- A special project under the PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) launched in Six States - Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.
- Under it technical Helpers will be trained to meet the requirement of power sector.

### Related Information

#### 'Power for all' (SAUBHAGYA) scheme

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 'Power for all' scheme to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on September 25, 2017.
- The scheme is named as '**Saubhagya**' and provide subsidy on equipment like transformers, meters and wires.
- The scheme also promises on-the-spot registration of applicants.

- Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) is the nodal agency for coordinating the implementation of the scheme.
- The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme identify using Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011 data.

#### **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**

- It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.

#### **National Skill Development Mission (Skill India Mission)**

- The National Skill Development Mission was launched by Prime Minister on 15 July 2015 on the occasion of World Youth Skills Day.
- Key institutional mechanisms for achieving the objectives of the Mission have been divided into three tiers-
  - (a) Governing Council for policy guidance at apex level
  - (b) A Steering Committee and
  - (c) A Mission Directorate (along with an Executive Committee) as the executive arm of the Mission.
- Mission Directorate will be supported by three other institutions: National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and Directorate General of Training (DGT).

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare Schemes*

*Source- PIB*

#### **4. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) or Housing for All**

##### **“Housing for All” In Rural Areas-**

- Under the scheme the Government proposes to provide an environmentally safe and secure pucca house to every rural household by 2022.
- It is named as the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin)- PMAY-G**.
- Interest subvention (subsidy) is a crucial component of the scheme – This will be implemented by National Housing Bank

##### **PMAY - URBAN-**

- Interest subvention (subsidy) is a crucial component of the scheme.
- Under the new scheme of housing for all 2022, the central assistance per house for EWS (Economically weaker section) has been planned to increase to 1.5 lakh rupees from 70,000 rupees.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare Schemes*

*Source- PIB*

5. **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) approved for implementation during 2018-19 and 2019-20**

- A new central sector scheme “IM-PDS” has been approved for implementation during 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- The key objectives of the scheme are to integrate PDS system/portals of States/UTs with Central System/portals, introduction of National Portability, and de-duplication of ration cards/beneficiary, etc.
- The new scheme will bring more transparency and efficiency in distribution of food grains as it will improve the mechanism to identify fake/duplicate ration cards and provide the option to PDS beneficiaries to lift their entitled food grains from the Fair Price Shops of their choice at the national level.

*Topic- GS-2-Governance*

*Source- PIB*

6. **India, Pakistan to hold Permanent Indus Commission meet**

- India and Pakistan will hold a two-day meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission to discuss various issues under the Indus Water Treaty.
- The issues relating to India’s Ratle hydroelectricity, Pakul Dul and Lower Kalnai projects, located in Jammu and Kashmir, may come up for discussion during the meeting.
- Pakistan contends that Ratle, Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai projects- located in the Chenab basin- were violating the IWT, signed in 1960.

**Related Information**

**IWT (Indus Water Treaty)**

- The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank.
- The treaty was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and then President of Pakistan Ayub Khan.

**Agreements under Indus Water Treaty (IWT)**

- Control over the water flowing in three "eastern" rivers of India was given to India. These rivers are-
  - (a) The Beas
  - (b) The Ravi
  - (c) The Sutlej
- Control over the water flowing in three "western" rivers of India was given to Pakistan-
  - (a) The Indus
  - (b) The Chenab
  - (c) The Jhelum
- India can use only 20% of the total water carried by the Indus.

*Topic-GS-2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests*

*Source- Indian Express*

7. **Govt begins process of selling enemy properties**

- Over 9,400 'enemy' properties, worth more than Rs 1 lakh crore, are set to be auctioned by the home ministry.
- The properties were left behind by people who took citizenship of Pakistan and China.
- The move came after the amendment of the 49-year-old Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act.
- The act ensured that the heirs of those who migrated to Pakistan and China during Partition and afterwards will have no claim over the properties left behind in India.

**Related Information**

- After the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, the Enemy Property Act was enacted in 1968, which regulates such properties and lists the custodian's powers.
- The government has vested these properties in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India, an office instituted under the central government.
- The government amended the Act in the wake of a claim laid by the heirs of Raja of Mahmudabad, on his properties spread across Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

*Topic- GS-2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Source- Times of India*

**29. 03. 2018**

1. **Hot, metallic Earth-sized planet "K2-229b" discovered**

- Scientists have discovered a hot, metallic, Earth-sized planet orbiting a dwarf star located 260 million light years away.
- The planet is named as **K2-229b** which is almost 20 percent larger than Earth but has a mass which is over two-and-a-half times greater.
- It reaches a day side temperature of over 2000 degrees Celsius.
- It is located very close to its host star, which itself is a medium-sized active K dwarf in the Virgo Constellation.
- K2-229b orbits this star every fourteen hours.
- The researchers discovered the planet with the use of k2 telescope via Doppler spectroscopy technique - also known as the 'wobble method' - to discover and characterise this faraway planet.
- As K2-229b is similar to Mercury, knowing more about the former can potentially reveal more about the latter.

Topic- GS-3-Science and Technology

Source- Times of India

2. **All you need to know about- Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**

- The Supreme Court in its recent judgement banned immediate arrests and registration of criminal cases against public servants under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989.
- It had taken note of the rampant misuse of the stringent Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against government servants.
- SC had passed a slew of directions and said a public servant can be arrested in cases lodged under the SC/ST Act only after prior approval by the competent authority.

**Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**

- The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to prevent atrocities against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
- The Act is popularly known as POA, the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act.
- Article 17 of Indian Constitution seeks to abolish 'untouchability' and to forbid all such practices.
- It is applicable to whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir.

**Argument in the favour of Original SC/ST Act 1989**

- The decline in the conviction rate for crimes against Dalits has created an impression that this may be driven by false filing of cases.
- But data from NCRB do not seem to support this contention.
- In fact, the share of false cases under the SC/ST Act has declined over time (2009-2015).
- The conviction rate too has in fact improved — from 23.8% in 2013 to 28.8% in 2014.

**Issues**

- In any case, as for the case in hand, Section 22 of the SC/ST Act already protects public servants from prosecution if they acted in 'good faith'.
- But now even a First Information Report is not to be registered without preliminary inquiry.
- Moreover, even after the registration of FIR, the accused cannot be arrested without written approval of the appointing authority.

**Related Information**

**Important facts**

- India has over 180 million Dalits.
- A crime is committed against a Dalit every 15 minutes.

- Six Dalit women are raped every day.
- Over the last 10 years (2007-2017), there has been a 66% growth in crime against Dalits.
- The rape of Dalit women has doubled in the last 10 years.

*Topic- GS-2- Parliament and State Legislatures*

*Source- The Hindu + Times of India*

3. **Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY)**

- For the senior citizens aged 60 years and above
- The Scheme provides an assured return of 8% p.a. payable monthly (equivalent to 8.30% p.a. effective) for 10 years.
- Minimum purchase price under the scheme is Rs.1,50,000/- for a minimum pension of Rs. 1,000/- per month and the maximum purchase price is Rs.7,50,000/- for a maximum pension of Rs. 5,000/- per month.
- The scheme will be operated by LIC.

*Topic- GS-2-Welfare Schemes*

*Source-PIB*

4. **Cabinet approved continuation of Nutrient Based Subsidy and City Compost Scheme till 2019-20**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of the Department of Fertilizers for continuation of Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) and City Compost Scheme beyond 12th Five Year plan till 2019-20.
- The continuation of the Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme and City Compost Scheme will ensure that adequate quantity of P&K fertilisers is made available to the farmers at statutory controlled price.

**Related Information**

**City Compost Policy**

- It was launched for promotion of city compost.
- Under the policy, a provision has been made for Market development assistance of Rs. 1500 per tonne of city compost for scaling up production and consumption of the compost.
- Market development assistance would lower MRP of city compost for farmers.

**Nutrient Based Subsidy**

- Under NBS, government gives subsidy based on weight of the different Macro/micro nutrient in the fertilizer.
- In this way, fertilizers companies can make new product mixes with micro-nutrients, according to soil requirement in each region and farmers can afford to buy these tailor-made fertilizers because government gives subsidy to keep them cheap.

Topic- GS-3-Agriculture

Source- PIB

5. **Cabinet approves enhancing the coverage of Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)**

- The Cabinet has given its approval for enhancing the scope of Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY).
- The Government of India will now contribute the Employer's full admissible contribution for the first three years from the date of registration of the new employee for all the sectors including existing beneficiaries for their remaining period of three years.

**Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)**

- PMRPY has been in operation since August, 2016.
- In this scheme, Government is paying the 8.33% contribution of Employers to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) in respect of new employees (who have joined on or after 1st April 2016) having a new Universal Account Number (UAN), with salary up to Rs. 15,000/- per month.
- Objective- The informal sector workers would get social safety net and there would be more job creation.

Topic- GS-2-Welfare Schemes

Source- PIB

**30. 03. 2018**

1. **Cabinet approved continuation of Krishi Vigyan Kendras till 2019-20**

- The special programmes which shall be initiated through the KVK Scheme are:
  - (a) A Network Project on New Extension Methodologies and Approaches
  - (b) Nutri-sensitive Agricultural Resources and Innovations (NARI)
  - (c) Knowledge Systems and Homestead Agriculture Management in Tribal Areas (KSHAMTA)
  - (d) Value Addition and Technology Incubation Centres in Agriculture (VATICA)
  - (e) Farm Innovation Resource Management (FIRM)
  - (f) Establishment of Agricultural Technology Information Centre
- Further two important programmes approved include the **Farmer FIRST** at 52 centres and **Attracting and Retaining Youth in Agriculture (ARYA)** for 100 Districts.

**Related Information**

**KVK Scheme**

- The KVK scheme is functioning on 100% Central funding pattern under the ambit of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE).
- The first KVK was established in 1974 at Puducherry. The number of KVKs has risen to 645 and 106 more KVKs are to be established in the newly created districts and some larger districts.

- KVK, is an integral part of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), aims at assessment of location specific technology modules in agriculture and allied enterprises, through technology assessment, refinement and demonstrations.
- KVKs have been functioning as Knowledge and Resource Centre of agricultural technology supporting initiatives of public, private and voluntary sector for improving the agricultural economy of the district and are linking the NARS with extension system and farmers.

### **Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture (DKMA)**

- It is mandated for-
  - (a) Dissemination and sharing of agricultural knowledge and information through value added information products in print, electronic and web mode.
  - (b) Development of e-resources on agricultural knowledge
  - (c) Information for global exposure, facilitation for strengthening e-connectivity among institutes of the ICAR, Agricultural Universities (AUs) and KVKs;
  - (d) Capacity building for agricultural knowledge management and communication.

*Topic- GS-3-Agriculture*

*Source- PIB*

#### **2. Government cracks down on GST evaders**

- The government has launched a crackdown on goods and services tax (GST) evaders ahead of the end of the fiscal year, signalling it will pursue tax dodgers.
- The Directorate General of GST Intelligence, the apex intelligence unit under the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC), has detected tax evasion to the tune of Rs440 crore.
- This is the first time such an operation has been carried out after the new indirect tax regime was implemented on 1 July, 2017.
- The nature of evasion includes:
  1. non-payment of tax,
  2. wrongful claim of tax rebates and
  3. failure to remit to the government taxes collected from customers.
- The sectors where tax evasion has been detected include
  1. iron and steel,
  2. port services and
  3. organized retailers,
- Cases of evasion include collusion between buyers and sellers to undervalue transactions.
- With the evaders using innovative ways, the government has asked the GST Network, the company that processes GST returns, to hire fraud analytics providers to comb through tax data to detect evasion patterns.

### **Related Information**

## GST Network

- Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is a non-Government, private limited company formed under new companies Act.
- The Government of India holds 24.5% equity in GSTN and all States of the Indian Union, including NCT of Delhi and Puducherry, and the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers (EC), together hold another 24.5%.
- Balance 51% equity is with non-Government financial institutions.
- The Company has been set up primarily to provide IT infrastructure and services to the Central and State Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

*Topic: GS-3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.*

*Source: Livemint*

### 3. **Cabinet approves formulation of a new Integrated Scheme for School Education from 1st April, 2018 to 31st March, 2020**

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal of Department of School Education and Literacy to formulate an Integrated Scheme on School Education by subsuming
  - (a) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
  - (b) Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
  - (c) Teacher Education (TE)from 1st April, 2018 to 31st March, 2020.
- The scheme comes in the backdrop of PM's vision of Sabko Shiksha, Achhi Shiksha and aims to support the States in universalizing access to school education from classes pre-nursery to XII across the country.

## Main Features of the Scheme

- The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from nursery to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal for Education.
- The main emphasis of the Integrated Scheme is on improving quality of school education by focussing on the **two T's - Teacher and Technology**.

*Topic-GS-2-Welfare schemes*

*Source- PIB*

### 4. **Shri Prakash Javadekar launched the Grand Finale of the Smart India Hackathon 2018 (Software Edition).**

- It is the world's largest event of its kind. It is being held at 28 nodal centres across the country simultaneously. Smart India Hackathon 2018 is aimed to encourage the spirit of innovations among the student.

- 27 innovations made by students during the last year Smart India Hackathon are in the final stage and ready for deployment.
- This year, 100 more innovations are expected.
- SIH-2018 comprises of two competitions – Software Hackathon and Hardware Hackathon. The final round of Hardware Hackathon competition will be conducted in the month of June 2018.
- **Problem Statements:** This year, 27 Central Ministries/Departments and 17 State Governments have sent more than 900 problem statements which were displayed on MyGov website and students across all technical institutions were sensitized to participate.
- **An Appeal for Leak Proof Exams:** HRD Minister said that this problem is not a subject of this year's Smart India Hackathon, but asked students to accept the challenge and work on the solution of full proof examination after this Smart India Hackathon-2018.

*Topic: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.*

*Source: PIB*

#### 5. **Govt approved amendments to National Medical Commission bill**

Important amendments are-

- Observing the need to act strictly against unqualified practitioners, the government approved an amendment to make the punishment for any unauthorised practice of medicine “severe” by including a provision for imprisonment of up to one year along with a fine extending to up to Rs five lakh.
- The final MBBS examination would be held as a common exam throughout the country and would serve as an exit test to be called the **National Exit Test (NEXT)**.
- Thus, students would not have to appear in a separate exam after MBBS to get licence to practice and ‘NEXT’ would serve as the screening test for doctors with foreign medical qualifications in order to practice in India.
- The provision dealing with “bridge course” for AYUSH practitioners to practice modern medicine has been removed.
- It also said that the maximum limit of 40 percent seats – for which fee would be regulated in private medical institutions and deemed universities- has been increased to 50 percent.
- Number of nominees from States and UTs in NMC increased from 3 to 6.

*Topic- GS-2- Parliament and State Legislatures*

*Source- Indian Express*

#### 6. **After leak, CBSE proposes electronically coded papers**

- In the wake of Class 10 Maths and Class 12 Economics question papers were leaked, the CBSE had to announce re-examination in the two subjects to uphold the sanctity of the board examinations and in the interest of fairness to the students.

- **Current System:** As of now, question papers are stored in bank lockers and released to the centres just before the examination.
- **One proposal:** One option being discussed is to have electronically coded papers, the key to which will be given only one hour before the exam to the centres and they will print it in the presence of observers

*Topic: GS-2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.*

*Source: The Hindu*

**31. 03. 2018**

### 1. Rajasthan's first mega food park inaugurated in Ajmer

- Union Minister for Food Processing Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated the Greentech Mega Food Park Private Ltd.
- It is the first mega food park in Rajasthan at Roopangarh Village in Ajmer district.
- The mega food park would have a central processing centre (CPC) as well as four Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) at Jaipur, Nagaur, Tonk and Churu.
- The facilities being created at Central Processing Centre (CPC) of this Mega Food Park include
- The advantages of the MFP include:
  - It will also provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 persons and benefit about 25,000 farmers in the CPC and PPC catchment areas.
  - Modern infrastructure for food processing created at the park will benefit farmers, growers, processors and consumers of Rajasthan and adjoining areas immensely and prove to be a big boost to the growth of the food processing sector.
- It would become a major contributor to doubling farmers' income through implementation of projects under the flagship scheme of 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana' and 'Make in India' initiative of the government.

### **Related Information**

#### **Mega Food Park**

- The Scheme of Mega Food Park aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastage, increasing farmers' income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.
- This Scheme is based on “**Cluster**” approach and envisages creation of state of art support infrastructure in a well-defined agri / horticultural zone for setting up of modern food processing units along with well-established supply chain.
- Mega food park typically consists of supply chain infrastructure including:
  - collection centres,

- primary processing centres,
- central processing centres,
- cold chain and
- around 30-35 fully developed plots for entrepreneurs to set up food processing units.

### **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana**

- PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana is a comprehensive package which will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme being implemented by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

*Topic: GS-III: Food processing and related industries in India- scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management.*

*Source: Business Standard*

### **2. NASA to send first mission to study 'heart' of Mars**

- NASA is all set to send the first-ever mission dedicated to exploring the deep interior of Mars.
- InSight or the Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport mission, carries a suite of sensitive instruments to gather data.
- InSight is a stationary lander (unlike a rover) and it will be the first NASA mission since the Apollo moon landings to place a seismometer, a device that measures quakes, on the soil of another planet.
- InSight has been equated to a scientific time machine that will bring back information about the earliest stages of Mars' formation 4.5 billion years ago.

### **Advantages of the mission:**

- It will help to learn how rocky bodies form, including Earth, its moon, and even planets in other solar systems.
- Looking deep into Mars will let scientists understand how different its crust, mantle and core are from Earth.

*Topic: GS-III: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life*

*Source: Business Standard*

### **3. In Haryana, the making of an Indian Brain Template**

- At the National Brain Research Centre (NBRC), a group of scientists is preparing a one-of-its-kind database of brain images

- The brain images, when compiled together, could result in a so-called Indian Brain Template (IBT).
- This archetype, to be constructed from a composite of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scans from 150 adult Indians, will likely include at least one person from every State and Union Territory, and serve as a guide to neuroscientists and surgeons, who have so far based their knowledge of intricate brain anatomy on Caucasian models.
- The IBT is funded by the Department of Science and Technology.

#### **Anthropological Significance:**

- Over the years, scientists from across the world have been pointing out that there are significant variations in the location of key brain regions and the density of neurons in various brain areas between racial types.
- Several countries, including China, South Korea and Canada, have brain templates of their population and it is time, that India had one of its own, too.

#### **Medical Significance:**

- Contemporary researchers are keener on variations in the details of the brain and whether it could hold clues to neuropsychiatric diseases.

*Topic: GS-III: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology*

*Source: The Hindu*

#### **4. India's antibiotics usage witnessed maximum rise among LMICs between 2000-2015: study**

- Indian population likely to face widespread antibiotic failure due to its prolonged use without medical consultation.
- A study has said that drug resistance poses the health challenge, as India witnessed the highest increase in antibiotic consumption among Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) between 2000 and 2015.
- Doctors have warned that with the prolonged use of antibiotics, many patients have become anti-antibiotic that even the primary diseases have become difficult to treat and transforming into fatal diseases.
- If such issues continue to progress, no antibiotics will be left even for the most simple infections by 2030, the study said.
- India saw the highest increase i.e. 103 percent increase in antibiotic consumption followed by China and Pakistan between 2000 and 2015.

#### **Who conducted the Study?**

- Researchers from the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics & Policy (CDDEP), Princeton University, ETH Zurich and the University of Antwerp conducted the study.

*Topic: GS-III: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life*

*Source: Newsonair (AIR)*

5. **Union cabinet has approved Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill 2018**

- The bill aims to provide a comprehensive legislation to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes.
- The Bill defines "Deposit Taker" who include all possible entities receiving or soliciting deposits except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation.
- Being a comprehensive Union law, the Bill adopts best practices from State laws, while entrusting the primary responsibility of implementing the provisions of the legislation to the State Governments.
- It has planned a designation of special courts and competent authority by the state Government to ensure repayment of deposits in the event of default by a deposit taking establishment.
- The bill also enables creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit taking activities in the country.

Why was the bill needed?

- Finance Ministry had announced earlier that a comprehensive central legislation would be brought in to deal with the menace of illicit deposit taking schemes.
- In India, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being looted by illicit deposit taking schemes.
- The worst victims of these schemes are the poor and the financially illiterate, and the operations of such schemes are often spread over many States.

*Topic: GS-III: Money-laundering and its prevention*

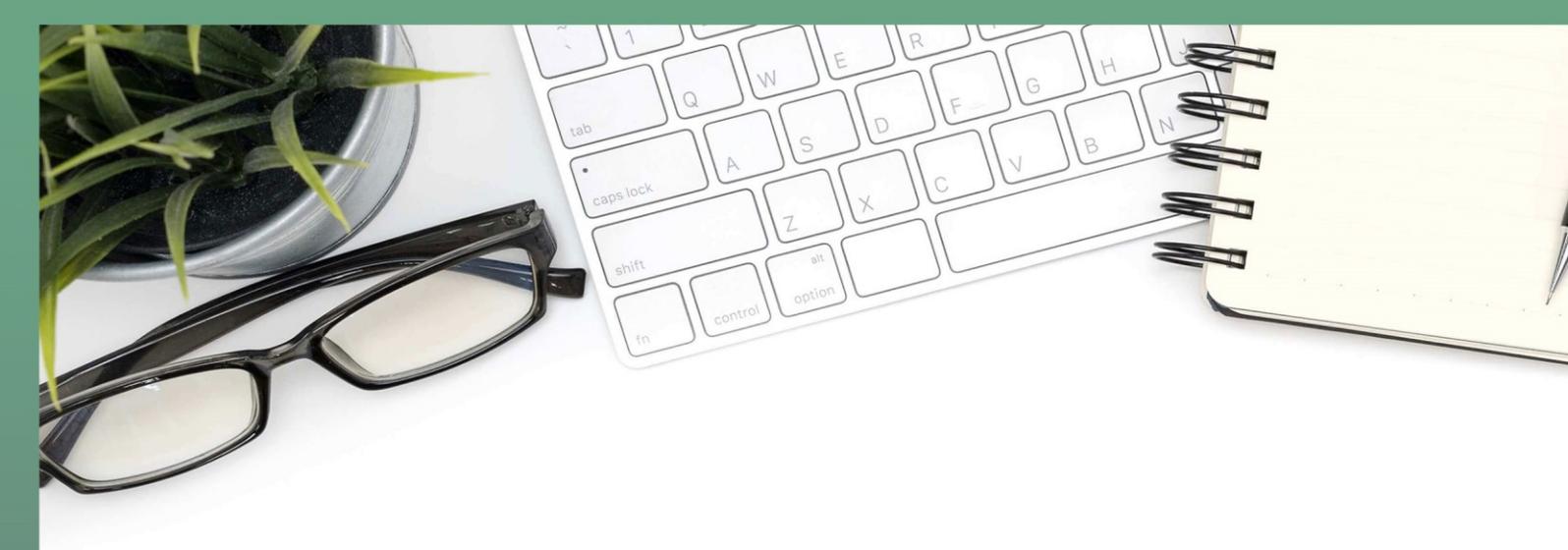
*Source: Economic Times*

6. **Government may make changes in PMLA to generate revenue from seized assets**

- India has begun discussions on amending its anti-money laundering framework so that an agency can be mandated to commercially manage seized assets worth thousands of crores of rupees such as farm land, prime property and luxury cars.
- The assets will generate income for the government rather than lying unused and going to waste until cases are decided.
- The issue has gained urgency after law enforcement agencies confiscated the assets of jewellers Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi following the Rs 14,000-crore Punjab National Bank fraud.

*Topic: GS-III: Money-laundering and its prevention*

*Source: Economic Times*



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