

Monthly Current Affairs for UPSC & PCS Exams

December 2018

POWERED BY:



Daily Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

01.12.2018

1. **Cope India 2019: India-US bilateral air exercise**

- The air forces of India and the US will participate in a joint exercise, Cope India 2019 (CI19) in Bengal.
- The exercise has evolved to incorporate subject matter expert exchanges, air mobility training, airdrop training and large-force exercises, in addition to fighter-training exercises.

Related Information

- The first Cope India was held at the IAF station in Gwalior in February 2004.
- Cope India had grown in scope with the involvement of fighter aircraft and force multipliers such as the Airborne Warning and Control System.
- Recently, Yudh Abhyas 2018- India and US joint military training exercises took place in the foothills of the Himalayas at Chaubattia in September 2018.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source-PIB

2. **India's first indigenous film festival**

- India's first international indigenous film festival will take place in the year 2019 in Odisha.
- It is an initiative of activist film collective Video Republic, that has been campaigning for indigenous communities in the State.
- It will showcase films made by indigenous people or made by non-indigenous filmmakers in collaboration with the indigenous communities.
- The festival aims to be a platform for indigenous communities from the world over to share, have a dialogue, collaborate and to use cinema as a mode of united assertion, resistance and activism against exploitative forces.

Related Information

- Odisha is the home of a total 62 tribes in which 13 tribes are included in "Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups" (PTGs).
- These tribes constitute more than 22.5% of the state's total population and 9.7% of the nation's total tribal population.
- The Kondha or Kandha is the largest tribe of the state in terms of population.
- The Santals inhabit the Mayurbhanj district.
- The Bonda is known as 'the Naked People', live in Malkangiri district formerly part of undivided Koraput.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

3. **Climate change: EU aims to be 'climate neutral' by 2050**

- The European Union says it is aiming to become the first major economy to go "climate neutral" by 2050.
- The EU says the move will also cut premature air pollution deaths by 40%.
- Under the plan, emissions of greenhouse gases after that date would have to be offset by planting trees or by burying the gases underground.
- Scientists say that net-zero emissions by 2050 are needed to have a fighting chance of keeping global temperatures under 1.5 degree Celsius for this century.

Related Information

What is climate neutrality?

- Climate neutrality means your emissions are balanced by methods of removing warming gases from the atmosphere.
- So the warming emissions that are created by cars and power plants should be counteracted by the greenhouse gases removed from the air by the planting of new forests or through carbon capture technologies which would see the CO2 buried underground.

How will they get there?

- The EU has set out eight scenarios for member states to cut warming gases - two of these strategies would see Europe become climate neutral.
- The EU says that this can be done with existing technologies such as solar and wind energy which would have to be ramped up to provide 80% of electricity.
- Energy efficiency measures such as home insulation would also need to be boosted to reduce energy consumption by half by the middle of the century.
- "With this plan, Europe will be the world's first major economy to go for net-zero emissions by 2050.
- The EU believes that the measures will help achieve the goals of the Paris agreement will be expensive but will boost economies by 2% of GDP by 2050 and reduce energy imports by over 70%, saving.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- TOI

4. Govt launches Bhasha Sangam

- The government has launched a unique initiative called Bhasha Sangam to introduce school students to 22 Indian languages.
- The initiative has been taken under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- The Bhasha Sangam is a programme for schools and educational institutions to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian languages.
- The main aim is to improve linguistic tolerance and respect and promote national integration.

Related Information

- Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution listed 22 languages but most students are familiar with only one or two language
- The programme will also help children to be familiarised with other languages of India.

'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

- "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat" was announced by Prime Minister on 31st October 2015 on the occasion of the

140th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

- This programme help to exchange the knowledge of the culture, traditions and practices of different States & UTs which will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between the States, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.

Objectives

- To CELEBRATE the Unity in Diversity of our Nation and to maintain and strengthen the fabric of traditionally existing emotional bonds between the people of our Country.
- PROMOTE the spirit of national integration through a deep and structured engagement between all Indian States and Union Territories through a year-long planned engagement between States.
- To SHOWCASE the rich heritage and culture, customs and traditions of either State for enabling people to understand and appreciate the diversity that is India, thus fostering a sense of common identity
- TO ESTABLISH long-term engagements.
- TO CREATE an environment this promotes learning between States by sharing best practices and experiences.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

5. Country's first owl festival in Pune

- The Indian Owl Festival, the country's first owl festival will be held at Pingori village in Pune.
- It is a first-of-its-kind festival in the country that is being organised with the intention of creating awareness about owl as a bird and debunking numerous superstitions associated with it
- It is organised by Ela Foundation, an NGO working towards nature education and conservation.

Related Information

- Of the 262 species of owls that are found in the world, 75 feature in the red data book meaning they are threatened.

- Major causes behind this are superstitions and habitat loss.
- According to a report published by Traffic India, a wildlife trade monitoring body, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2010: Owls were found to be “consumed and traded for a wide variety of purposes, including black magic, street performances, taxidermy, food and in folk medicines”.
- Owls are protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

6. **UNESCO lists wrestling, reggae and raiho-shin rituals as global treasures to be preserved**
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added Jamaican reggae, Georgian wrestling and Japanese raiho-shin rituals as among the new elements to its list of “intangible heritage” for the world to treasure.
- It will help to improve the visibility of often little-known and understood arts traditions.:

Reggae

- It is a unique Jamaican musical form which became the medium through which marginalized people made their voices heard.
- It can be experienced at the largest reggae festival in Jamaica, Reggae Sum fest, which is held every year in mid-July in Montego Bay.

Japanese Raiho-shin

- This is a Japanese folk ritual in which people will dress up in outlandish costumes and masks that depict deities and visit the homes of their neighbours.
- The representation of the belief that gods visit communities in order to celebrate the New Year or the changing of seasons.

Georgian wrestling

- It is a centuries-old form of Georgian traditional wrestling called Chidaoba.
- Descriptions of chidaoba techniques and codes of chivalry for champions appear in ancient Georgian manuscripts.

- It was an essential part of training for Georgia’s army in the 13th century but by the late middle Ages, it had lost any combat function and tournaments were held as festive events in rural and urban communities.

Related Information

Intangible cultural heritage

- An intangible cultural heritage is a practice, representation, expression, knowledge, or skill, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces that are considered by UNESCO to be part of a place’s cultural heritage.
- Intangible cultural heritage is considered by the Member States of UNESCO in relation to the tangible World Heritage focusing on intangible aspects of culture.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

7. **“8 States achieve 100% household electrification under Saubhagya.**
- 8 States have achieved 100% saturation in household electrification under Saubhagya.
- These states are namely Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, J&K, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal.
- There are total 15 States in the country now have 100 % household electrification.

Related Information

Saubhagya – ‘Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana’

- The Scheme was launched in September 2017.
- It has the objective to provide access to electricity to all the remaining households in the country.
- Achievement of 100% household electrification in the country would be a major milestone in the direction to achieve 24x7 power for all.
- The Government is committed to ensure 24x7 accesses to electricity for all by 31st March 2019.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-PIB

8. **FSSAI launches awareness drive on Trans fats**

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) 30 launched a new mass media campaign in order to create awareness about Trans fats and eliminate them in India by 2022.
- The campaign will warn citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fats and offer strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
- Studies have recently shown that 60,000 deaths occur every year due to cardiovascular diseases, which in turn are caused due to high consumption of trans fats.
- Swasth Bharat Yatra, an initiative started under the "Eat Right" campaign which started will also seek to create awareness among citizens about trans fats.

Related Information

Trans fat

- Trans fat is also called unsaturated fatty acids or trans fatty acids, are a type of unsaturated fat that occur in small amounts in nature.
- It has widely produced industrially from vegetable fats starting in the 1950s for use in margarine, snack food, packaged baked goods, and for frying fast food.
- Fats contain long hydrocarbon chains, which can be either unsaturated, i.e., have double bonds, or saturated, i.e., have no double bonds.
- Consuming trans fats has been shown to increase the risk of coronary artery disease in part by raising levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL, often termed "bad cholesterol"), lowering levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL, often termed "good cholesterol"), increasing triglycerides in the bloodstream and promoting systemic inflammation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 -Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

03.12.2018

1. **Hampi Utsav**

- Recently, Karnataka Government has announced the Hampi Utsav will not be held this year owing to drought in Ballari.
- Hampi Utsav, also known as the Vijaya Utsav the largest festival of Hampi has been celebrated from the times of the Vijayanagar reign.
- This event has been reiterated as the "Nada Utsava" by the Government of Karnataka.
- This festival is attributed to the mega cultural extravaganza.

Related Information

Hampi

- Hampi, also referred to as the Group of Monuments at Hampi, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in east-central Karnataka, India.
- It became the centre of the Hindu Vijayanagara Empire capital in the 14th century.
- Chronicles left by Persian and European travellers, particularly the Portuguese, state Hampi was a prosperous, wealthy and grand city near the Tungabhadra River.
- Hampi continues to be an important religious centre, housing the Virupaksha Temple, an active Adi Shankara-linked monastery and various monuments belonging to the old city.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

2. **Australia Becomes First Country to Move Against 'Orphanage Trafficking'**

- Australia is the first country in the world to recognize orphanage trafficking as a form of modern slavery.
- The Modern Slavery Bill was passed by both houses of parliament and under it, the new law, so-called "orphanage trafficking" will be treated as a slavery and trafficking offence.

- According to US Government Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, it is estimated that around 80 percent of the eight million children in orphanages worldwide have parents or family who could take care of them.
- According to Save the Children, more than 50 percent of Australian universities advertised orphanage placements as a volunteering opportunity overseas.

Related Information

- Trafficking of children is a form of human trafficking and is defined as the "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, and/or receipt of a child for the purpose of slavery, forced labour and exploitation.
- This definition is substantially wider than the same document's definition of "trafficking in persons"
- Children may also be trafficked for the purpose of adoption.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. India to host G20 summit in 2022

- India will host the G20 summit in 2022, the year the country would celebrate the 75th anniversary of its Independence.
- Before India, Italy was to host the international forum in 2022.

Related Information

G20 Summit 2018

- It will be the 13th meeting of Group of Twenty (G20) and the first G20 summit to be hosted in South America in Buenos Aires summit, Argentina.
- It is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors.
- The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union.
- The 19 countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States
- The aim of G20 is to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability.

- The G20 economies account for around 90% of the gross world product (GWP), 80% of world trade.

Topic- GS Paper2 – Important summit

Source- Indian Express

4. Kimberley Process

- India took over the chairmanship of Kimberley Process from EU during the four-day 15th Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) Plenary 2018.
- The KPCS was held in Brussels, Belgium this year.
- India's role during as the Chairman of KPCS would consist of:
 - (a) India aims to improve the living standards of people who are dependent on the production, trade and manufacture of diamonds
 - (b) India will also help in uplifting Artisanal & Small-Scale Mining through capacity building, technical assistance and education on valuation

Related Information

Kimberley Process

- Kimberley Process is a joint initiative of different countries, industry and civil societies to control the flow of conflict diamonds, which are used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments in the world.
- India is the founding member of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) and is actively involved in KP activities to ensure that almost 99 per cent of the diamond trade in the world is conflict free.

Topic- GS Paper 2– International organisation

Source- Times of India

5. Global Nutrition Report 2018

- 2018 Global Nutrition Report reveals malnutrition is unacceptably high and affects every country in the world, but there is also an unprecedented opportunity to end it.
- India is facing a major malnutrition crisis as it holds almost a third of the world's burden for stunting, according to a global nutrition report.
- India worst in malnutrition crisis has one-third of world's stunted kids.

- The report classifies India as experiencing two forms of malnutrition anaemia and stunting.
- Stunting or low height for age is caused by long-term insufficient nutrient-intake and frequent infections.
- India accounted for 25.5 million children who are wasted, followed by Nigeria (3.4 million) and Indonesia (3.3 million).
- Wasting, or low weight for height, is a strong predictor of mortality among children under five which is usually the result of acute significant food shortage and/or disease.

Related Information

- The World health organization is the partner of Global Nutrition Report.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Report

Source- The Hindu

6. eDrishti

- The Indian Railways launched a software named- 'eDrishti', that will enable the Union Railway Minister to keep track of punctuality of trains as well as freight and passenger earnings from anywhere in the country.
- The 'eDrishti' software has been developed by the Centre for Railway Information System (CRIS) to help the Minister keep track of all information related to Indian Railways.
- The software has also been connected with the base kitchens of the Indian Rail Catering and Tourism Corp (IRCTC) as many complaints come regarding the quality of food served on trains.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

7. Sharda Peeth

- Recently, Kashmiri Pandits took out a protest march in Anantnag demanding that a passage on the lines of the Kartarpur Corridor for Sikhs be opened to facilitate devotees to visit the Sharda Devi temple in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Related Information

Sharda Peeth

- Sharda Peeth is an abandoned temple in Sharda village along the Neelam river across the Line of Control in Pak Occupied Kashmir region.
- It was a major centre of learning and is regarded as one of the 18 highly-revered temples in South Asia.
- Sharada Devi is the principal deity for Kashmiri Pandits.
- During the reign of Kanishka I, Sharada was the largest academic institution in entire Central Asia.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

8. Nagaland became the second state in the North East to introduce Tourist Police

- Nagaland CM launched the state Tourist Police at Police Headquarter in Kohima.
- Nagaland became the second state in the North East to introduce Tourist Police after Arunachal Pradesh.
- He also released the Tourist Police Handbook and launched Nagaland Police FIR Mobile App.

Related Information

Hornbill Festival

- The Hornbill Festival is one of the most cherished festivals of Nagaland.
- Hornbill is one of the most venerated bird species in the state.

Topic- GS Paper –Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

9. Asia Pacific Summit-2018

- The Asia Pacific Summit-2018 was started in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal.
- The theme of 2018 Summit is "Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity, and Universal Values".
- This summit has been attended by 1500 participants from 45 countries including India.

Topic- GS-2- Summit and Conferences

Source- DD News

04.12.2018

1. **SHINYUU Maitri-2018**

- It is a bilateral air exercise between the Japanese Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) and Indian air force.
- The theme of the exercise is **joint Mobility/Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) on Transport aircraft.**
- The JASDF C2 aircraft along with aircrew/observers are part of this first air exercise between the two Air Forces.

Related Information

- JIMEX-18, a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Japan in Visakhapatnam
- 'Dharma Guardian-2018' is a joint military exercise between India & Japan.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PIB

2. **GSAT-11 - Part of ISRO's new satellite fleet for high-speed Internet services**

- The GSAT-11 satellite launched by ISRO which will ride on European launch vehicle Ariane 5 ECA, numbered VA246.
- The 5,854-kg satellite almost doubles the biggest one built or launched by ISRO to date.
- Its co-passenger is South Korea's GEO-KOMPSAT-2A, a meteorology satellite.
- GSAT-11 is part of ISRO's new family of high-throughput communication satellite (HTS).
- This satellite will help to drive the country's Internet broadband from space to untouched areas.

Related Information

- ISRO already has launched two HTSs — GSAT-29 and GSAT-19 which will provide high-speed Internet data services at the rate of 100 Gbps (Gigabits per second) to Indian users.
- The HTSs will also be the backbone of pan-India digital or easy Internet-based programmes and services — such as Digital India, BharathNet for rural e-governance, and commercial and public sector VSAT Net service providers.

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

3. **Sex-sorted semen scheme to control stray bulls**

- The Uttar Pradesh government approved a 'Sex Sorted Semen' scheme, under which chances of cows delivering a female calf are as high as 90-95%.
- The scheme would be implemented on indigenous breeds, such as Sahiwal, Gir, Haryanvi, Tharparkar & Gangatiri.
- To avail of the scheme, cattle-breeders would have to pay ₹300 per conception, while in the drought-prone region of Bundelkhand, this levy would only be ₹100.
- The aim of the project was two-fold:
1. It helps to increase the productivity of cows and to decrease the number of unproductive male cattle.
2. It will provide a permanent solution to the stray cattle menace in the next 2-4 years.

Why has this step taken by Government?

- In Uttar Pradesh, where the ban on cow slaughter is taken very seriously, what's illegal for humans may well prove a godsend to tackle the growing menace of stray bulls: sex selection.
- The State government plans to reduce the numbers of stray bulls by making sure that they are never born.

Related Information

- The practice of 'Amnapratha', or the letting loose of unproductive cattle, is a common practice in Bundelkhand.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

4. **Qatar to withdraw from OPEC**

- Qatar will leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) next month in order to focus on gas production.
- Qatar is the world's 17th largest producer of crude oil and holds around 2% of the world's global oil reserves
- OPEC members, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, and fellow Arab states Bahrain and Egypt have imposed a political and economic boycott on Qatar since June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism.

- Doha denies the charges and says the boycott aims to impinge on its sovereignty.

Related information

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- It is an intergovernmental organization of 15 nations, founded in 1960 in Baghdad by the first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela).
- Its headquarter is in Vienna, Austria.
- These 15 countries accounted for an estimated 44 percent of global oil production and 81.5 percent of the world's "proven" oil reserves.
- The current OPEC members are the following: Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia (the de facto leader), United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.
- Indonesia is a former member, and Qatar will no longer be the member of OPEC starting on 1 January 2019.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International Relation

Source- The Hindu

5. **Digital Sky: Govt starts online portal for drone registration**
 - Civil Aviation Ministry announced the registration process for drone operators in the country, to be done through a portal called 'Digital Sky'.
 - Digital Sky Platform, a first of its kind that implements 'no permission, no take-off' (NPNT) – a novel system of software-based self-enforcement to minimize deviations from the Civil Aviation Regulations.
 - The digital platform has begun accepting registrations of users, and payments for Unmanned Aerial Operator's Permit (UAOP) and Unique Identification Numbers (UIN) will be accepted through the Bharat Kosh portal (bharatkosh.gov.in).

Related Information

- Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems (RPAS), popularly referred to as drones, are a technology platform with wide-ranging applications.

- In August 2018, India had announced the release of its Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) to enable safe flying of RPAS in India.
- The CAR detailed the obligations of operators, remote pilots/ users and manufacturers/ OEM for safe operations of RPAS and co-operative use of airspace.
- For drones of micro size and above categories, operators are required to register on the Digital Sky portal.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

- An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), commonly known as a drone, is an aircraft without a human pilot aboard.
- The flight of UAVs may operate with various degrees of autonomy by either under remote control by a human operator or autonomously by onboard computers.
- These drones are used mostly in military applications but their use is rapidly expanding to commercial, scientific, recreational, agricultural, and other applications.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

6. **Government puts gold dore imports under the restricted category**
 - The government put the imports of gold dore in the restricted category.
 - This restriction implemented by the directorate general of foreign trade which works under the Ministry of Industries and commerce.
 - The restricted category means now, an importer needs a license to import this commodity.

Related Information

Gold dore

- Gold dore is a semi-pure alloy which is refined for further purification.
- Refined gold bars are manufactured from gold dore bar.
- India, the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China, imports about 900 tonnes of gold a year.
- In value terms, gold imports fell by about 43 percent to USD 1.68 billion in October.

- The imports mainly take care of the demand for the jewelry industry.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Economics times

7. **Train 18**

- Train 18 which India's first engine-less train-breached the 180 kmph speed threshold during a test run in the Kota-Sawai Madhopur section, becoming the country's fastest train.
- It is indigenously built train.
- It is a high-tech, energy-efficient, self-propelled (engine-less) train.
- It features aerodynamically designed driver cabins at both ends for quicker turn-around at destinations.

Topic-GS Paper 3– Science & Technology

Source- Times of India

8. **India's first indigenously developed Braille maps**

- Kolkata based National Atlas & Thematic Mapping Organisation (NATMO), India has developed indigenously Braille maps.
- It is intricately carved Braille maps that depict a gamut of information provided with the help of legends, dots, bars, and symbols.
- This map could change the way 52 million visually impaired people and 0.27 million blind children in India study geography.

Related Information

Braille

- Braille is a tactile writing system used by people who are visually impaired.
- Braille is named after its creator, Louis Braille, a Frenchman who lost his sight as a result of a childhood accident.
- In 1824, at the age of fifteen, he developed a code for the French alphabet as an improvement on night writing.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Social Justice for Vulnerable Section of Society

Source- Down to earth

9. **International conference on bears starts in Agra**

- An international conference on bears is organizing in Agra, Uttar Pradesh.
- The conference is aimed at sharing knowledge on the principles of the welfare of bears and other wild animals in zoos, sanctuaries and rescue centers.

- The conference has been Hosted by Wildlife SOS in collaboration with Bear Care Group from the US and Canada.

Topic-GS-3- Biodiversity

Source- AIR

05.12.2018

1. **TROPEX- 2019 Exercise**

- Indian Navy will conduct its flagship large-scale coastal defence exercise "Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise" (TROPEX) from next year to test the robustness of entire coastal security apparatus.
- It is an annual exercise that takes place on Western Seaboard.
- It is a tri-service exercise in which troops from the Indian Army and fighter aircraft from Indian Air will also participate.
- It is conducted to test various aspects of not only joint combat capabilities but also to test the war capabilities of three services in a war-like situation.

Related Information

- As part of TROPEX, the Indian Navy would also be conducting a large-scale coastal defence exercise 'Exercise Sea Vigil' which will involve all stakeholders across mainland and island territories.

Topic- GS Paper 3 - Defence

Source- Financial Express

2. **The first ever Swadesh Darshan Project in the state of Nagaland**

- "Development of Tribal Circuit: Peren-Kohima-Wokha Project" will be inaugurated at Kisama Heritage Village in Nagaland.
- This is the first project to be implemented in the state under the Swadesh Darshan scheme of the Union Ministry of Tourism.
- Under the project, the Ministry has developed facilities like Tribal Tourist Village, Eco Log Huts, Open Air Theatre, Tribal Rejuvenation Centre, Cafeteria, Helipad, Tourist Interpretation Centre, Wayside Amenities, Last Mile Connectivity, Public Conveniences, Multipurpose Hall, Nature Trails, and Trekking Routes etc.

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

- Swadesh Darshan scheme is one among the flagship schemes of the Ministry of Tourism for development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritized manner.
- The scheme was launched in 2014-15.
- Under this scheme, the Government is focussing on the development of quality infrastructure in the country with the objective of providing better experience and facilities to the visitors on one hand and on other hand fostering the economic growth.

Topic- GS Paper 3 - Art and Culture

Source-PIB

3. **INDIAN PAVILLION at COP-24**
 - 24th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-24) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held at **Katowice, Poland**.
 - This year the theme of the Indian Pavillion was **"One World One Sun One Grid"**.

India's initiatives in combating climate change

- India will try for achieving 175 GW target for installed Renewable Energy capacity by 2022.
- India stands 4th in wind power 5th in renewable power and 5th in solar power.
- Under Ujjwala scheme, 58 million households are already covered under and it will not only contribute to improved health of women and children but also help on reducing deforestation.
- India also pledged to get rid of single-use plastic by 2022 across the country.
- India's leadership in global climate action has been recognized and PM Narendra Modi has been awarded the "champions of Earth Award" this year by the United Nations in promoting International Solar Alliance and resolve to make India plastic free by 2022.

'Champions of the Earth award'

- It is the UN's highest environmental honor launched in 2005 to celebrate outstanding figures from the public

and private sectors and from the civil society whose actions have had a transformative positive impact on the environment.

- The 2018 award was received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron for their leadership in the promotion of solar energy.

UNFCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty adopted on May 9, 1992, and opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992.
- The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".
- The parties to the convention have met annually from 1995 in **Conferences of the Parties (COP)** to assess progress in dealing with climate change.
- Example- COP 24- 24th session of the Conference of Parties (COP).

Topic- GS Paper 3 - Environment

Source- The Hindu

4. **Country's largest Floating solar plant to set up in reservoir Rihand dam**
 - A 50 Mega Watt floating solar plant will be set up in the country's largest reservoir Rihand dam in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh.

What are Floating solar plants?

- Floating solar plant involves setting up solar panels on floats placed on dams, lakes and similar water bodies.
- They are considered an alternative to tackle land availability issues.

Related Information

Rihand Dam

- Rihand Dam, also known as Govind Ballabh Pant Sagar, is the country's largest reservoir by volume and largest artificial lake, located on the Rihand River.

- It's catchment area spread over Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh
- The largest floating solar plant to date is a 2MW one in Vishakhapatnam.
- Another is a 500-kWh plant built by the Kerala State Electricity Board at the Banasura Sagar Dam.

Topic- GS Paper 3 - Environment/ Energy sector

Source- Economics Times

5. **Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC COSC)**

- The three services – Army, Navy and Air Force – are taking steps to improve 'jointmanship' and have agreed on the appointment of a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- The PC COSC is envisaged as a single-point military adviser to the government.
- The permanent chairman, CoSC will be a four-star officer, who will be equivalent to chiefs of Army, Airforce, and Navy.
- The PC COSC is established as a single-point military adviser to the government.

Roles of PC COSC

- He would look into joint issues of the services like training of troops, acquisition of weapon systems and joint operations of the services.
- The officer would also be in charge of the tri-services command at Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the strategic command of nuclear weapons along with the upcoming cyber and space command.

Related Information

- A GoM in its report, submitted to the government in February 2001, recommended the creation of such an institution.
- The **Naresh Chandra Task Force**, formed in May 2011 to review the national security management system, recommended the creation of the permanent post of chairman, chiefs of staff committee (CoSC).

Topic- GS Paper 3 - Defence

Source- The Hindu

6. **Central Govt included new places in PRASAD Scheme**

- Recently, Centre has included Gangotri and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand, Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and Parasnath in Jharkhand under this central scheme to develop pilgrimage and heritage destinations in the country.
- With the new additions, the number of sites under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme has now become 41 in 25 states.

PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) Scheme

- The scheme was launched by Ministry of Tourism in 2014-15.
- The scheme aimed at infrastructure development such as entry points (road, rail, and water transport), last mile connectivity and basic tourism facilities.
- Under the scheme 'Prasad', the Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations.
- It is a 100% Central Government funded scheme.
- Initially, Twelve cities were identified, namely Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh), Gaya (Bihar), Dwaraka (Gujarat), Amritsar (Punjab), Ajmer (Rajasthan), Kanchipuram (Tamil Nadu), Vellankani (Tamil Nadu), Puri (Odisha), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Mathura(Uttar Pradesh), Kedarnath (Uttarakhand) and Kamakhya (Assam) for development under PRASAD by the Ministry of Tourism.
- To implement the PRASAD scheme a Mission Directorate has been set up in the Ministry of Tourism.

Topic- GS Paper 1 - Art and Culture

Source-PIB

7. **New 'chemputer' system may revolutionize drug production**

- Scientists have developed a new method to produce drug molecules which use downloadable blueprints to easily and reliably synthesize organic chemicals via a programmable 'chemputer'.
- This the first time scientists are able to a synthesis of important drug molecules which can be achieved in an affordable and modular chemical-robot system called chemputer.
- The objective of this program is to develop a general abstraction for chemistry that can be made universal, practical, and driven by a computer programme.

Related Information

- Chempiler is the chemical recipes, run on a computer programme which instructs the computer how to produce molecules on-demand, more affordable and safely than ever possible before.
- The researchers claim the ability to use a universal code will allow chemists all around the world to convert their recipe into a digital code.
- This approach is a key step in the digitization of chemistry and will allow the universal assembly of complex molecules on demand, democratizing the ability to discover and make new molecules using a simple software app and a modular chemputer.

Topic-GS Paper 3-Science & technology

Source- Indian Express

8. **India, UAE sign currency swap deal**

- On 12th session of India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting for Economic and Technical Cooperation, India and UAE have signed an agreement on Currency Swap.
- The two countries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for Development Cooperation in Africa.

Related Information

Currency Swap

- Currency Swap is such a pact between two countries that allows trading in their own currency and payments to import and export trade at pre-

determined exchange rate without bringing in a third benchmark currency like the US dollars.

- The two countries are one of the largest trade partners of around \$50 billion trade for each other and have made robust investments bilaterally.
- The UAE is the sixth-largest source of Indian oil imports and hosts a 3.3 million-strong Indian community.
- The second agreement would enable both sides to undertake development projects in Africa.

Topic-GS Paper-3-International relation

Source- Times of India

9. **NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft reached asteroid Bennu**

- NASA's Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer (OSIRIS-REx) spacecraft completed its journey to arrive at the asteroid Bennu on 3 December 2018.
- The primary goals of this survey are to refine estimates of Bennu's mass and spin rate and to generate a more precise model of its shape.
- The mission will help scientists investigate how planets formed and how life began, as well as improve our understanding of asteroids that could impact Earth.

Topic- GS-3- Science and Technology

Source- Science Daily

06.12.2018

1. **India's heaviest communication satellite GSAT-11 has been launched**

- ISRO's heaviest and most-advanced high throughput communication satellite GSAT-11 was successfully launched from the Spaceport in French Guiana on December 5, 2018.
- The launch vehicle Ariane 5 VA-246 lifted off from Kourou Launch Base, French Guiana carrying India's GSAT-11 and South Korea's GEO-KOMPSAT-2A satellites, as scheduled.
- Ariane 5 is one of three launch vehicles operated by Arianespace along with Soyuz and Vega.

- The 5,854-kg GSAT-11 will provide high data rate connectivity to users of Indian mainland and islands through 32 user beams in Ku-band and 8 hub beams in Ka-band.
- GSAT-11 will boost the broadband connectivity to rural and inaccessible Gram Panchayats in the country coming under the Bharat Net Project, which is part of Digital India Programme.
- GSAT-11 will be positioned at 74-degree east longitude in the geostationary orbit.
- Subsequently, the two solar arrays and four antenna reflectors of GSAT-11 will be deployed in orbit.

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 satellite in such an orbit is at an altitude of approximately 36000 km above mean sea level.
- A special case of the 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-PIB

2. Climate Risk Index 2018

- The report is prepared by Germanwatch, an independent development organization.
- It placed India at 14th among countries most affected by extreme weather events in the last 20 years.
- Four of our country's neighbors are placed even higher. Myanmar is at rank 3, Bangladesh at 7, Pakistan at 8 and Nepal at 11 in the report.
- It analyses quantified impacts of extreme weather events, in terms of fatalities and economic losses.
- For assessing economic impact, the CRI also looks at losses per unit GDP of each country.

THE 3 WORST HIT, AND INDIA & NEIGHBOURS			
COUNTRY	RANK	DEATHS/YEAR	LOSSES/YEAR (\$ mn PPP)
Puerto Rico	1	150.05	5,033.16
Honduras	2	302.45	556.56
Myanmar	3	7,048.85	1,275.96
Bangladesh	7	635.50	2,403.84
Pakistan	8	512.40	3,826.60
Nepal	11	235.30	230.83
India	14	3,660.60	12,822.71
Sri Lanka	31	60.75	491.05
China	37	1,240.80	36,601.70
Bhutan	105	1.65	4.99

Source: Germanwatch data for 1998-2017

These rankings are based on a Climate Risk Index (CRI) developed by Germanwatch.

3. India third largest contributor to carbon emission

- Global carbon emissions are set to hit an all-time high of 37.1 billion tonnes of CO₂ in 2018, according to researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA) and the Global Carbon Project.
- India, the third-highest contributor, is projected to see emissions rise by 6.3% from 2017.
- The 2.7% projected a global rise in 2018 has been driven by appreciable growth in coal use for the second year in a row, and sustained growth in oil and gas use.
- The 10 biggest emitters in 2018 are China, U.S., India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Canada.
- The EU as a region of countries ranks third.
- China's emissions accounted for 27% of the global total, having grown an estimated 4.7% in 2018 and reaching a new all-time high.
- Emissions in the U.S., which has withdrawn from its commitment to the Paris Agreement, account for 15% of the global total and look set to have grown about 2.5% in 2018 after several years of decline.
- Limiting global warming to the 2015 Paris Agreement goal of keeping the global temperature increase this century to well below 2°C, would need carbon dioxide emissions to decline by 50% by 2030 and reach net zero by about 2050.

Topic- GS-3-Environment

Source- The Hindu

4. India now has a witness protection programme in place

- Supreme Court on December 5, approved a Witness Protection Scheme drawn up by the government and asked the Centre, states and Union Territories to "enforce" it "in letter and spirit".
- The court held that the right to life would include the right of witnesses to testify freely in courts.

- If one is unable to testify in courts due to threats or other pressures, then it is a clear violation of Article 21 of the Constitution.
- The right to life guaranteed to the people of this country also includes in its fold the right to live in a society, which is free from crime and fear, and the right of witnesses to testify in courts without fear or pressure."
- The court said, "it shall be the 'law' under Article 141/142 of the Constitution, till the enactment of suitable Parliamentary and/or State Legislations on the subject".

Related Information

- The Scheme was drawn up by the Centre in 2018 with inputs from 18 states/Union Territories, legal services authorities of five states and open sources including civil society, three High Courts as well as from police personnel.
- The scheme was launched with aim and objective "to ensure that the investigation, prosecution, and trial of criminal offenses is not prejudiced because witnesses are intimidated or frightened to give evidence without protection from violent or other criminal recrimination".
- The programme identifies "three categories of witnesses as per threat perception"
 - (a) Category A: Those cases where threat extends to the life of witness or family members during the investigation, trial or even thereafter.
 - (b) Category B: Those cases where the threat extends to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members during the investigation or trial.
 - (c) Category C: Cases where the threat is moderate and extends to harassment or intimidation of the witness or his family members, reputation or property during the investigation, trial or thereafter.
- The expenses for the programme will be met from a Witness Protection Fund to be established by states and Union Territories.

- The application for protection will have to be filed before the "Competent Authority" along with supporting documents.
- The Witness Protection Order passed by the Competent Authority shall be implemented by the Witness Protection Cell of the state or Union Territory.

Topic-GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- Indian Express

5. Prohibition of Child Marriage

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) said the Commission will act against anyone who promises to facilitate child marriage in Rajasthan in the run-up to the Assembly elections.
- Rajasthan has the highest prevalence of child marriages in the country.
- The National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-16) showed that one out of every four women— or 26.8 percent — aged 20-24 years in India was married off as a minor.
- In Rajasthan, the prevalence is 65 percent.

Related Information

- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act presently allows for child marriages, between a boy of under 21 years and a girl under 18 years of age.
- The Act has been grossly inadequate in preventing child marriages.
- A proposal by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, seeking the Union Cabinet's approval to an amendment to the Act and make child marriages void, has been pending.

NCPCR

- It was set up in March 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament (December 2005).

Topic- GS-2- Social Issues

Source- Indian Express

6. Odisha's New Programme PEETHA For Transparency, Awareness Of Government Schemes

- Odisha Chief Minister announced a new programme "PEETHA" for transparency and awareness on various government schemes.

- The programme, the Peoples Empowerment Enabling Transparency and Accountability or PEETHA aims to improve transparency in the distribution of individual and social benefits.

Topic-GS-2-Government Schemes

Source- NDTV

7. Colistin ban a step in the right direction: CSE

- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) said that a ban on the use of the antibiotic colistin would be a step in the right direction.
- India's highest drug advisory body, the Drug Technical Advisory Board had recommended a stoppage on the use of colistin by poultry farmers.
- Colistin is a last resort antibiotic which is administered to human beings when most other antibiotics fail to function.
- However, it is indiscriminately used by the poultry industry to promote growth and prevent the occurrence of infections in chicken.
- Increasing evidence has linked this to the development of resistance against colistin in humans.

Topic- GS-3- Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

07.12.2018

1. Delhi govt launched free pilgrimage scheme for senior citizens

- The Delhi government launched the 'Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana' which offers free travel packages on five religious circuits for senior citizens from the national capital.
- The scheme will enable 1,100 senior citizens from each Assembly constituency of Delhi per year to undertake the free pilgrimage, the expenses for which will be borne by the Delhi government.

Related Information

Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana

- Under the scheme, any resident of Delhi above 60 years of age will be eligible for the scheme and those above 70 years can have one attendant.

- The scheme does not have any income criterion, but preference will be given to those who are from the economically weaker section.
- The applicant should not be an employee of the central, state, local government or autonomous bodies.
- The journey will be performed through Indian Railways.
- A total of 77,000 pilgrims will be able to avail this facility every year.
- The pilgrimage duration will be of three days and two nights and will be for any of the following routes:
 - (a) Delhi-Mathura-Vrindavan-Agra-Fatehpur Sikri-Delhi;
 - (b) Delhi-Haridwar-Rishikesh-Neelkanth-Delhi;
 - (c) Delhi-Ajmer-Pushkar-Delhi;
 - (d) Delhi-Amritsar-Wagah border-Anandpur Sahib-Delhi;
 - (e) Delhi-Vaishno Devi-Jammu-Delhi.
- The Scheme will help and promoting communal harmony and brotherhood in society.

Topic- GS-2- Government Schemes

Source- Business Standard

2. Plastic pollution threatens tourism-dependent Bali

- Indonesia's Bali, which attracts five million tourists every year, is dependent on tourism for 80 percent of its economy.
- But, massive plastic pollution on its beaches threatens this picture.
- The island's lovely beaches are often found covered in huge amounts of plastic and other garbage that the high tides angrily throwback.
- The water too is no more as clear as it used to be.
- According to Rivers, Oceans, Lakes and Ecology Foundation, an NGO based in Bali, Indonesia produces about 130,000 tonnes of plastic and solid waste every day.

Related Information

- Bali has been known for its rich biodiversity and now all of it is under serious threat.

- In the year 2017, Bali declared a "garbage emergency".
- China heads the list of the 20 worst polluters of plastic waste thrown into the ocean.
- The major polluters of plastic waste in the sea are China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia.
- Around 8.5 million tonnes of plastic waste is annually dumped into the oceans by 192 coastal countries.
- Data collected from 60 Indian cities shows that around 25,940 tonnes of plastic waste is generated every day, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

Topic-GS-3- Environment

Source-Down to Earth

3. India claims top 10 in the list of fastest-growing cities

- Surat will have the fastest growing city, with its GDP jumping 9 percent per annum year-on-year, by 2035, predicted in report Global Cities: The future of the world's leading urban economies to 2035.
- The report is prepared by firm Oxford Economics, UK.
- All of the 10 fastest over that period will be in India.
- While economic output in many of those Indian cities will remain rather small in comparison to the world's biggest metropolises.
- The aggregated gross domestic product of all Asian cities will exceed that of all North American and European urban centers combined in 2027.
- By 2035, it will be 17 percent higher, with the largest contribution coming from Chinese cities.
- The fastest-growing African city is the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam, while the top spot in Europe is held by the Armenian capital of Yerevan.
- San Jose -a proxy for Silicon Valley, will be the best performer in North America.

Largest Cities

Four Chinese cities will make the world's biggest 10 by 2035

Rank by 2035 GDP	Changes from 2018
1. New York	—
2. Tokyo	—
3. Los Angeles	—
4. London	—
4. Shanghai	4 ▲
6. Beijing	7 ▲
7. Paris	-2 ▼
8. Chicago	-2 ▼
9. Guangzhou	10 ▲
10. Shenzhen	10 ▲

India's Dominance

Fastest-growing cities in the world 2019-2035 are all in India

Rank	City	Nation	Average annual growth
1	Surat	India	9.17%
2	Agra	India	8.58
3	Bengaluru	India	8.5
4	Hyderabad	India	8.47
5	Nagpur	India	8.41
6	Tiruppur	India	8.36
7	Rajkot	India	8.33
8	Tiruchirappalli	India	8.29
9	Chennai	India	8.17
10	Vijayawada	India	8.16

Topic- GS-3- Economic Development

Source- Economic Times

4. Cabinet approved implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam on river Ravi in Punjab

- The Union Cabinet has approved implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam Project, Punjab on river Ravi.
- Central Assistance of Rs. 485.38 cr (for irrigation component) would be provided over five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23.
- Implementation of this project would help to minimize some of the water of the River Ravi which at present is going waste through the MadhopurHeadworks downstream to Pakistan whereas there is a requirement for the same for use in Punjab and J&K.

Related Information

- Funding for Central Assistance to Shahpurkandi Dam project shall be made through NABARD under the existing system for funding of 99 PMKSY-AIBP projects under LTIF.

- The project would be implemented by Govt. of Punjab with Central Assistance of Rs. 485.38 crore The project would be completed by June 2022.

Other Information

- Indus Waters Treaty was signed between India and Pakistan in 1960 for sharing of Indus waters.
- According to the Treaty, India got the full rights for utilization of waters of the three Eastern Rivers namely Ravi, Beas, and Satluj.
- A Bilateral agreement was signed between Punjab and J&K in Jan 1979.
- As per the agreement, construction of Ranjit Sagar Dam (Thein Dam) and Shahpurkandi Dam was to be taken up by Punjab Govt.
- Ranjit Sagar Dam was commissioned in Aug 2000.
- The ShahpurKandi Dam project was initially approved by the Planning Commission during November 2001 and was included under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Scheme (AIBP) of this Ministry for funding its irrigation component.

Topic- GS-3- Agriculture

Source-PIB

5. Union Cabinet approves Amendment of the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Amendment of the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Act, 1951.
- In the existing Act, there is a provision for representation of a single national political party.
- The proposed amendment ensures representation of the Opposition Party in the Trust.
- The proposed Amendment will empower the Government to terminate and replace a Trustee to participate in functioning of the Trust or for any other reason.

Topic- GS-1- Art and Culture

Source-PIB

6. Union Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy, 2018

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Agriculture Export Policy, 2018.

- The Cabinet has also approved the proposal for the establishment of Monitoring Framework at Centre with Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from various line Ministries/Departments and Agencies and representatives of concerned State Governments, to oversee the implementation of Agriculture Export Policy.
- The Government has come out with a policy to double farmers' income by 2022.

Objectives:

- To double agricultural exports from present ~US\$ 30+ Billion to ~US\$ 60+ Billion by 2022 and reach US\$ 100 Billion in the next few years
- To diversify our export basket, destinations and boost high value and value-added agricultural exports including the focus on perishables.
- To promote novel, indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional and non-traditional Agri products exports.
- To provide an institutional mechanism for pursuing market access, tackling barriers and deal with sanitary and phytosanitary issues.
- To strive to double India's share in world agri exports by integrating with global value chain at the earliest.
- Enable farmers to get the benefit of export opportunities in the overseas market.

Topic-GS-3- Agriculture

Source-PIB

7. Sahitya Akademi announces winners in 24

- Sahitya Akademi is an organization dedicated to the promotion of literature in the languages of India.
- Sahitya Akademi (National academy of letters) annually gives awards recognizing the literary works of writers in 24 Indian languages–22 scheduled languages along with English and Rajasthani.
- **Winners include Anees Saleem in English**, Rama Kant Shukla in Sanskrit, **Rajesh Kumar Vyas in Rajasthani**, Rahman Abbas in Urdu, Lok Nath Upadhyay in Nepali, **Chitra**

Mughal in Hindi and S. Ramakrishnan in Tamil.

- The awards, in the form of a casket containing an engraved copper-plaque, a shawl and a cheque of Rs 1 lakh, will be presented to the authors at a special function in January next year at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi.

Topic- Important for PCS Exams

Source- Indian Express

08.12.2018

1. Tamil Nadu House passes a resolution against Mekedatu dam project

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Central Water Commission's (CWC) nod to Karnataka to prepare a detailed project report on the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir and Drinking Water Project.

Related Information

Mekedatu Dam Project

- 'Mekedatu' is at the confluence of Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers, near Kanakapura which is at a distance of 110 km from Bengaluru.
- A multi-purpose balancing reservoir project over Mekedatu, built at a cost of Rs 5,912Cr was aimed at solving the drinking water problems of Bengaluru and Ramnagar district.
- This project was also touted as one that could generate hydroelectricity to meet the power demand in the state.
- The proposed project intends to store excess water that would otherwise flow into the Bay of Bengal.

CWC (Central Water Commission)

- It is an apex organization in the country in the field of Water Resources.
- It advises the Government of India in respect of Water Resources Development, regarding rights and disputes between different States which affect any scheme for the conservation and utilization and any matter that may be referred to the Commission in connection with river valley development.

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.

Topic- GS-1- Indian Geography

Source- Indian Express

2. Vitamin D deficiency in newborns increases schizophrenia risk: Study says

- Schizophrenia, a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects roughly 1 percent people globally, could be triggered by neonatal vitamin D deficiency.
- The findings suggest that newborns with vitamin D deficiency had a 44 percent increased risk of being diagnosed with schizophrenia as adults, in contrast to those with normal vitamin D levels.
- The disorder is associated with multiple risk factors, including genetic and environmental.
- Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium.
- Apart from fish oils and egg yolks, a major source of Vitamin D is direct sunlight.
- Hence, an increased risk of schizophrenia-like the prevalence of vitamin D deficiency is associated with being born in winter or spring and living in a high-latitude country.

Topic-GS-2- Health Issues

Source- Down to Earth

3. Road accidents keep rising, more so in low-income countries: WHO

- Pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists living in developing countries bear the brunt of road accidents, according to the Global status report on road safety 2018.
- The report is launched by the WHO in December 2018.

- This group accounts for 54 percent of the deaths that occur due to road accidents, which are also the biggest cause of deaths in children and young adults (age group 5-29).
- The report highlights that the number of annual road traffic deaths has reached 1.35 million—too high a price to pay for mobility.
- According to the report, there was no reduction in the number of road traffic deaths in low-income countries between 2013 and 2016, also showing that there were some reductions in 48 middle and high-income countries.

India and Report

- The report highlights India as an example of the implementation of seven or eight of the priority United Nations vehicle safety standards.
- The report says that cities in India have reduced traffic crashes, and through media campaigns and stronger enforcement, more cities have cut drink driving.
- Despite this, India reported 150,785 deaths in 2016.
- The trend shows that deaths have been increasing since 2007.
- India has put in place most of the rules needed to protect people but seems to have failed in cutting down deaths.
- Therefore, there is an urgent need for governments to scale up their road safety efforts in order to live up the commitments made in Sustainable Development Agent 2030.

Topic- GS-2- Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services

Source- Down To Earth

4. Maharashtra govt launches "SMART" initiative for Agribusiness, Rural Transformation

- In a bid to transform rural Maharashtra, state govt. launched a unique initiative called "SMART", which stands for State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation.

- This World Bank assisted project aims to revamp agricultural value chains, with a special focus on marginal farmers across 1,000 villages.
- This initiative is a step towards doubling farmers' income by 2022.
- It will also support post-harvest value chain and bring efficiency to benefit the economy at large.
- The project seeks to establish a partnership between the various stakeholders in the agri-business segments including farmer organisations, start-ups, SMEs and large corporates along with women's self-help groups.

Topic-GS-2- Government Schemes

Source- AIR

5. Cabinet approved the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems

- The Union Cabinet has approved the launching of National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to be implemented by Department of Science & Technology at a total outlay of Rs. 3660 crore for a period of five years.
- The Mission addresses the ever-increasing technological requirements of the society and takes into account the international trends and roadmaps of leading countries for the next generation of technologies.
- The Mission aims at the establishment of 15 numbers of Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH), six numbers of Application Innovation Hubs (AIH) and four numbers of Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRP).
- These Hubs & TTRPs will connect to Academics, Industry, Central Ministries and State Government in developing solutions at reputed academic, R&D and other organizations across the country in a hub and spoke model.
- The Hubs & TTRPs have four focused areas along which the Mission implementation would proceed, namely
 - (i) Technology Development
 - (ii) HRD & Skill Development
 - (iii) Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Start-ups Ecosystem Development

(iv) International Collaborations

- The proposed Mission would act as an engine of growth that would benefit national initiatives in health, education, energy, environment, agriculture, strategic cum security, and industrial sectors, Industry 4.0, SMART Cities, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) etc.
- NM-ICPS is a Pan India Mission and covers the entire gamut of India that includes Central Ministries, State Governments, Industry and Academia.
- CPS and its associated technologies, like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Machine Learning (ML), Deep Learning (DP), Big Data Analytics, Robotics, Quantum Computing, Quantum Communication, Quantum encryption (Quantum Key Distribution), Data Science & Predictive Analytics, Cyber Security for physical infrastructure and other infrastructure, have pervaded and is playing a transformative role in almost every field of human endeavour all most in all sectors.

Topic-GS-2- Government Policies

Source-PIB

6. Gujarat may soon declare its first biodiversity heritage sites

- The Gujarat government is working towards declaring two sites — an indigenous **mango forest in Chinchli village of Dangs** and an **inland mangrove site in Guneri village of Kutch** — on the Western Indo-Pakistan border as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS).
- The sites, proposed by the Gujarat Biodiversity Board (GBB), will be the state's first biodiversity heritage sites.
- Guneri, nearly a hundred years old, is a natural inland mangrove site spread over 33 hectares including the buffer zone. Generally, mangroves are grown in coastal areas. However, the site in Guneri has inland mangrove of considerable height. It also has the presence of wildlife like chinkara, ratel, and some migratory birds.

- The Chinchli region in Dang district has a unique indigenous mango forest spread over 2,357 hectares in Piplaidevi Range. It contains 2,708 huge indigenous mango trees. The region also has 68 species of trees, 25 species of shrubs, 100 species of herbs, 50 species of climbers, 25 species of grass and 20 species of lower groups of plants like moss. As per estimates, Chinchli could date back to over 200 years. The region is hilly and some of the cliffs of the hills are a natural nesting site of endangered vultures.

Topic-GS-3 Environment

Source- Indian Express

7. Kolkata-Patna becomes India's second container cargo sector on Inland Waterways

- Earlier, on November 12, 2018, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had received the country's first IWT containerized cargo that reached Varanasi from Kolkata.
- Kolkata-Patna is India's new IWT origin-destination pair for containerized cargo movement on the National Waterway-1.
- Container cargo transport comes with several inherent advantages. Even as it reduces the handling cost, allows easier modal shift, reduces pilferages and damage, it also enables cargo owners to reduce their carbon footprints.
- The Ministry of Shipping is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore.

Topic- GS-3-Infrastructure

Source- PIB

10.12.2018

1. India's first underwater museum to come up off Puducherry coast

- INS Cuddalore, a Pondicherry-class vessel that was decommissioned in March this year after sailing nearly 30,000 nautical miles in three decades of service as a minesweeper.

- It will be sent to the seabed at a depth of 26m about 7km off the Puducherry coast to create the country's first underwater museum.
- The Navy has agreed to gift INS Cuddalore to promote tourism in the Union territory and also enhance the marine environment.

Topic- Important for PCS Exams

Source- Times of India

2. Amazon river dolphins now listed as 'Endangered' by IUCN

- The dolphins of the Amazon river have been listed as "Endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its latest "Red List" published in November 2018.
- There are two types of Amazon river dolphins namely, the "boto" and the "tucuxi", which were once considered abundant in the Amazon.
- The study had warned that freshwater dolphins found in the Amazon River Basin were "dying off fast", and could face extinction unless they were more vigorously protected against fishing.
- The primary reason for the decrease in numbers is "Use of flesh and blubber as bait for catfish", which have become widely available commercially.
- In May 2018, the IUCN had listed the freshwater dolphins' status as "data deficient," meaning not enough was known about their numbers in the wild to assess the degree of threat to the population.

Related Information

- Besides the Amazon dolphins, freshwater dolphins in other parts of the world are also facing extreme pressures.
- In the Indian Subcontinent, the Gangetic or Indus River Dolphin found in the Ganga and Indus River Basins is considered "Endangered" by the IUCN.
- In China, the Yangtze River dolphin or "baiji", was declared functionally extinct in 2006 due to human activities like overfishing, dam building, pollution and boat traffic.

Topic- GS-3 Environment

Source- Down to Earth

3. UN launched a new framework "UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact"

- UN has launched a new framework "UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact" to combat the scourge of international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors.
- The framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation, to better serve the needs of Member States when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism.
- According to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, the Coordination Committee will oversee the implementation of the Compact and monitor its implementation.
- It is chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General for counter-terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov.
- This Task Force will replace the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which was established in 2005 to strengthen UN system-wide coordination and coherence of counter-terrorism efforts.

Topic-GS-2- International Organization

Source- Economic Times

4. Ex Aviaindra 2018

- It is a service specific exercise between Indian Air Force and Russian Federation Aerospace Force (RFSAF), is planned at Air Force Station Jodhpur from 10-21 Dec 2018.
- The inaugural IAF-RFSAF Ex AVIAINDRA was conducted in 2014.
- AVIAINDRA-2018 is the second in the series of a bilateral joint exercise between IAF-RFSAF.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source-PIB

5. 1st International Conference on Sustainable Water Management at Mohali

- The first International Conference under the aegis of National Hydrology Project, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation is being organised by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) during 10-11 December 2018 at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali.
- The theme of the conference is 'Sustainable Water Management'.
- The aim of the Conference is to foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to:
(a) Promote sustainable policies for water management,
(b) To create awareness of water-related problems,
(c) Motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

Topic- GS-3- International Summits and Conferences

Source-PIB

6. Schemes of the Department of Youth Affairs

(i) Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK)

A. Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)

- NYKS, with about 36.22 lakh youth enrolled through 1.68 lakh youth clubs, has been working all over the Country to develop the personality of the youth and to engage them in nation-building activities.

B. International Cooperation

- This Department seeks to operate international Youth exchange programmes with various countries to develop international perspective among the youth and also to collaborate with various international agencies on youth development.

C. National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development (NPYAD)

- NPYAD along with other Schemes of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been merged into one 'Umbrella Scheme' called Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakarm

(RYSK) for providing support to Government/ non-Government organisations for undertaking activities for development of adolescent and youth.

(ii). National Service Scheme (NSS)

- NSS, with about 4.13 million student youth enrolled in 42958 NSS units spread over through 451 Universities/ +2 Councils, 17996 Colleges/Technical Institutions and 12,827 Senior Secondary Schools across the country, has been working for the development of personality and character of youth through voluntary community service.

(iii). Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD)

- It provides funds to Major and Minor Research Projects to the various Universities/Institutes.

Related Information

Khelo India School Games (KISG), 2018

- 1st Khelo India School Games, 2018 was held in Delhi.
- 2nd Khelo India School Games, 2019 will be held in Pune, Maharashtra.
- The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.
- Khelo India School Games are a part of the Khelo India programme.
- Under-17 athletes have been invited to participate across 16 disciplines, which are as follows: Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

National Sports University, Manipur

- National Sports University in Manipur will be first of its kind to promote sports education in the areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management and sports coaching besides functioning as the national training centre for select sports disciplines by adopting best international practices.

- The University will impart Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes in Sports Coaching, Sports Sciences and Physical Education in various disciplines.

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

Source-PIB

7. Kannur airport inaugurated, Kerala becomes the only state with four international airports

- Kerala became the only state in the country to have four international airports. Kochi, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram are the other three cities with an international airport.
- The greenfield airport, built on a public-private-partnership model, stretches across over 2,000 acres of land at Mattanur, a town 25 kilometres from Kannur town.

Topic- GS-3- Infrastructure

Source- Indian Express

8. Less than 2% Yamuna stretch accounts for 76 per cent of river pollution

- National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice A K Goel in July 2-18 formed the monitoring committee comprising retired expert member B S Sajwan and former Delhi chief secretary Shailaja Chandra and directed them to the submit an action plan and detailed report on cleaning of the river by December 31.
- The committee has submitted the details to the Delhi government.
- It is mentioned that "Although the Yamuna river flows only for 54 kilometres from Palla to Badarpur through Delhi, the 22 kilometre stretch from Wazirabad to Okhla, which is less than 2 per cent of the river length of 1370 kilometres from Yamunotri to Allahabad, accounts for about 76 per cent of the pollution level in the river".
- The monitoring committee also raised an objection to the capacity utilisation of common effluent treatment plant (CETP) which is as low as 25 per cent.

- Another area of concern is the direct discharge of completely unregulated waste from industries and residences into the river.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Indian Express

9. 7th India and China joint military exercises - 'Hand in Hand'

- India and China will resume their joint military drills after a one-year gap in the southwest Chinese city of Chengdu to improve capabilities in fighting terrorism and promote mutual understanding.
- The opening ceremony of the drills will be held on December 11.
- The exercises will be held after a gap of one year as both the sides were locked in a 73-day standoff in Doklam in the Sikkim sector of the border in 2017.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- Indian Express

11.12.2018

1. Agni-5 missile test fired from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast

- Agni V, a long-range surface-to-surface Nuclear Capable Ballistic missile, was successfully launched from mobile launcher at the Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha on Dec 10, 2018.
- This is the seventh trial of the indigenously-developed surface-to-surface missile.
- The first test of Agni-5 was conducted on April 19, 2012.
- Agni-5, which can strike targets as far as 5,000 kilometres, also has other advantages, such as higher reliability, longer shelf life, less maintenance and enhanced mobility.

Related Information

- At present, India has in its armoury the Agni series — Agni-1 with 700 km range, Agni-2 with 2,000 km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range.

Topic-GS-3- Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

Source- Economic Times

2. India is at a 5th global position for overall installed renewable energy capacity

- India attains global 4th and 5th positions in the wind and solar power installed capacities.
- India is now at the 5th global position for overall installed renewable energy capacity
A total of around 73.35 GW of renewable energy capacity has been installed in the country as on October, 2018 from all renewable energy sources which includes:
(a) Around 34.98 GW from Wind,
(b) 24.33 GW from solar,
(c) 4.5 GW from Small Hydro Power and
(d) 9.54 GW from Bio-power.

Related Information

- As per the Paris Accord on Climate Change, India made a pledge that by 2030, 40% of installed power generation capacity shall be based on clean sources, it was determined that 175 GW of renewable energy capacity will be installed by 2022.
- This includes 100 GW from solar, 60 GW from wind, 10 GW from bio-power and 5 GW from small hydropower.

Topic GS-3- Energy

Source-PIB

3. IISER Kolkata team develops a method to simulate, predict solar activity over ten years

- A team of researchers from IISER Kolkata have developed a way of predicting the intensity of sunspot activity in the next solar cycle (approximately from 2020 to 2031) using data spread over the last 100 years.
- Astronomers have observed sunspots on the surface of the sun for nearly 400 years.
- It is known that sunspots follow a cyclic pattern of growing in number and disappearing in approximately 11 years, known as the sunspot cycle or the sun's activity cycle.
- We are currently in the 24th sunspot cycle since the observation began in 1755.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu

4. India sets world record in nuclear plant operation

- The indigenously developed Kaiga Atomic Power Station has set a new world record, with one of its units operating uninterrupted for more than 940 days.
- This is a record for all kinds of nuclear power-generating units, including advanced gas-based reactors in the world.
- The record was earlier held by Unit 2 of Heysham of the United Kingdom, which operated non-stop for 940 days.

Related Information

Kaiga Nuclear Power Plant

- It is situated at Kaiga, near the river Kali, in Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka, India.

Topic- Important for PCS exams

Source- DD News

5. Centre amended rules for minorities from three nations

- The Union Home Ministry has notified amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009, to include a separate column in the citizenship form for applicants belonging to six minority communities (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians) from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.
- A parliamentary committee has been examining the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, that proposes citizenship to six persecuted minorities — Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists — from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before 2014.

Related Information

- It has run into strong resistance in the BJP-ruled Assam because it will pave the way for giving citizenship mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh in Assam, who came after March 1971, in violation of the 1985 Assam Accord.

Topic- GS-2- India Polity

Source- The Hindu

6. India plans deep dive for seabed minerals

- India is going full steam ahead in anticipation of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) — a U.N. body that oversees mining on the high seas — giving the green light for commercial exploitation.
- Over the next decade, the Indian government plans to pump in more than \$1 billion to develop and test deep-sea technologies like underwater crawling machines and human-piloted submarines
- If it works, the equipment will be able to reach depths of up to 6 km, where metals can be 15 times more concentrated than inland deposits.
- The ISA allows India to explore an area in the Indian Ocean of 75,000 square kilometres.
- China provides about 90% of rare earth, which are used in aviation and defence manufacturing.
- India is most interested in copper, nickel and cobalt, as it ramps up clean power generation.

Topic- GS-3- Science & technology

Source- The Hindu

7. Appointment process of heads of CBI, CVC

- The Supreme Court asked the Centre to respond on a plea that the appointment process of the CBI Director and the heads of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Central Information Commission (CIC) and the Lokpal.
- The petition pointed to two facts to back its claim that the heads of these institutions were not “truly independent and transparent.
- The CVC is the country’s top anti-corruption ombudsman. The CIC is the apex forum under the Right to Information Act.
- The Lokpal is yet to be implemented through the statute came into existence in 2014.
- The petition further challenged Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. The provision provided a blanket protection to public servants regardless of their status.

Related Information

- It argued that Section 17A "affords a second threshold to be crossed while investigating a public servant, apart from the requirement of sanction, which is in any case available under Section 19 of the 1988 Act.

Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- The Hindu

8. Pakistan plans heritage park for Hindus, Buddhists

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province plans to construct a heritage park in Elum Valley, which carries a historical significance to both the Hindus and the Buddhists, to promote religious tourism.

Related Information

- Elum Valley is located between the Swat and Buner districts in the province.
- Elum Valley has been a site of divinity and pilgrimage for both the Hindu and the Buddhist communities.
- According to Hindu belief, Lord Ram spent time meditating there during his 14 years of exile, while Buddhists believe it to be the site where a previous incarnation of Lord Buddha gave up his life.

Topic- GS-3- India and its neighbourhood- relations

Source- The Hindu

12.12.2018

1. **ENSURE: An online portal To connect with Direct Benefit Transfer**
 - Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched a portal ENSURE- National Livestock Mission-EDEG developed by NABARD.
 - This portal is operated under the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries.
 - The Subsidy payment for activities related to poultry, small ruminants, pigs etc. through Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) goes directly to the beneficiary's account.

- The burden of extra interest due to delay in the disbursement of the subsidy would now be reduced after the launch of the portal.
- Access from the portal will also be on a real-time basis and list of beneficiaries can be easily prepared.

Related Information

NATIONAL LIVESTOCK MISSION

- National Livestock Mission is an initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
- The mission, which commenced from 2014-15, has the objective of sustainable development of the livestock sector.
- NABARD is the subsidy channelizing agency under Entrepreneurship Development & Employment Generation (EDEG) component of National Livestock Mission.
- This includes:
 - (a) Poultry Venture Capital Fund (PVCF)
 - (b) Integrated Development of Small Ruminants and Rabbit (IDSRR)
 - (c) Pig Development (PD)
 - (d) Salvaging and Rearing of Male Buffalo Calves (SRMBC)

Who can benefit from the scheme?

- Farmers, Individuals Entrepreneurs, NGOs, Companies, Cooperatives, groups of the organized and unorganized sector which include Self- Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs)

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Agriculture and Development

Source-PIB

2. **Kala Utsav National Competition**
 - Union Minister of HRD will inaugurate "Kala Utsav" (Festival of Arts) at Bal Bhavan, New Delhi.
 - Kala Utsav is an initiative of the Department of School Education and Literacy of the Ministry of Human Resource Development.
 - Students representing Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and Navodaya Samiti will also be competing.

Related information

- Kala Utsav National Competition was launched in 2015.

- It aims to promote arts in education by nurturing and showcasing the artistic talents of school students, children with special needs too will have the opportunity to display their talents.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source-PIB

3. **Government raises its contribution in National Pension System to 14% from 10%**
- Union Cabinet has decided to raise the contribution of the Central Government to the National Pension System (NPS) corpus of its employees from 10% to 14%.
- This will increase in eventually accumulated corpus of all central government employees covered by NPS.
- The government also has decided to make NPS fully tax free, making it on par with the provident fund scheme.
- It has decided to exempt income tax that is applicable on part of NPS corpus that is withdrawn on retirement.
- At present, while exiting scheme, 60% of corpus could be withdrawn and 20% of withdrawn amount is taxable.

Related Information

National Pension System

- It is easily accessible, low cost, tax-efficient, flexible and portable retirement savings account.
- It was launched in 2004 and was initially introduced for new Government recruits (except armed forces).
- It aims to institute pension reforms in the country and to inculcate the habit of saving for retirement amongst the citizens.
- Its objective is to provide retirement income to all the citizens. Under it, the individual contributes to his retirement account.
- It was extended for all citizens of the country from May 2009 including the unorganised sector workers on a voluntary basis.
- NPS is governed and administered by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- Currently, any Indian between the age of 18 to 65 years may voluntarily join the NPS.

- NRI can open an NPS account, however, contributions made by NRI are subject to regulatory requirements as prescribed by RBI and FEMA from time to time.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-PIB

4. **Odisha: Celebrates its traditional lac doll marriage**
- Odisha celebrates its traditional lac doll marriage on the banks of Chilika with pomp and splendour.
- This lac doll marriage celebrated in wedding season which is a unique union of art and tradition.
- At a time when celebrity wedding ceremonies are making headlines and catching the fancy of the nation, Odisha celebrated a unique marriage with much pomp and splendour.
- The marriage was organised in conformity with the Odia tradition of 'jau kandhei bahaghara (lac doll marriage)' by 'Purbasa Lok-kala o Adivasi-kala Sangrahalaya', an institution and museum at Barkul.
- 'Forum for Ganjam' of Berhampur is also involved in the development of this museum.

Related Information

- The aim of this unique marriage ceremony was to promote traditional folk and tribal art forms and create awareness against social evils like dowry and child marriage.
- The marriage procession, which started from Berhampur, included performers of several folk dance forms of Ganjam district like Bagha Nacha (tiger dance), Ghoda Nacha (horse dance), Sakhi Nacha.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. **Israel became a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**
- Israel became a full member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- The FATF membership will tag Israel as an attractive country for international investment and improve the status of the Israeli financial sector and its ability to operate in the global economy.

Financial Action Task Force

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions.
- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF is, therefore, a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.
- The FATF has developed a series of Recommendations that are recognised as the international standard for combating of money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Times of India

6. **Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) – 2018**
 - World Bank has released its report – Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) 2018 which is charting global progress on sustainable energy policies.
 - The report was released on the sidelines of the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24).

Related Information

Key takeaways from "RISE 2018" are as follows:

- Many of the world’s largest energy-consuming countries significantly improved their renewable energy regulations since 2010.
- From 2010-2017, the number of countries with strong policy frameworks for sustainable energy more than tripled – from 17 to 59.
- Many of the world’s largest energy-consuming countries have significantly improved their renewable energy regulations while adopting

clear targets for both renewable energy and energy efficiency in the run-up to the 2015 Paris Agreement.

- Progress is no longer contained in developed countries: there are strong performers in every region of the developing world.

Energy Access:

- The countries that have increased their electricity access rates the most since 2010 have also shown a concurrent improvement in electricity access policies.
- In countries with an electricity access deficit, policymakers are increasingly turning their attention to off-grid solutions to close the gap. This is illustrated by the soaring share of low-access countries adopting measures to support mini-grids and solar home systems from around 15 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2017.

Renewable Energy:

- In 2017, 50 countries – almost double from 2010 – had developed significant policy frameworks to enable the uptake of renewable energy.
- About 93 percent of countries covered by RISE had adopted an official renewable energy target, compared to only 37 percent in 2010 and 84 percent of countries had regulations in place to support renewable energy deployment, while 95 percent allowed the private sector to own and operate renewable energy projects.

Energy Efficiency:

- The percentage of countries with advanced policy frameworks on energy efficiency grew more than ten-fold from 2 percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2017. Most encouragingly, these countries account for 66 percent of the world’s energy consumption.
- But the global average score on energy efficiency remains low, suggesting significant room for improvement.

Note: Among the four SDG7 target areas, renewable energy, energy efficiency, electricity access and access to clean cooking, the last one continued to be the most overlooked and underfunded by policymakers.

Indian scenario:

- India has gained great success in renewable energy auctions that delivered record-setting low prices for solar power.
- However, to realize its full potential, the country needs to address critical gaps, such as failing utilities, clean cooking, and the slow progress on decarbonizing heating and transport.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important report

Source- Economics Times

7. **SC directs Centre to Declare 10 km area around national parks, sanctuaries as ESZ**

- The Supreme Court directed the Centre to declare "at the earliest" 10 km area around 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country as Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) to protect wild birds and animals.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notifies areas close to National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as ESZ.
- Its aimed at creating "shock absorbers" for protected animals and birds by regulating and managing activities there.
- They also act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.
- The 21 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, without ESZ, are in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Related Information

Statutory backing

- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 does not mention the word "Eco-Sensitive Zones".
- However, Section 3(2)(v) of the Act, says that Central Government can restrict areas in which any industries, operations or processes or class of industries, operations or processes shall not be carried out or shall be carried out subject to certain safeguards.
- Besides Rule 5(1) of the Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986[1] states

that central government can prohibit or restrict the location of industries and carrying on certain operations or processes on the basis of considerations like the biological diversity of an area, maximum allowable limits of concentration of pollutants for an area, environmentally compatible land use, and proximity to protected areas.

- The above two clauses have been effectively used by the government to declare ESZs or EFAs.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environmnet

Source-PIB

8. **Indian Ports Association Launches 'PCS 1x' to Increase Ease of Doing Business**

- Indian Ports Association (IPA), under the guidance of the Ministry of Shipping, launched the Port Community System 'PCS1x'.
- 'PCS 1x' is a cloud-based new generation technology, with a user-friendly interface.
- The platform offers value added services such as notification engine, workflow, mobile application, track and trace, better user interface, better security features, improved inclusion by offering a dashboard for those with no IT capability.
- A unique feature of 'PCS1x' is that it can latch on to third party software which provides services to the maritime industry thereby enabling the stakeholders to access a wide network of services.
- The system enables a single sign-on facility to provide a one-stop interface to all the functionalities across all stakeholders.
- Another major feature is the deployment of a world class state of the art payment aggregator solution which removes the dependency on bank-specific payment ecosystem.

Related Information

- This system will enable trade to have an improved communication with the customs as they have also embarked on an Application Programming Interface (API) based architecture, thereby enabling real-time interaction.

- This system is also an initiative that supports green initiatives by reducing dependency on paper. The web-based platform has been developed indigenously and is a part of the 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics
Source-PIB

13.12.2018

1. **First container mainline vessel flags off at Tuticorin**
 - Union Minister for Shipping flagged off the first container mainline vessel from VoC Port (Tuticorin Port).
 - Tuticorin Port has made towards improvement of infrastructure with the focus to unlock efficiencies at the Port as well as add capacity to reduce logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade under Sagarmala.

Related Information
Tuticorin Port

- O.Chidambaranar Port, formerly Tuticorin Port is one of the 12 major ports in India.
- Located in Gulf of Mannar, with Sri Lanka on South East and large Indian Landmass on the West, the Port is well sheltered from storms and cyclone winds.
- It is a second-largest port in Tamil Nadu and fourth-largest container terminal in India.
- It is an artificial port.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure
Source-PIB

2. **Partners' Forum, 2018**
 - The Partners' Forum 2018 is co-hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Partnership of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) in New Delhi.
 - Partners' Forum is a global health partnership launched in September 2005 to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, newborn and maternal health.
 - The previous chapters were held in Johannesburg, South Africa (2014), New Delhi, India (2010) and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (2007).

- This is the second time India is hosting the Partners' Forum.

Related Information

Other Programs Related to Health

- Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan to provide best possible care to mothers during pregnancy.
- Ayushman Bharat Yojana or Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) or National Health Protection Scheme or Modicare is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2018, under the Ayushman Bharat Mission of MoHFW for a New India -2022.
 - The scheme aims at making interventions in primary, secondary and tertiary care systems, covering both preventive and pro-motive health, to address healthcare holistically.
 - It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives namely, Health and Wellness centres and the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS).
- India has also steered the setting up of National Nutrition Mission with an aim of doubling the pace of improving the nutritional status of mothers, children, and adolescents, through concerted actions between various departments and stakeholders.
- Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) for immunization.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Health Issues
Source-PIB

3. **LCAVR and CVVRS**

- Ministry of railway started installing Loco cab audio-video recording system (LCAVR) / Crew Voice/Video Recording System (CVVRS) in Diesel and Electric locomotives which are similar to Black Box.
- This system provides invaluable data to investigators which will help them in understanding the sequence of events leading up to an accident and for identifying operational issues and human factors.

Related Information

- Indian Railways undertakes various IT initiatives to improve train operations & provide better passenger experience.

Handheld Devices on trains (HHT)

- Handheld Terminals (HHTs) are being provided to the Train Ticket Examiners (TTEs) to be able to check the reserved coaches, allot the vacant berths and transmit information on available berths to the subsequent stations.
- The HHT can also access the ticketing application and collect excess fares as per rules.
- The terminal can potentially connect to a Point of Sale (POS) machine and charges can be collected digitally.

Paperless Unreserved Ticketing through Mobile Phones

- Paperless Unreserved ticketing on mobile phones was launched on 2014 at Mumbai.
- This has eliminated the need for passengers to stand in queue for getting tickets for the journey in unreserved compartments of trains.

Indian Railway e-Procurement System (IREPS)

- The complete tendering activity of Indian Railways for procurement of goods, services & works and e-auction of scrap sale is on IREPS.
- IREPS system is largest such G to B portal in India.
- It has helped in achieving the objectives of transparency, efficiency, and improvement of ease of doing business.
- Central Vigilance Commission has recognized and awarded the system under "Vigilance Excellence Award – 2017" for outstanding contribution in the category of "IT initiatives for transparency in the organization".

Topic-GS Paper 2–Government Initiatives

Source-PIB

4. **Global migration pact: Why we need this?**
 - Recently heads of state and government ministers from 164 countries publicly confirmed in **Marrakech their commitment to the Global Compact** for the Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration external link, a multilateral accord external link which was concluded under UN auspices earlier this year.

Aims of the pact

- The compact is a non-binding multilateral instrument of cooperation that aims to set common principles and guidelines for orderly migration, thereby reducing irregular flows.
- The Global Compact establishes a United Nations mechanism allowing Governments and companies to contribute technical, financial and human resources for implementing it.
- The global compact is framed consistently with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.

Related Information

- According to the UN, there are around 258 million migrants in the world today external link.
- This figure is expected to grow due to globalization, easier communications, transport, and trade, as well as rising inequality, demographic imbalances, and climate change.
- Migration external link provides huge opportunities and benefits for the migrants, host communities and communities of origin.
- The pact gained momentum after the migration crisis in Europe in 2015, which saw the biggest influx of refugees and migrants since World War Two.
- It is the fruit of earlier human rights and development treaties and initiatives like the Global Forum on Migration and Development external link and stems from a political committee known as the "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants external link", adopted unanimously in 2016 by the 193-member UN General Assembly.

Who's for it and who's against?

- The United States, which backed out last year saying the issue was "simply not compatible with US sovereignty".
- The Austrian government, for example, is concerned that signing up could eventually help lead to the recognition of a "human right to migration"

- Dominican Republic, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Israel, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia also refused to sign the document.
- Some states that have rejected the GCM are especially worried about human rights references within the document. In their view, an emphasis on human rights contradicts what matters for them: securing borders.

Need for a global compact

- Over 250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic product.
- Migrant's remittance is a huge contributor to their home countries' development.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International issues

Source- Indian Express

5. **ISRO and ROSCOSMOS have signed a MoU in on 'Joint Activities in the field of Human Spaceflight Programme'**

Related Information

Roscosmos

- The Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities commonly known as Roscosmos is a state corporation responsible for the space flight and cosmonautics program for the Russian Federation.
- The headquarters of Roscosmos are located in Moscow, capital of Russia.

Indian Human Spaceflight Programme

- The Indian Human Spaceflight Programme was created by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop the technology needed to launch crewed orbital spacecraft into low Earth orbit.
- The first crewed flight is planned with a spacecraft called Gaganyaan for December 2021 on a home-grown GSLV-III rocket.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

6. **Voyager 2 Mission**
 - NASA's Voyager 2 spacecraft has exited the heliosphere which is the protective bubble of particles and magnetic fields created by the Sun.

- It has become the second human-made object in voyager series in history to reach the edge of our solar system.
- Earlier Voyager 1 crossed the space boundary in 2012.

Related Information

Heliosphere

- It is a bubble around the sun created by the outward flow of the solar wind from the sun and the opposing inward flow of the interstellar wind.
- It is the region influenced by the dynamic properties of the sun that are carried in the solar wind such as magnetic fields, energetic particles, and solar wind plasma.
- The solar system boundary is called the 'Heliopause'.
- It is the place where the tenuous, hot solar wind meets the cold, dense interstellar medium.
- The heliopause marks the end of the heliosphere and the beginning of interstellar space.

What is Heliophysics?

- The study of the sun and its interaction with Earth and the solar system is called Heliophysics.
- It requires viewing the sun, heliosphere & planetary environments as elements of a single interconnected system - one that contains dynamic space weather, and that evolves in response to solar, planetary and interstellar conditions.

Topic-GS Paper 3-Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

7. **Japan picks 'disaster' character as a symbol to define 2018**
 - Japan selected the Chinese character for 'disaster' as its 'defining symbol' for 2018, a year that saw the country hit by deadly floods, earthquakes, and storms.
 - This symbol display at Seihan Mori, master of the ancient Kiyomizu temple in Kyoto, writing the character on a huge white panel with an ink-soaked calligraphy brush.

Related Information

- The country was hit by a series of natural disasters in 2018, starting with massive flooding in western regions that killed over 200 people.

- It was also battered by a typhoon that inundated a major international airport, and an earthquake in the north that triggered landslides and disrupted supply lines.
- Last year, Japan picked 'North' following a series of North Korean missile launches, and the year before the choice was 'gold', in celebration of the success of Japanese athletes at the Rio Olympics.
- Chinese characters, or Kanji, are widely used in Japanese, along with other types of alphabets.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

8. **1st Adventure Next India 2018**
 - The heart of India- Madhya Pradesh hosted the 1st AdventureNext India 2018.
 - It was organized by The Adventure Travel Trade Association and Madhya Pradesh Tourism.
 - The theme of the event was "**Pulse of Tomorrow**".
 - It was a first-of-its-kind in India & Asia.
 - The Major partner in the event was Jharkhand Tourism.

Topic- GS Paper – Environment

Source- Indian Express]

9. **CAG Rajiv Mehrishi has appointed as Vice-Chair of UN Panel of Auditors**

- Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi has become the Vice-Chair of the UN Panel of Auditors.

Related Information

United Nations Panel of Auditors

- The United Nations Panel of Auditors consists of External Auditors of the United Nations and its agencies.
- Presently, the panel consists of 11 countries -India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, the Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.
- Currently, the panel is chaired by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the UK.
- The panel held its annual meeting in New York from 3 to 4 December 2018 and discussed various issues concerning the audit of United Nations and the agencies under the United Nations System.

- The panel also elected the Comptroller and Auditor General of the UK as Chair of the Panel for another term (2019).

Topic- GS-2-International Organization

Source- Hindu Business Line

14.12.2018

1. **India's 'Help Us Green' Bags Top UN Award**

- India's 'Help Us Green' was among the recipients of the Momentum of Change award by UN Climate Change.
- "Help Us Green" is a private group which collects floral wastes from temples in Uttar Pradesh, along with the flowers washed ashore of holy river Ganga.
- The flower wastes are recycled to produce incense, organic fertilizers, & biodegradable packaging material.
- The Indian firm was awarded the UN honor for not only recycling floral waste but also for providing employment to women living as manual scavengers.

Related Information

Momentum for Change UN initiative

- Momentum for Change is an initiative spearheaded by the UN Climate Change secretariat to shine a light on the enormous groundswell of activities underway across the globe that is moving the world toward a highly resilient, low-carbon future.
- Momentum for Change recognizes innovative and transformative solutions that address both climate change and wider economic, social and environmental challenges.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

2. **Egypt's fertile Nile Delta threatened by climate change**

- Lush green fields blanket northern Egypt's Nile Delta, but the country's agricultural heartland and its vital freshwater resources are under threat from a warming climate.
- The fertile arc-shaped basin is home to nearly half the country's population, and the river that feeds it provides Egypt with 90% of its water needs.

- By 2050, the region could lose up to 15% of its key agricultural land due to salinization, according to a 2016 study published by Egyptian economists.

Reasons

- Increasing temperatures and drought are drying up the mighty Nile - a problem compounded by rising seas and soil salinization.

Nile River

- It is a major north-flowing river in northeastern Africa and is the longest river in the world.
- It is an "international" river as its drainage basin covers eleven countries, namely, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Republic of the Sudan and Egypt.
- The river Nile has two major tributaries, the White Nile and the Blue Nile.
- The White Nile is considered to be the headwaters and primary stream of the Nile itself.
- In particular, the Nile is the primary water source of Egypt and Sudan.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- TOI

3. **UHC2030: International Universal Health Coverage**
 - The International Day is supported by UHC2030, a global partnership consisting of Member States, several United Nations Agencies – including the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN Children’s’ Fund (UNICEF), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) – and civil society organizations.
 - The aim is to raise awareness of the need for strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage to call for stronger, more equitable health systems to achieve universal health coverage, leaving no one behind.
 - The theme for the 2018 UHC Day is: **“Unite for Universal Health Coverage: Now is the Time for Collective Action.”**

- Universal health coverage (UHC) ensures all people, everywhere, can access the quality health services they need without suffering financial hardship.
- This year 5 pillars to achieve Universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030 were released and they include- (a) Ensuring Political Commitment & Multi-Stakeholder Action, (b) Leaving No One Behind, (c) Engaging Community Voices, (d) Investing More & (e) Smarter and Holding Leaders Accountable.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Health Issues

Source- Economics Times

4. **New online portal "Collect Earth" developed to track land-use on Earth’s surface**
 - The UN food agency has announced, launching a new online portal developed in collaboration with the United States Space Agency, NASA.
 - The system known as **Collect Earth Online** is web-based, free of charge and open to all platforms, that will allow users to “systematically inspect” any location on the planet, from glaciers to rainforests with satellite data.
 - This innovation allows the collection of up-to-date data about our environment and its changes in a more efficient and participatory manner, using the local experts that know the landscape and the underlying ecology.
 - It helps us to obtain and upscale practical inputs at a time when environmental challenges are taking on an urgent and unprecedented importance.
 - The next generation geospatial tool also provides access to high-resolution satellite imagery from multiple sources as well as historical imagery and photo mosaics from NASA and European Union satellite networks, making it easier to carry out surveys, collect samples and use crowdsourcing techniques.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

5. **Ocean acidification ‘changing’ marine biodiversity**

- A study led by Stanford University sheds light on the impact of human-induced environmental change on the functioning of ecosystems, especially marine life.
- The researchers studied the impact of ocean acidification, or the uptake of excess anthropogenic CO₂ by the ocean, on marine species and their population.
- In addition to studying how species diversity changes with acidification, they analyzed traits like diet and growth that influence an ecosystem's performance.
- To understand how multiple, co-existing species are affected by an increase in ocean acidification, the researchers examined dozens of species across areas, with varying levels of acidity, in the volcanic carbon dioxide (CO₂) vents in Ischia, Italy.
- The paper, published in Nature Communications, found that, among other species, sea snails were smaller in more acidic water as their shells take longer to grow and are thinner and more brittle.
- This, in turn, affects the food chain and the fish that consume them.

Effect of Acidic Environment

- When an organism's environment becomes more acidic, it can dramatically impact not only that species, but the overall ecosystem's resilience, function, and stability.
- These transformations ultimately impact people, especially our food chains.
- The acidification displaced long-lived species, such as corals, that form habitat for other species.
- Species with short life spans and fast turnover survived better in areas with high CO₂ levels as they are the only species that can resist these environmental conditions.
- The study warns that increasing acidification of the oceans will ultimately threaten food security for millions of people and cause huge economic losses.
- Earlier reports have highlighted that since 1955, over 90 percent of the

excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases has been stored in the oceans.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Down to Earth

6. Climate Change Performance Index 2019

- India moved to 11th rank from last year's 14 positions in CCPI 2019 as a result of an improved performance in renewable energy, comparatively low levels of per capita emissions and a relatively ambitious mitigation target for 2030.
- Most notably India improved its performance in the renewable energy category, joining the group of medium performers.
- Comparatively low levels of per capita GHG emissions and a relatively ambitious mitigation target for 2030 give India an overall high rating in the emissions category.
- Global carbon dioxide emissions are rising again but India's ranking has improved by three points, a Germanwatch report said.
- Sweden and Morocco were the leading countries, with the latter making significant expansion of renewable energy.
- The US and Saudi Arabia were at the bottom of the Climate Change Performance Index 2019.

Related Information

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2019

- The Climate Change Performance Index by Germanwatch and the new climate Institute published together with the Climate Action Network (CAN) is a ranking of the 56 countries and the EU, together responsible for about 90% of global GHG emissions.
- Its aim is to put political and social pressure on those countries that have, until now, failed to take ambitious action on climate protection and to highlight those countries with best practice climate policies.
- The four categories examined are GHG emissions (40%), renewable energy (20%), energy use (20%) and climate policy (20%).

- The CCPI also evaluates to what extent the respective countries are taking adequate action within the categories emissions, renewables, and energy use to being on track towards the global Paris-goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C.
- Therefore, CCPI is an important tool in contributing to a clearer understanding of national and international climate policy.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Economics times

7. Akademik Lomonosov: World’s first floating nuclear plant

- Russian state-run atomic energy corporation ‘Rosatom’ announced the commencement of installation of Akademik Lomonosov, the world’s first “floating” nuclear power plant (FNPP).
- FNPP is located at the port of Pevek in Russia’s extreme north-eastern region of Chukotka.
- It has a capacity of 70MW and is equipped with two reactors of 35MW each.
- It will replace the existing Bilibino Nuclear Power Plant and the Chauskaya coal-fired power plant.

Related Information

- Rosatom is also the equipment suppliers and consultants for the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project in Tamil Nadu.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Energy Sector

Source- The Hindu

8. Punganur cow

- Recently, Scientists launched a study to help Punganur cow, considered one of the world’s smallest breeds of cattle, which is on the verge of extinction.
- The Livestock Research Station (LRS) has instituted a programme to conserve the breed.
- These cows are mainly found in Andhra Pradesh.

Related Information

- Punganur cow’s milk is used to prepare ghee which is offered as ‘archana’ to Lord Venkateswara.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

9. Govt sets up GoM on stressed power assets

- The government has constituted a Group of Ministers headed by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to assess the recommendations of a high-level panel on stressed power projects.
- The panel, headed by Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha, had submitted its report in November 2018.
- The high-level committee had suggested setting up a mechanism to allow public financial institutions (PFIs) like REC and PFC to discount receivables from distribution companies (discoms) and make upfront payments to generating companies.
- The panel also recommended that the Ministry of Power may engage with the power regulators to ensure that late payment surcharge (LPS) is mandatorily paid in the event of delay in payment by discoms.
- According to a report by the Department of Financial Services, as many as 34 coal-based thermal power projects, mostly private with a total capacity of 40,130 MW, were considered 'stressed' by the Ministry of Power as on March 22, 2017.

Topic-GS-3- Indian Economy

Source- TOI

10. 9 States achieve 100% household electrification under Saubhagya

- According to the Ministry of Power, nine states have achieved complete household electrification under the Saubhagya scheme.
- They are Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana, and West Bengal.

Related Information

- The Ministry had recently lowered the household electrification target by around 10 million homes, or about one-fourth of the earlier goal.
- This was because some users have opted out of the electrification programme while some houses are not regularly occupied.

- With this, 16 States in the country now have 100 percent household electrification.
- The country is expected to achieve 100 percent household electrification by December 31, 2018.

SAUBHAGYA- 'Power for all' scheme

- Prime Minister launched 'Power for all' scheme to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on September 25, 2017.
- The scheme named as '**Saubhagya**' and will provide subsidy on equipment like transformers, meters, and wires.
- Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) has been appointed as the nodal agency for coordinating the implementation of the scheme.
- The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme will be identified using Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011 data.

Note:

From onward we will provide Daily UPSC Current Affairs from Monday to Friday. We will cover all news of Friday-Sunday in Monday's current Affairs. We have started some new initiatives for Saturday and Sundays which includes **GS Writing Challenge, Weekly Article, and Weekly Hindu Analysis Editorial PDF**. So, stay connected with us.

17.12.2018

1. **Operation Oliva: Coast Guard launches the operation to safeguard turtles**
 - The Coast Guard has launched the 'Operation Oliva' exercise as part of its annual mission to ensure the safe mid-sea sojourn of breeding Olive Ridley sea turtles.
 - The exercise launched along the serene sea waters of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Odisha.
 - The Coast Guard has chalked out a pro-active plan for these marine animals conservation.

Related Information Olive Ridley Turtles

- The olive ridley sea turtle, also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, is the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- These sea turtle is found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- They can also be found in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean.
- These turtles, along with the related Kemps ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- The olive ridley sea turtle has been listed on Schedule – I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (amended 1991).
- The species is listed as **vulnerable** under IUCN.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu Business

2. **Jharkhand gets "Krishi Karman" award in rice category**
 - Jharkhand has been selected for "Krishi Karman" award in the rice category from the Union Ministry of Agriculture.

Related Information

Krishi Karman awards

- Krishi Karman awards are given to Best performer States for raising country's food grain production.
- These awards were instituted in 2010-11 for recognizing the meritorious efforts of the states in food grains production.
- It comprises of three awards for total food grain production and four awards for production of crops that constitute the food grain viz. rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu Business

3. **Nepal bans Indian currency notes above Rs 100**
 - The Nepal government has banned all Indian notes above the denomination of Rs 100 in a move that would impact tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used.

- New Indian note of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations were banned as the Nepal government has not yet legalized them in the market.
- The move can affect the Indian tourist and Nepali people working in India, who carry the currency in Nepal for the transaction.
- Even though Indian currency is accepted in Nepal, people would often face difficulties while using higher denomination notes of Rs 500 & Rs 1,000 since they were not easily accepted.
- This is even before the demonetization exercise of November 2016.

Reasons for not accepting these notes:

- Due to a large number of fake currency in these denominations was found there.
- It was among the places from where wrong elements would try to bring in fake notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 to India.
- The Indian government introduced new banknotes of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations after the demonetization of old notes worth Rs 500 and 1,000 in 2016.

Topic-GS Paper 2– International relation

Source- Economics times

4. **4th WHO Global Forum on Medical Devices held in Andhra Pradesh**
 - 4th WHO Global Forum on Medical Devices “Increasing access to medical devices” concluded Andhra Pradesh Medtech Zone in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
 - It was the first time the WHO Global Forum on Medical devices was being held in India.
 - The aim of the Forum was to face the challenges present in the selection, regulation, and use of medical devices

Objectives of the Forum

- To define methods of increasing and measuring access to essential and priority medical devices under Universal Health Coverage in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

- To share country evidence of best practices in regulating, assessment and management of medical devices
- To demonstrate the development and use of innovative appropriate affordable technologies to respond to global health priorities
- The forum also shares WHO tools and guidelines on medical devices for better implementation.

Related Information

- The 1st Global Forum was held in Bangkok in 2010, the 2nd in Geneva in 2013 and the 3rd also in Geneva in 2017.

World Health Organisation

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health.
- It's headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The WHO is a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Health and Issues

Source-PIB

5. **ECO Niwas Samhita 2018**

- Ministry of Power launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018, an Energy Conservation Building Code for Residential Buildings (ECBC-R) on the occasion of National Energy Conservation Day 2018 in New Delhi.
- The code aims to benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in the design and construction of homes, apartments, and townships.
- The Code is also expected to assist a large number of architects and builders who are involved in the design and construction of new residential complexes in different parts of the country.
- The Code will potentially save energy to the tune of 125 Billion Units of electricity per year by 2030, which is equivalent to about 100 million ton of (Carbon dioxide) CO2 emission.
- It is estimated that energy demand in the building sector will rise from around 350 billion units in 2018 to approximately 1000 billion units by the year 2030.

Related Information

National Energy Conservation Awards

- National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated every year on 14th December by Ministry of Power in association with Bureau of Energy Efficiency.
- Its aim to recognize the efforts of industry and other establishments towards promoting energy efficiency.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency.

- BEE is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power which is mandated to implement policy and programmes in the area of energy efficiency and conservation.
- The objective of such initiatives is to reduce energy intensity in our country by optimizing energy demand and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) which are responsible for global warming and climate change.
- India has committed to the reduction of 33-35% GHG emission by 2030 as part of the document submitted to UNFCCC.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Energy and Policies

Source-PIB

6. **J & K becomes the first state to have a law banning sexual exploitation of women**
 - Jammu and Kashmir became the first state in the country to enact a law banning sexual exploitation of women "by those in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or a public servant".
 - The Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 seeks to amend the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC)-a criminal code, whereby specific offense under section 354 E is being inserted to provide for the offense of 'Sextortion'
 - 'Sextortion' is a physical or non-physical form to extort sexual favors. People entrusted with power use 'sextortion' in a form of 'corruption'.
 - Prevention of Corruption Act was amended to cover the definition of misconduct and to provide that demand for sexual favors would also constitute misconduct within the meaning of Section 5 of the act.

- Anyone found guilty of extortion ("non-bailable" and "not compoundable" offense) will be punished with a monetary fine and a minimum jail sentence of three years, which may extend to five years.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Women Empowerment

Source- Times of India

7. **4 Indian PSUs in top 100 arms producers: SIPRI**
 - According to the latest rankings released by a Stockholm-based think tank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), four Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have been featured on the world's top 100 arms producers in 2017.
 - The four PSU featuring in world's top 100 arms producer are:
 1. Indian Ordnance Factories
 2. Hindustan Aeronautics
 3. Bharat Electronics
 4. Bharat Dynamics
 - Arms sales of the four Indian companies, all state-owned, totaled \$7.52 billion in 2017, up 6.1% from the previous year.
 - Arms sales of all 100 arms-producing and military services companies (excluding those from China) in the list add up to \$398.2 billion, which was 2.2% higher than the sales in 2016 and marks the third consecutive year of growth.

Why major exporter China is not on the list:

- SIPRI doesn't cover Chinese companies due to lack of data.
- It estimates three Chinese arms companies would be among top 10: AVIC (\$20.1 billion), NORINCO (\$17.2 billion) and CETC (\$12.2 billion).

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- It is an international institute based in Sweden, dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament.
- SIPRI provides data, analysis, and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- SIPRI is based in Stockholm.

**Topic-GS Paper 2–International Organisation
Source- Economics**

8. **ISRO- GSAT-7A**

- ISRO is gearing up for the launch of its latest communication satellite, GSAT-7A aboard Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F11) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- GSAT-7A will be launched by the GSLV-F11 is ISRO's fourth generation launch vehicle with three stages into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

GSAT-7A

- GSAT-7A would be placed in the geostationary orbit and this communication satellite is expected to help the IAF to interlink different ground radar stations, airbases and AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft.
- The idea is to improve the IAF's network-centric warfare capabilities.
- The GSAT-7A is expected to have the Ku-band transponders and two deployable solar arrays onboard.
- The GSAT-7A is also expected to be a big push for drone operations as it will help the Navy reduce the reliance on on-ground control stations and take satellite-control of military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) which should help boost the range and endurance of the UAVs.

Related Information

- The GSAT 7 series was launched in 2013 as a dedicated communications satellite for the Indian Navy, which made the Navy completely independent of relying on foreign satellites for its blue water capabilities.
- This helps in providing real-time inputs to Indian warships, submarines, and maritime aircraft.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

10. **ICAR has approved the registration of record 15 new breeds of livestock and poultry this year**

- ICAR has approved the registration of record 15 new breeds of livestock and

poultry this year alone taking the total to 40 during 2014-18.

- The 15 newly registered breeds include:
 - (a) two cattle breeds - Ladakhi (J&K) and Konkan Kapila (Maharashtra & Goa);
 - (b) three buffalo breeds - Luit (Assam & Manipur), Bargur (Tamil Nadu), Chhattisgarhi (Chhattisgarh);
 - (c) one sheep breed-Panchali (Gujarat);
 - (d) six goat breeds – Kahmi (Gujarat), Rohilkhandi (UP), Assam Hill (Assam & Meghalaya), Bidri (Karnataka), Nandidurga (Karnataka), Bhakarwali (J&K);
 - (e) one pig breed – Ghurrah (UP);
 - (f) one donkey breed – Halari (Gujarat) and
 - (g) one chicken breed-Uttara (Uttarakhand).

Related Information

- The process of identification of animal breeds and their documentation is not only important in providing value to the ingenious animal breeds and introducing various development programs of the government for their improvement but also plays a special role in preserving the biodiversity of the country.
- We have about 15% of total cattle, 57% of total buffalo, 17% of goat, 7% of sheep and 4.5% of chicken of the world.
- There is still the possibility of many populations in pure form in the remote areas which need to be assessed for registration as breeds in the coming years.

Topic- GS-3- Agriculture

Source-PIB

18.12.2018

1. **Cabinet approves the signing of MoU between India and Australia**

- The Union Cabinet has been apprised of MoU between India and Australia for Cooperation in the Disability Sector.
- It will strengthen bilateral ties between India and Australia.
- Further, the MoU will facilitate in improving the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities especially for persons with intellectual disability and mental illness in both countries.

- Both the countries will take up specific proposals in the disability sector as mutually agreed upon, for implementation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Scheme for vulnerable people of society.

Source-PIB

2. **Cabinet approves the expansion of beneficiaries list under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**
 - The Cabinet cleared the proposal of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to release deposit free LPG connections to poor families.
 - The list included those
 - (a) Who has not been considered earlier for the release of LPG connections under PMUY on account of their names not been covered either in Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) list or
 - (b) The seven identified categories i.e. SC/STs households, beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) (Gramin), Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Forest dwellers, Most Backward Classes (MBC), Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes, people residing in Islands / river islands, whose names did not appear in the SECC List.

Related Information

PMUY

- IT was launched on 1st May 2016.
- Under the scheme, deposit free LPG connections are released with the cash assistance of Rs 1600/- per connection by Government of India.
- It also provides interest-free loan to purchase stove and refill by Oil Marketing Companies.
- Provision of LPG, among other things, so far, more than 5.86 crore LPG connections have been released under PMUY against the target of 8 crores.
- 48% of the beneficiaries are SC/STs.

Note: - World Health Organisation hailed PMUY as decisive intervention by the Government to facilitate the switch to clean household energy use, thereby addressing the problems associated with Indoor Household Pollution.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Health Sector

Source-PIB

3. **10 monuments adopted under the 'Adopt A Heritage' project**
 - The 'Adopt A Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan', a scheme launched on 27th September 2017.
 - It is a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), State/UTs Governments.
 - It envisages the development and maintenance of tourist amenities at heritage sites and making them tourist friendly, to enhance tourism potential and cultural importance in a planned and phased manner.
 - The project primarily focuses on providing basic amenities that include cleanliness, public conveniences, safe drinking water, ease of access for tourists, signages, illumination, Wi-Fi etc.
 - No fund is given by Ministry of Tourism.
 - The Project envisages involvement of Private/Public Companies / Organizations and Individuals to adopt Monuments, Natural Heritage Sites and other Tourist Sites in the country, primarily under CSR.
 - Archaeological Survey of India has identified 100 monuments as "Adarsh Smarak" for upgradation of existing facilities/amenities like Wi-Fi, cafeteria, interpretation center, brail signage, modern toilets etc. on the basis of actual requirement and feasibility on the case to case basis.

LIST OF MONUMENTS/SITES IDENTIFIED AND ADOPTED BY COMPANIES

Sl. No.	Agency/ Monument Mitras	Sl. No.	Name of Monument	State
1.	Dalmia Bharat Ltd.	1.	Red Fort	Delhi
		2.	Gandikota Fort	Andhra Pradesh
2.	Adventure Tour Operators Association of India	3.	Area surrounding Gangotri Temple and Trail to Gaumukh	Uttrakhand
		4.	Mt. Stok Kangri Trek, Lakakh	Jammu and Kashmir
3.	Apeejay Park Hotels	5.	Jantar Mantar	Delhi
4.	Bliss Inns (V-Resorts)	6.	Surajkund	Haryana
5.	Yatra Online	7.	Qutub Minar	Delhi
		8.	Ajanta Caves	Maharashtra
		9.	Leh Palace, Leh	Jammu & Kashmir
		10.	Hampi (Hazara Rama Temple)	Karnataka

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

4. **India’s first military flight using Blended Bio-Jet Fuel Flown by IAF**
 - Experimental Test Pilots and Test Engineer from IAF’s premier testing establishment ASTE, flew India’s first military flight using blended bio-jet fuel on the An-32 transport aircraft.
 - The project is a combined effort of IAF, DRDO, Directorate General Aeronautical Quality Assurance (DGAQA) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum.
 - Indian Air Force now carried flight trials using 10% biojet blended ATF.
 - This fuel is made from Jatropha oil sourced from Chattisgarh Biodiesel Development Authority (CBDA) and then processed at CSIR-IIP, Dehradun.
 - IAF intends to fly the An-32 transport aircraft using biojet fuel on 26 January 2019, in the Republic Day fly past.

Related Information

Biofuel

- Bio-fuels are a source of energy derived from the conversion of carbon-fixing biomass through thermal, chemical or biochemical processes.

- Their popularity arises from the fact that they are cheaper and less environmentally polluting than fossil fuels.
- Biofuels are in theory carbon-neutral because the carbon dioxide that is absorbed by the plants is equal to the carbon dioxide that is released when the fuel is burned.
- Bioethanol is an alcohol made by fermentation, mostly from carbohydrates produced in sugar or starch crops such as corn, sugarcane, or sweet sorghum. Cellulosic biomass, derived from non-food sources, such as trees and grasses, is also being developed as a feedstock for ethanol production.
- Biodiesel can be used as a fuel for vehicles in its pure form (B100), but it is usually used as a diesel additive to reduce levels of particulates, carbon monoxide, and hydrocarbons from diesel-powered vehicles.
- Biodiesel is produced from oils or fats using transesterification and is the most common biofuel in Europe.

- **1st generation biofuel**- Directly using the food crops like wheat and sugar for making ethanol and oilseeds for biodiesel by the conventional method of fermentation. These fuels emitted more greenhouse gases.
- **2nd generation biofuel**- Non-food crops and feedstock instead of food crops. Example: Wood, grass, seed crops, organic waste etc.
- **3rd generation biofuel**- Use specially engineered Algae whose biomass is used to convert into biofuels. The greenhouse gas emission here will be low in comparison to others.
- **4th generation biofuel**- is aimed at not only producing sustainable energy but also a way of capturing and storing CO₂.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PIB

5. **Cabinet approves the establishment of two new AIIMS under PMSSY**
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of two new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Tamil Nadu & Telangana under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY).
 - The objective is to establish the new AIIMS as Institutions of National Importance for providing quality tertiary healthcare, medical education, nursing education and research in the Region.

Related Information

PMSSY

- It was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/ reliable tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.
- PMSSY has two components-
 - (i) Setting up of AIIMS like Institutions
 - (ii) Upgradation of Government Medical College Institutions.
- Six AIIMS-like institutions, one each in the States of Bihar (Patna), Chhattisgarh (Raipur), Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal), Orissa

(Bhubaneswar), Rajasthan (Jodhpur) and Uttaranchal (Rishikesh) have been set up under the PMSSY scheme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Health Sector

Source-PIB

6. **Australia Recognizes West Jerusalem as Capital of Israel**
 - Australia has recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
 - With this, Australia has become one of the few countries that officially recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Related Information

- Both Israel and the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their Capital and this despite is not resolved yet.
- US President administration had also announced the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital on December 6, 2017.
- The UN General Assembly passed a resolution in opposition to declare the US President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void".
- India also supported the resolution, which was approved with a majority of 127-9 at the UN General Assembly calling for the US to withdraw its decision.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International Issues

Source- The Hindu

7. **India, Nepal, Bhutan plan joint task force to protect wildlife**
 - The governments of India, Nepal, and Bhutan are actively considering having a joint task force for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking to smuggle of wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India, and Bhutan.
 - The objectives of this move to provide free movement of wildlife and checking smuggling of wildlife.
 - The landscape stretches along the southern side of Mount Kanchenjunga covers an area of 25,080 sq km spread across parts of eastern Nepal (21%), Sikkim and West Bengal (56%) and western and south-western parts of Bhutan (23%).

Related Information

- According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a regional knowledge development and learning center, 1,118 sq km of riverine grassland and tree cover were lost in the landscape between 2000 and 2010. 74 % of the area was converted into rangeland and 26% to agricultural land.
- Other than seven million people, the Kanchenjunga Landscape is also home to 169 species of mammals and 713 species of birds.
- Studies by the ICIMOD suggest that between 1986 and 2015, as many as 425 people were killed by elephants and 144 elephants were killed between 1958 and 2013.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

8. Pune court is first in India to get the facility of e-payment

- Pune District court became the first court in India to allow e-payments of court fee, judicial deposits, fines, and penalties.
- This facility which will be eventually available across all courtrooms in the country to bring transparency to cash transactions.
- The Pune district court administration is starting the e-payment facility in the Shivajinagar district and sessions court.
- This will also help to end the long queues on court premises to pay cash.
- The court administration has tied up with State Bank of India (SBI)
- The person making the e-payment will get a unique case number record (CNR) which will remain the same till the matter is disposed of.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

9. India signed ascension pact to the 30-member Trans-Regional Maritime Network

- India signed an ascension pact to the 30-member Trans-Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN) that will give it an access to the information on ships passing through the Indian Ocean Region.

- The pact will give India the access to information on ships which pass through the Indian Ocean region that will greatly help the security forces in keeping a tab on any suspicious activity.
- The IOR is India's backyard and first respondent to any crisis situation.
- India already has bilateral White Shipping Agreements with 36 countries.

Related Information

Trans-Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN)

- The Network comprises 30 countries & is steered by Italy.

Topic- GS-3- International Organisation

Source- Economic Times

19.12.2018

1. National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) project.

- Recently Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) has given details on the status of implementation of NeVA Project.
- MoPA organized a two-day workshop on 24th and 25th September 2018 at New Delhi.
- It aimed to familiarize officers from State Legislatures/Councils with the features and functionalities of NeVA.
- In order to provide assistance to the Members, a NeVA Kendra (e-Facilitation Center) would be set up at each location under a Nodal Officer.
- Central Project Monitoring Unit (CPMU) under MoPA will be responsible for reviewing the financial and technical progress of the project.
- Himachal Pradesh is already the first Digital Legislature of the country.

RELATED INFORMATION

NeVA

- It is mission Mode Project (MMP) under Digital India Programme.
- Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is the 'Nodal Ministry' for its implementation in all the 31 States/UTs with Legislatures.

- It enables automation of the entire lawmaking process, tracking of documents and sharing of information.
- It completely eliminates the process of sending out a notice/request for collection of data.
- Live webcasting of Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV is also available on this application.

TOPIC: GS PAPER 2- GOVERNANCE

SOURCE: PIB

2. **The third Roadshow on Competition Law held in Ahmadabad**

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) organized the Third Roadshow on Competition Law on 18th December 2018 in Ahmadabad.
- It laid thematic focus on Public Procurement, Trade Associations, Cartels, and Leniency.
- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) was the Implementation Partner for the Roadshow.
- The Roadshow is part of a series of Roadshows being organized across the country on competition law.
- It brought together various stakeholders from
 - Industry,
 - Trade Associations,
 - Chartered Accountants (CA),
 - Company Secretaries (CS),
 - Lawyers and Researchers
- to engage effectively on various competition issues for creating awareness and compliance amongst the industry participants.

RELATED INFORMATION:

Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- It was established in the year 2003 under the Competition Act, 2002.
 - to prevent practices having an adverse effect on competition,
 - to promote and sustain competition in markets,
 - to protect the interest of consumers and
 - to ensure freedom of trade in markets in India.

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA)

- Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) is a think tank under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- It was established for holistic treatment of matters that impact corporate functioning.
- And to provide instruction and capacity building to a wide range of stakeholders drawn from the government, regulators, professionals and public.

TOPIC: GS PAPER 3- ECONOMY

SOURCE: PIB

3. **Centre has drafted 'National Child protection policy'**

- In wake of Muzaffarpur shelter abuse case, Centre has drafted national child protection policy.
- This will be the first policy dedicated to the protection of children, an area that until now was a part of broader National Child Policy, 2013.

RELATED INFORMATION

National Child Protection Policy:

- Its recommendations include:
 - All organizations must have a code of conduct based on zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation.
 - Rules must be laid down to ensure that employees do not use language or behavior inappropriate to children.
 - Institutes should also designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place and thoroughly followed.
- The policy has four aspects-
 1. Creating awareness
 2. Prevention
 3. Reporting
 4. Responding
- It will apply to all institutions and organizations (including corporate and media house), government or private both.

TOPIC: GS PAPER 1- Vulnerable section of society

SOURCE: The Hindu.

5. **Groundwater extraction**

- The central ground water authority (CGA) has notified revised guidelines for groundwater extraction.

- It aims at ensuring “robust groundwater regulatory mechanism” in the country.
- It has introduced the concept of ‘water conservation fee (WCF)’.
- It will be effective from June 1, 2019, and would apply across the country.

Related information

WATER CONSERVATION FEE (WCF)

- WCF is payable by industries and some domestic users.
- The rates would be levied depending upon the location of groundwater extraction point and amount of water being extracted.
- It has a list of groundwater blocks which are known as assessment blocks.
- These are classified as ‘safe’, ‘semi-critical’, ‘critical’ and ‘over-exploited’ depending upon groundwater draft.
- It is not a water charge but is a conservation fee meant for water conservation projects.
- Different users:
 1. Industries: Users including mining dewatering units and those which use groundwater for packaged drinking water have to pay the fee.
 2. Domestic users: the households that draw water using a delivery pipe more than a 1” diameter tube will have to pay the WCF.
 3. Agriculture: the largest consumer of groundwater is exempted from the fee.

HIGHLIGHTS OF REVISED GUIDELINES

- Encourage the use of recycled and treated sewage water.
- It has provisions for actions against polluting industries.
- The entire process of grant of NOC (No Objection certificate) will be done through a web-based application system of CGA.
- The revised guidelines exempt requirement of NOC to:
 1. agricultural users,
 2. users employing non-energized means to extract water,
 3. individual households and
 4. Armed Forces Establishments during operational deployment and during mobilizations in forward locations.

WATER USE TABLE

- 90% of annual groundwater extraction is for farming related activities.
- Rest 10% is for drinking, domestic and industrial users.
- Industrial use is estimated to account for nearly 5% of annual groundwater extraction.

Topic: GS PAPER1: natural resources and

GS PAPER 3: conservation

Source: The Hindu and the Indian Express

6. Bihar sweet delicacy Silao Khaja got GI tag

- GI Registry at Chennai has granted GI tag to Silao Khaja, the traditional delicacy of Nalanda district of Bihar.
- Silao Khaja is known for its taste, crispness and multi-layer appearance attributed to local water and climate of Silao.
- It consists of twelve to sixteen very thin dough-sheets placed one above another.
- Silao is located close to Buddhist sites.

RELATED INFORMATION

Geographical Indication

- A GI product is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- Darjeeling Tea, Tirupati Laddu, Kangra Paintings, Nagpur Orange and Kashmir Pashmina are among the registered GIs in India.
- It ensures exclusivity.
- It covered as the element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under the Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.
- GI is governed by WTO’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- GI tag in India is governed by Geographical Indications of Goods Registration and Protection Act), 1999.
- This Act is administered by **the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks.**

Topic: GS-1- Art and Culture

Source: Times of India

7. **India ranks 108 in WEF gender gap index**

- India stood at 108 out of the 149 countries in 2018, the same as in 2017.
- India has ranked lower on all segments-
 - economic participation & opportunity,
 - educational attainment,
 - health and survival ranking, and
 - Political Empowerment.
- The country continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival.
- South Asia has made the fastest progress on closing its gender gap of any world region over the past decade.
- Interestingly, India has the second-largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforce, but with only 22 percent of roles filled by women.
- Iceland holds the top spot in the index for the 10th consecutive year.

RELATED INFORMATION:

World Economic Forum

- It is an independent not-for-profit organization headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland.
- It was established in 1971 by Klaus Schwab.
- It works to improve the state of the world through public-private cooperation.

Topic: GS PAPER 2-International organizations

Source: The Business Standards

20.12.2018

1. **Farout: The furthest known object in the Solar**

- 2018 VG18 also nicknamed "Farout" was discovered at approximately 120 AU (astronomical units) from the Sun.
- This is slightly farther than the distance that Voyager 2 is now out from the Sun after crossing the heliopause (where the solar atmosphere is pushed back by the interstellar medium) into interstellar space.
- Farout is also the first known Solar System object that has been detected at a distance that is more than 100 times farther than Earth is from the Sun.

- Farout was discovered as part of a search for extremely distant Solar System objects, including the suspected Planet X, which is sometimes also called Planet 9.
- The second-most-distant observed solar system object is Eris, at about 96 AU.

Topic-GS Paper 3-Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

2. **E-Drishti Software**

- Recently, An 'e-Drishti' interface has been unveiled for the Union Railway Minister, Minister of State and Board Members.

Related Information

- This software includes an interface which provides summary information on punctuality of trains for the previous day.
- There is also an interface which provides information on current train running on the Indian Railway network.
- In addition, there are interfaces providing details of freight earning, freight loading and passenger earnings for the previous day & month and cumulative for the year, in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year.
- Punctuality of passenger carrying trains is being also monitored rigorously to improve punctuality performance on a daily basis.

Topic- GS Paper 2 -Governance

Source-PIB

3. **NITI Aayog: 9% growth by 2022 must to generate jobs**

- A growth rate of 9% is essential to generate enough jobs and achieve universal prosperity, according to a vision document released by NITI Aayog.
- Towards this, the 'Strategy for New India @75' document recommends a number of steps, including increasing the investment rate, reforming agriculture, and codifying labor laws.
- Later in the report, NITI Aayog said the target should be 8% growth over the period 2018-23.

- This will raise the economy's size in real terms from \$2.7 trillion in 2017-18 to nearly \$4 trillion by 2022-23.
- Besides having rapid growth it is also necessary to ensure that growth is inclusive, sustained, clean & formalized.

Related Information

- On boosting economic growth, the document identified two key steps for increasing the country's investment rate and the tax-GDP ratio.
- To raise the rate of investment (gross fixed capital formation as a share of GDP) from about 29% in 2017-18 to about 36% of GDP by 2022-23, a slew of measures will be required to boost both private and public investment.
- India's tax-GDP ratio of around 17% is half the average of OECD countries (35%) and is low even when compared to other emerging economies like Brazil (34%), South Africa (27%) and China (22%).
- In agriculture, emphasis must shift to converting farmers to 'agripreneurs' by further expanding e-National Agriculture Markets (e-NAMs) and replacing the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act with the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (APLM) Act.
- The creation of a unified national market, a freer export regime, and the abolition of the Essential Commodities Act are essential for boosting agricultural growth.

Note: The document also called for a strong push towards 'Zero Budget Natural Farming' (ZBNF) techniques that reduce costs, improve land quality, and increase farmers' incomes.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

4. **Shiksha Setu app**
 - The Haryana government has launched a mobile application to provide students with information on attendance, fee, online admission and scholarships of all government colleges of the state.
 - The 'Shiksha Setu' app would bring transparency in the department and college administration while ensuring better connectivity between students, parents, teachers, and officials.

- The app will provide instant updates of important notices, circulars and other programmes to students and teachers while allowing the former to pay their fee online

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance

Source- India Today

5. **Lok Sabha passed a Bill banning commercial surrogacy**
 - The Lok Sabha passed a Bill banning commercial surrogacy with penal provisions of a jail term of up to 10 years and fine of up to ₹10 lakh.
 - The Bill allows only close Indian relatives to be surrogate mothers and purely for "altruistic" reasons.
 - It states an Indian infertile couple, married for five years or more, can go in for 'altruistic surrogacy' where the surrogate mother will not be paid any compensation except medical expenses and insurance.

Related Information

Surrogacy

- Surrogacy is an arrangement, often supported by a legal agreement, whereby a woman agrees to become pregnant, carry the pregnancy to due term, and give birth to a child or children, all of this for another person or persons, who are or will ultimately become the parent(s) of the newborn child or children.
- People may seek a surrogacy arrangement when pregnancy is medically impossible, when pregnancy risks present an unacceptable danger to the mother's health, or when a man alone or a male couple wishes to have a child.
- In these arrangements, monetary compensation may or may not be involved. Receiving money for the arrangement is considered commercial surrogacy; receiving no compensation beyond reimbursement of reasonable expenses is altruistic.
- The legality and cost of surrogacy vary widely between jurisdictions, sometimes resulting in problematic interstate or international surrogacy arrangements.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Bill / Policies

Source- The Hindu

6. **Warming leads to the water crisis in the Himalayas: study**
 - Climate change is driving glaciers in the Himalayas to melt more rapidly than at any point in the last 10,000 years, and could soon cause water supply shortage in parts of India, Pakistan, and Nepal, a study has warned.
 - Researchers from Ohio State University in the U.S. showed that climate change could have devastating effects on vulnerable residents in the Andes mountains and the Tibetan plateau.
 - By 2100, the best case scenario is that half of the ice will disappear. Worst-case scenario: two-thirds of it will disappear.
 - Researchers showed that while water supply is declining, demand is rising because of growing populations.
 - The glaciers in Peru, supply critically needed water for people, crops & livestock.
 - The international research team dubbed the plateau the “Third Pole” because it contains the largest stores of freshwater in the world outside of the North and South poles.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

7. **J&K Education Dept. withdraws ban on pheran**
 - Recently, an order barring officials from wearing the pheran, a long woolen winter dress, to the office of Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) in north Kashmir’s Langate, which triggered a massive online campaign against the move, was withdrawn.

Related Information

- The traditional outfit for both males and females in Kashmir is the phiran (or pheran) and poots.
- The pheran and poots consist of two gowns, one over the other.
- The traditional phiran and poots extend to the feet, which was popular up to the late 19th century C.E.
- However, a relatively modern variation of the phiran and poots

extends to below the knees, which is worn with a suthan inside (a loose form of shalwar) similar to the styles worn in Afghanistan.

- It is optional to wear the suthan with a long phiran as traditionally lower garments are not worn with phirans.
- The traditional phiran and poots do not have side slits.
- In summer, the phiran and poots are made of cotton, but in winter, the poots are made out of cotton and the phiran of wool, covering and protecting the body from the cold especially during snow.
- These dresses are used by the residents of the Kashmir valley and Kashmiris residing in Chenab Valley.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

8. **The packaging of food grain in jute bags made mandatory**
 - The Centre has mandated the packaging of 100% of food grain and 20% of sugar in jute bags for 2018-19.
 - This includes a stipulation on placing 10% of the orders through a reverse auction on the government e-marketplace.
 - The order follows the Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory Use in Packing Commodities) Act (JPM), which was enacted in 1987 to protect the jute sector from the plastic packaging segment.

Related Information

- West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh are the two largest jute goods producers, Punjab is the largest procuring State.
- It plans to initiate the procurement on a trial basis for 10% of the indents.
- Gunny bags now account for about 63% of raw jute consumption, according to official statistics.
- The sector employs about 3.7 lakh mill workers directly beside supporting several lakh farmer families.
- Since 1987, the JPM Act has been mandating compulsory use of sacks in certain areas to bring buoyancy to the raw jute market.

Seepage issue

- While initially there was reservation for sugar, cement, fertilizer and food grain packaging over time, certain sectors have been taken out of the ambit for various reasons, including market demand for alternative packaging as there was seepage of materials through gunny sacks.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

9. Neutrino Observatory

- Recently, Environmental Clearance has been obtained for India Neutrino Observatory (INO).
- INO has applied for Wildlife Clearance to the Govt. of Tamil Nadu in early 2018, as also building clearances for the Inter-Institutional Centre for High Energy Physics (ICHEP), Madurai and INO, Pottipuram sites.
- Clearance from the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (PCB) has to be applied after obtaining above clearances.

Related Information

India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO)

- It is a particle physics research project under construction to primarily study atmospheric neutrinos in a 1,300 meters deep cave under Ino Peak near Theni, Tamil Nadu, India.
- This project is notable in that it is anticipated to provide a precise measurement of neutrino mixing parameters.
- The project is a multi-institute collaboration and one of the biggest experimental particle physics projects undertaken in India.
- When completed, the main magnetized iron calorimeter (ICAL) experiment will include the world's largest magnet, four times larger than the 12,500-tonne magnet in the Compact Muon Solenoid detector at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

21.12.2018

1. States' Startup Ranking 2018

- The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) announced the results of the first-ever States' Start-up Ranking 2018.
- States have been identified as leaders across various categories such as Start-up policy leaders, incubation hubs, seeding innovation, scaling innovation, regulatory change champions, procurement leaders, communication champions, North-Eastern leader, and hill state leader.

Related Information

- On the basis of performance in these categories, the States have been recognized as the Best Performer, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, Emerging States, and Beginners, as follows:
 - (i) Best Performer -Gujarat
 - (ii) Top Performers - Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan
 - (iii) Leaders - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana
 - (iv) Aspiring Leaders- Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal
 - (v) Emerging States - Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand
 - (vi) Beginners- Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura

Objective

- The key objective of the exercise was to encourage States and Union Territories to take proactive steps towards strengthening the Start-up ecosystems in their states.
- The methodology has been aimed at creating healthy competition among States to further learn, share and adopt good practices.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

2. International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography

- Union Minister for Earth Sciences will inaugurate the newly constructed UNESCO Category 2, International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCOcean) Complex in the INCOIS campus at Hyderabad.
- The UNESCO Category 2 Centre established as a training facility at INCOIS will give an opportunity to the South Asian and African states bordering the Indian Ocean and the small island nations in the Pacific to benefit from the expertise and experience of INCOIS in the areas of ocean science and management.

Related Information

- INCOIS is already playing its part as a leading operational oceanography institute in the region.
- Tsunami early warnings from the institute are delivered to 25 countries on the Indian Ocean Rim on a real-time basis, since IOC/UNESCO designated the Centre as Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP) in October 2012.
- Under the aegis of Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), INCOIS is also providing ocean state forecast and other related warnings to 5 countries (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, Madagascar, and Cameroon).

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source-PIB

3. Government Launches Asiatic Lion Conservation Project

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India has launched the "Asiatic Lion Conservation Project".
- Its aim to protect and conserve the world's last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem.
- "The Asiatic Lion Conservation Project" will strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion with the help of state-of-the-art techniques/ instruments, regular scientific research studies, disease management, Modern surveillance/ patrolling techniques.

- It will be funded from the Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH) with the contributing ratio being 60:40 of Central and State share.

Related Information

Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*)

- Its range is restricted to the Gir National Park and environs in the Indian state of Gujarat.
- On the IUCN Red List, it is listed as Endangered because of its small size and area of occupancy.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source-PIB

4. iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training Programme)

- The Union Minister of State Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Dr. Jitendra Singh launched the iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training Programme).
- It is developed by the Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.
- It will augment the existing training mechanism with online module-based training coupled with certification.
- This will make training inputs available to government servant on site and on flexitime basis.
- The initiative aims at "Competent Civil Services for Good Governance".
- They also launched Hybrid Course on Administrative Laws developed by DoPT in collaboration with the premier law school, National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru.

Related Information

iGOT (Integrated Government Online Training Programme)

- The National Training Policy-2012 mandates that all civil servants will be provided with training to equip them with the competencies for their current or future jobs.
- The e-Learning mode provides unparalleled opportunities for training to a large number of civil servants scattered all over the country.

- The online training programme through the Massive Online Open Courses mechanism would be a platform to bring together the numerous Government and other training institutions for providing a single point of access to the repository of training resources.
- This will provide a broad training ecosystem creating synergies across various premier training institutes of the country and will cater to the training needs which can encompass all the officials in the entire hierarchy of Central and State Governments.
- The training courses under this programme will be accessible through DoPT's web portal.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source-PIB

5. **GAS 2019: Mobile app for global aviation summit launched**
 - The civil aviation ministry along with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) launched an official mobile app GAS 2019 for the global aviation summit to be held in Mumbai next month.
 - This app will enable users to interact with the co-delegates and speakers besides providing a platform for networking through personal and group chats.

Related Information

International Civil Aviation Organization

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations. It codifies the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.
- Its headquarters is located in the Quartier International of Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- ICAO defines the protocols for air accident investigation followed by transport safety authorities in countries signatory to the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

6. **USA pulled out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with Russia**

- The Russian government announced USA's withdrawal from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
- The treaty aimed to end arms race between USA and USSR during the cold war and to ensure some strategic stability in Europe.
- President Donald Trump announced in October that he plans to "terminate" the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty because Russia is violating the treaty.

Related Information

Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

- The INF Treaty was signed in 1987 between US President Ronald Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev.
- The treaty aimed to end arms race between USA and USSR during the cold war and to ensure some strategic stability in Europe.
- The INF treaty banned the development, testing and possession of short and medium-range ground-launched nuclear missiles having range between 500-5,000 km.
- And also, all the nuclear and conventional missiles, as well as their launchers, with ranges of 500–1,000 km or (short-range) and 1,000–5,500 km (intermediate-range) were banned under this treaty.
- The Treaty proved to be a potent deterrent against any full-scale nuclear war in Europe.

New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)

- It is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation with the formal name of Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.
- It was signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague, and, after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011.
- It is expected to last at least until 2021.

- New START replaced the Treaty of Moscow (SORT), which was due to expire in December 2012.
- Under terms of the treaty, the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers will be reduced by half.
- A new inspection and verification regime will be established, replacing the SORT mechanism.
- It does not limit the number of operationally inactive stockpiled nuclear warheads that remain in the high thousands in both the Russian and American inventories.

Topic- GS Paper 2–International relation
Source- The Hindu

7. **At Jesus’s birthplace, an app is born to ease crowds**
- The app, which will be introduced early next year, is aimed at ensuring a regular flow of tourists at the Church of the Nativity, where at busy times visitors wait hours to see the underground grotto where Christians believe Jesus was born in a manger.

Related Information

- The first church was built on the site in the fourth century, though it was replaced after a fire in the sixth century.
- Bethlehem is a Palestinian town south of Jerusalem in the West Bank.
- The biblical birthplace of Jesus, it’s a major Christian pilgrimage destination.
- The birth is marked by an inlaid silver star in a grotto under the 6th-century Church of the Nativity, which shares Manger Square with the 15th-century Church of St. Catherine.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture
Source- The Hindu

8. **It is unhealthy to be a woman in India: Report**
- The recent Assembly elections highlighted the role of aware women electorates in the country.
 - Yet, the country ranks at a dismal 108 out of the 149 countries included in the 2018 Global Gender Gap report, released at the World Economic Forum.
 - Even within the South Asian region, which is the second lowest scoring

region, with a remaining gender gap of 34.2 percent, India ranks fourth, well behind Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

- The gender gap is measured across four key pillars—economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health and survival.
- Health of women in India is low on our priority, highlights the report that ranks us as the third-lowest in the world on health and survival, which was drawn by looking at the basic health parameters such as sex ratio, malnutrition, life expectancy among others.
- The report also highlights the economic disparity within the genders in India when it says that women in India do the bulk (five times higher than men) of unpaid tasks, including housework and household care.
- A recent report highlighted that in 56 years, India’s Lok Sabha has not been able to double its tally of elected women representatives.
- Earlier, a UNDP report on gender and disaster risk reduction had flagged that women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die during a disaster.
- It stressed the fact that there is a direct correlation between women’s vulnerability during disasters and their socio-economic status.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Women Empowerment

Source- Down to Earth

9. **India fifth-most deadliest place to be a journalist: Reporters Without Borders**

- A new report by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shows there has been an increase in the number of journalists killed this year, with a total of 80 killed so far.
- The report said 15 journalists were killed in Afghanistan in 2018, making the nation the deadliest place to report from, 17 years after the US-led war began.
- 11 were killed in Syria, 9 in Mexico, 8 in Yemen, and 6 each in India and the United States.

- The positive news was from Iraq, where RSF reported no journalist was killed for the first time since the US-led invasion of 2003.

Related Information

Reporters Without Borders (RWB)

- It is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Paris, France, that conducts political advocacy on issues relating to freedom of information and freedom of the press.

Topic-GS-2- International Organization

Source- Times of India

10. Maharashtra govt approves Rs 4,089 crore for Tembhu irrigation scheme

- The Maharashtra government approved a sum of Rs 4,089 crore for the Tembhu lift irrigation scheme in Satara district.
- The irrigation project will benefit the perennially drought-prone areas of Satara, Solapur and Sangli districts.
- The scheme is about constructing barrages on the river Krishna near Tembhu village and lifting 22 billion cubic feet water to irrigate 80,000-hectare areas in seven talukas - Karad, Kadegaon, Tasgaon, Khanapur, Atpadi, Kavathe-Mahankal and Sangola - spread across Satara, Sangli and Solapur districts.

Topic- GS-2- Government Policies

Source- Business Standard

11. President's rule imposed in Jammu and Kashmir under A-92 of J&K constitution

- On December 20, 2018, President's rule is imposed in Jammu & Kashmir after six months of the Governor's rule.
- According to Article 92 of the state's Constitution, six months of Governor's rule is compulsory under which all the legislature powers are vested with the Governor.
- The Governor has to dissolve the Legislative Assembly after the tenure of six months is over and the state will directly come under the President's rule for following six months during which elections have to be declared in the state.

- In case the elections are not declared, President Rule will be can be extended by another six months.
- According to the state's Constitution, no Presidential proclamation shall remain in force for more than three years except for the intervention of Election Commission of India which has to certify that the continuance in force of the Proclamation is necessary on account of difficulties in holding general elections to the Legislative Assembly.

Related Information

- According to Indian Constitution, President's Rule is the imposition of Article 356 of the India Constitution on a state (except J&K) which gets incapable of running the constitutional machinery.

Topic- GS-2- Indian Polity

Source- Hindustan Times

24.12.2018

1. Mukhya Mantri Krishi Yoana

- Jharkhand Announces Rs 2,250-Crore Scheme to Help Farmers "Under the new Mukhya Mantri Krishi Yojana which will be started from the 2019-20 financial year.

Related Information

Highlights of the Scheme

- The state government will give Rs 5,000 per acre to 22.76 lakh medium and marginal farmers from the next financial year.
- Those farmers having less than one acre will also get Rs 5,000 and the upper limit is five acres.
- This will also help the farmer in procuring seeds, fertilizers and other requirements for agriculture purposes without depending on anybody.
- This scheme will help in doubling the income of farmers of the country by 2022.

Other schemes related to doubling farmers income

Krishonnati Scheme

- The "Green Revolution - Krishonnati Scheme" aims to bring together under one umbrella 11 agricultural schemes besides their effective monitoring.
- These schemes look to develop the agriculture and allied sector in a holistic and scientific manner to increase the income of farmers by enhancing production, productivity and better returns on produce.
- The major schemes are Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) and Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Marketing (ISAM).
- The other schemes are Submission on Agriculture Extension (SMAE), Sub Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP), Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPPQ), Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Census, Economics and Statistics (ISACES), Integrated Scheme on Agricultural Cooperation (ISAC) and National e-Governance Plan (NeGP-A).
- The schemes are aimed at creating and strengthening of infrastructure for production, reducing production cost and marketing of agriculture and allied products.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Economics Times

2. **KALIA Scheme: Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation**
 - Odisha govt announces Rs 10,000 crore scheme for development of farmers under the KALIA Scheme.
 - In this scheme, all the small and marginal farmers of the state (over 30 lakh) will be covered under the scheme.
 - The KALIA scheme also has a component for livelihood support for landless households.
 - Ten lakh landless households will be supported with a unit cost of Rs 12,500 to take up activities like goat

rearing units, mini layer units, duckery units, fishery kits for fishermen and women, mushroom cultivation and bee keeping.

- The landless households will have the option of selecting any of the units.
- The scheme will particularly benefit scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households.
- The KALIA scheme also includes life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident cover of Rs 2 lakh will be provided to both cultivators and landless agriculture laborers covering about 74 lakh households.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-Times of India

3. **MHA authorizes 10 central agencies to access any computer resource**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an order authorizing ten security and intelligence agencies of the country to access any information stored in any computer for the purpose of monitoring, decrypting and an interception.
- The Authorization is given under subsection (1) of **section 69 of the Information Act, 2000.**
- The Non Compliance may result in **seven years of imprisonment and fine.**
- The 10 central agencies are : the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation; National Investigation Agency, Cabinet Secretariat (R&AW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence (For service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, North-East and Assam only) and Commissioner of Police, Delhi, to access any computer resource.

Related Information

Ministry of Home Affairs

- It is mainly responsible for the maintenance of internal security and domestic policy.
- The Home Ministry is headed by Union Minister of Home Affairs.

- The Home Ministry is also the cadre controlling authority for the Indian Police Service (IPS), DANIPS and DANICS. Police-I Division of the ministry is the cadre controlling authority in respect of the Indian Police Service; whereas, the UT Division is the administrative division for DANIPS and DANICS and the All India Services officers posted and working in the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

4. **Pokkali paddy: Under the Threat**
 - Pokkali paddy variety is a saltwater-tolerant paddy grown in the coastal fields of Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of Kerala.
 - It is endemic to Kerala and was given Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
 - The single-season paddy is raised in saltwater fields between June and November followed by a season of fish-farming.
 - After the harvest, the paddy stubble in the fields acts as food and shelter for shrimp and small fish.
 - Fish excreta and scales, along with the decomposed stubble, provide excellent natural manure for another season of Pokkali.
 - The cultivation is labor intensive and this farming tradition is under threat due to lack of labor.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Indian Express

5. **States performing best in under maternity benefit programme PMMVY: MoSWCD**
 - Minister of State for the Women and Child Development Ministry released the performance of states and UTs under the maternity benefit programme named Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.
 - Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh topped the charts as the best performing states.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- It was launched in 2016 under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It is a centrally-sponsored scheme.
- The cost-sharing ratio between the Centre, states and the Union Territories with the legislation is 60:40.
- For the eight northeastern states and the three Himalayan states, it is 90:10, and 100 percent central assistance for the Union Territories without the legislation.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Economics Times

6. **India successfully test-fires nuclear-capable Agni-IV missile at Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast**
 - India successfully tests fired its nuclear-capable long-range ballistic missile Agni-IV with a strike range of 4,000 km.

Agni-IV

- Agni-IV is the fourth in the Agni series of missiles which was earlier known as Agni II prime.
- The missile is light-weight and has two stages of solid propulsion and a payload with re-entry heat shield.
- Capable of striking targets in nearly all of China (including Beijing and Shanghai) if launched from northeastern India.
- Agni-IV missile is equipped with advanced Avionics, 5th generation On Board Computer and distributed architecture.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- The Hindu

7. **SDG India Index: Baseline Report 2018**
 - According to a first-of-its-kind SDG index released by NITI Aayog: Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu have been ranked highest in terms of being on track to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
 - The SDG Index comprises a composite score for each State and Union Territory based on their aggregate performance across 13 of the 17 SDGs.

- The score, ranging between 0 and 100, denotes the average performance of the State/UT towards achieving the 13 SDGs and their respective targets.
- The average Indian score was 57.
- The aim of the index is to **instill competition among States** to improve their performance across social indices as the States' progress will determine India's progress towards achieving the set goals by 2030.
- Using the index, **States will be monitored on a real-time basis.**

Outcomes of the report

- Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have an SDG India Index score of 69.
- **Kerala's** top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education.
- **Himachal Pradesh** ranks high on providing clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving the mountain ecosystem.
- **Tamil Nadu** has a score of 66 and is the top scorer on the goals to do with eradicating poverty and also providing clean and affordable energy.
- Among the UTs, **Chandigarh** is the front-runner with a score of 68. Chandigarh takes the lead because of its exemplary performance in providing clean water and sanitation to its people. It has further made good progress toward providing affordable and clean energy, generating decent work and economic growth, and providing quality education.
- Overall, the average score for the States was the **worst** when it came to **gender equality** (36), in creating **sustainable cities and communities** (39), in enabling **industry, innovation, and infrastructure** (44), and in eradicating **hunger** (48).

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

8. Albino orangutan

- Recently, The world's only known rare "Albino orangutan" has been released back into the jungle more than a year after she was found emaciated and bloody in a remote corner of Borneo, in Indonesian.

Orangutan

- The orangutans are three extant species of great apes native to Indonesia and Malaysia.
- Three Extant species are-
(a) Bornean orangutan
(b) Sumatran orangutan
(c) Tapanuli orangutan
- Orangutans currently inhabit lowland forests on Borneo, an island shared by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, and Indonesia's island of Sumatra.
- IUCN status: **Critically Endangered**
- This critically endangered species lost due to habitat shrink drastically over the past few decades largely due to the destruction of forests for logging, paper, palm oil, and mining.

Borneo Islands

- It is the third-largest island in the world and the largest in Asia.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

9. Defence Minister inaugurates Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre

- Defence Minister inaugurated the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) that aims to collaborate with partner countries and multi-national agencies to develop maritime awareness and share information on vessels.
- The IFC-Indian Ocean Region would also work towards capability-building in the region, coordination of incident response and disaster relief, and in time, also share submarine safety information, he said.
- The IFC-IOR is initially being launched as a virtual construct wherein information exchange will be done electronically through the Internet.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- Times of India

25.12.2018

1. Polavaram Project

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister expressed satisfaction over the progress of Polavaram multi-purpose irrigation project, said that around 63 percent of works have been completed so far.

Related Information

Polavaram Project

- Polavaram Project is an under construction multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari River in the West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh.
- The project has been accorded national project status by the Union Government of India and will be the last to be accorded the status.
- Its reservoir spreads into parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha States also.

Purpose of this project

- National River-Linking Project, which works under the aegis of the Indian Ministry of Water Resources, was designed to overcome the deficit in water in the country.
- As a part of this plan, surplus water from the Himalayan rivers is to be transferred to the peninsular rivers of India.
- After construction, it would be the largest ever infrastructure project in the world. In this project's case, the Godavari river basin is considered as a surplus one, while the Krishna River basin is considered to be a deficit one.

Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme

- Pattiseema, the lift irrigation project, interlinks Godavari and Krishna Rivers through the Polvaram right canal.
- The project has one of the largest pump houses in Asia with 24 pumping units spread across an area of 7,476 square meters.
- These pumps deliver excess water drawn from the river Godavari in Pattiseema into the Polavaram Project Right Main Canal for the benefit of farmers in the Krishna river delta.

- The Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme will help revive the Krishna delta to its past glory and infuse life back into the Krishna that has dried up completely.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- TOI

2. **Central government released Rs 100 commemorative coin in memory of Late former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee**
- PM released Rs 100 commemorative coin in memory of Late former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- This Rs 100 currency will be the highest denomination in the form of a coin.
- The coin was released on 25 December which is also celebrated as 'Good Governance Day and also the birth anniversary of the late PM.

Related Information

COINS

- The Government of India has the sole right to mint coins.
- The responsibility for coinage vests with the Government of India in terms of the Coinage Act, 1906 as amended from time to time.
- Coins are minted at the four India Government Mints at Mumbai, Alipore(Kolkata), Saifabad(Hyderabad), Cherlapally (Hyderabad) and NOIDA (UP).
- The coins are issued for circulation only through the Reserve Bank in terms of the RBI Act.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source-PIB

3. **Section 197 of Income Tax**
- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has decided to allow an exception from the online filing of an application under Section 197 and 206C (9) in the cases of NRIs and Resident Applicants.
- The Income Tax Rules, 1962 was amended to prescribe electronic filing of an application for lower deduction or no deduction under section 197 of Income Tax Act, 1961 using a digital signature or EVC.
- The functionality for online filing has since been made available by CPC-TDS through TRACES portal.

- Form No. 13 is the common form for application under Section 197 and 206C (9).
- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) by virtue of the powers conferred under Section 119(1) of the Income Tax Act has:
 1. allowed Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), who are not able to register themselves on TRACES, to file a manual application in Form No. 13 before the TDS officer or in ASK Centers.
 2. allowed Resident Applicants to file Manual Application in Form No. 13 before the TDS officer or in ASK Centers.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance

Source- Economics Times

4. **Bogibeel Bridge in Assam: India's longest railroad bridge**
 - The bridge is part of infrastructure projects planned by India to improve logistics along the border in Arunachal Pradesh.
 - The 4.94 km-long Bogibeel Bridge is Asia's second and India's longest railroad bridge.
 - It is India's only fully welded bridge, with the double-decker structure comprising two railway lines on the lower deck and a three-lane road on the upper, strong enough to withstand movement of heavy military tanks.
 - The Bogibeel Bridge will connect the south bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam's Dibrugarh district with Silapathar in Dhemaji district, bordering Arunachal Pradesh.
 - It has been built by the Hyderabad-based Navayuga Engineering Co.
 - It is also for the first time European codes and welding standards were adhered to in the construction of a bridge in India.

Benefits:

- It will also reduce travel time from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh to four hours (minus the 170-km detour via Tinsukia), and Delhi to Dibrugarh by about three hours (34 hours compared with 37 earlier).

- It will also reduce the distance to the North East by 165 km, saving fuel worth Rs 10 lakh per day in the region.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. **International Whaling Commission (IWC)**

- Recently, Japan is considering pulling out of the *International Whaling Commission (IWC)*.
- Tokyo currently observes the moratorium but exploits a loophole to kill hundreds of whales every year for "scientific purposes" as well as to sell the meat.

Related Information

International Whaling Commission (IWC)

- The International Whaling Commission (IWC) is an international body set up by the terms of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).
- It was signed in Washington, D.C., United States, on December 2, 1946, to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry".
- Its Headquarters is in Impington, England. In 1986, it adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling. This ban still continues.

Whale sanctuary

There are two whale sanctuary existed.

- (i) Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary
 - In 1994, it created the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary surrounding the continent of Antarctica.
- (ii) Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary
 - by the tiny island nation of Seychelles.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

6. **Tamil Nadu: India's first music museum to be set up in Thiruvaiyaru**
 - The country's first music museum will be set up with assistance from the Central government in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamilnadu
 - Thiruvaiyaru is the birth place of Saint Thyagaraja, one of the Trinities of Carnatic music.

Related Information

- The Tyagaraja Aaradhana Music Festival which is held annually in January in Thiruvaiyaru attracts musical talents from all over the world.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source-PIB

7. **Andamans to get undersea cable**
 - The 'Chennai Andaman Nicobar Island' (CANI) cable system will have a speed of 100 Gigabit per second.
 - It will be of immense strategic significance to India in addition to assisting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands communications security, especially during natural disasters or failures of other systems.
 - The proposed project is set to provide a fillip to defense communication infrastructure in the islands.
 - At present, telecom connectivity between the mainland and Andaman and Nicobar is through satellites with limited bandwidth capacity.
 - The submarine cable system will connect the Indian mainland from Chennai with the eight islands of the Union Territory.
 - These are Port Blair, Little Andaman (Hut Ba), Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great Nicobar (Campbell Bay), Havelock, Long, and Rangat.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Economics Times

8. **PNB Rupay card: Launched for Kumbh Mela 2019**
 - State-owned **Punjab National Bank (PNB)** in collaboration with Uttar Pradesh government launched a special card called **PNB Rupay card**, for **Kumbh Mela 2019**.
 - It is aimed to create a model for digitization at this edition of Kumbh Mela for convenient and hassle-free transactions for the participating 12 crore devotees.
 - This Rupay Card can be used even in absence of internet.

Related Information

Kumbh Mela

- Kumbh Mela is a mass Hindu pilgrimage of faith in which Hindus gather to bathe in a sacred or holy river.
- Traditionally, four fairs are widely recognized as the Kumbh Melas:
 - (a) Prayag Kumbh Mela (Prayag Sangam- a confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati)
 - (b) Haridwar Kumbh Mela (Along Ganga River)
 - (c) Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Simhastha (Along Godavari River)
 - (d) Ujjain Simhastha (Along Shipra River)
- At any given place, the Kumbh Mela is held once in 12 years.
- It is held every third year at one of four places by rotation: Haridwar, Allahabad, Nashik, and Ujjain.
- **Maha Kumbh** occurs after 12 Purna Kumbh Melas i.e. every 144 years. **Ardh Kumbh ("Half Kumbh")** Mela occurs every 6 years at Prayag and Haridwar.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- AIR

9. **Indonesia tsunami**

- More than 222 people have been killed and 843 injured after a tsunami hit coastal towns on Indonesia's Sunda Strait.
- It is thought undersea landslides from the Anak Krakatau volcano caused them.

Sunda Strait

- Between the islands of Java and Sumatra, connects the Java Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Krakatau Volcano

- Krakatau is a volcanic island situated in the Sunda Strait between the islands of Java and Sumatra in the Indonesian province of Lampung.

26.12.2018

1. **Koregaon-Bhima battle**

- Recently, Government announced the tight security for the 201st anniversary of the Koregaon-Bhima battle to preclude any recurrence of the violent clashes that marred the bicentenary celebrations on January 1 this year.

Related Information

Koregaon Bhima battle

- The Battle of Koregaon was fought on 1 January 1818 between the British East India Company and the Peshwa faction of the Maratha Confederacy, at Koregaon Bhima.
- This battle was the of Part of Third Anglo-Maratha War (November 1817 – February 1818).
- The 28,000-strong Marathas, led by Peshwa Baji Rao II intended to attack Pune.
- On their way, they were met by an 800-strong Company force that was on its way to reinforce the British troops in Pune.
- The Peshwa dispatched around 2,000 soldiers to attack the Company force stationed in Koregaon.
- The Company troops Led by Captain Francis Staunton, defended their position for nearly 12 hours.
- The Marathas ultimately withdrew, fearing the arrival of a larger British force led by General Joseph Smith.
- There is a "victory pillar" (obelisk) in Koregaon commemorating the battle.
- The Company troops of Indian origin included predominantly Mahar Dalit soldiers belonging to the Bombay Native Infantry, and therefore Dalit activists regard the battle as a heroic episode in a Dalit history.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Important Battle of Indian History

Source- The Hindu

2. **World's smallest tic-tac-toe board game is developed with DNA**
 - The researchers from the California Institute of Technology, (USA) made the world's smallest tic-tac-toe game board using dynamic DNA microscopic organic structures that can be programmed to transform into pre-designed patterns.
 - Using this technique they fashioned a microscopic game of tic-tac-toe in which players place their X's and O's by adding special DNA tiles to the board.

- They had chosen to make the world's smallest version of the Italian polymath Leonardo Da Vinci's iconic painting Mona Lisa.

Related Information

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)

- It is an organic chemical of complex molecular structure that is found in all prokaryotic and eukaryotic cells and in many viruses.
- DNA codes genetic information for the transmission of inherited traits.
- DNA is a polymer of the four nucleotides A, C, G, and T, which are joined through a backbone of alternating phosphate and deoxyribose sugar residues.
- These nitrogen-containing bases occur in complementary pairs as determined by their ability to form hydrogen bonds.
- James Watson and Francis Crick determined that the structure of DNA is a double-helix polymer, a spiral consisting of two DNA strands wound around each other.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

3. **Govt extends a ban on the import of milk products from China for 4 months**
 - The government has further extended the ban on import of milk and its products, including chocolates, from China for four months till April 23 next year by Ministry of Commerce.
 - The ban was first imposed in September 2008 and later extended from time to time.

Related Information

- The ban was imposed on apprehensions of the presence of melamine in some milk consignments from China.
- Melamine is a toxic chemical used for making plastics and fertilizers.
- India is the world's largest producer and consumer of milk.
- It produces around 150 million tonne milk annually.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- TOI

4. **Sadaiv Atal**

- Sadaiv Atal, the Samadhi of Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been dedicated to the Nation on the birth Anniversary of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- To emphasise on the unity in diversity, stones from various parts of the country have been used in the construction of Samadhi near Rajghat in New Delhi.
- The Samadhi has a central platform comprising of nine square blocks, capped with a Diya in the center.
- The number nine represents the navarasas, navaratras and navagrahas.
- The placement of the nine square blocks is in a circular lotus shaped pattern.

Related Information

Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee served as the Prime Minister of India for a term of 13 days in 1996, then for a period of 13 months from 1998 to 1999, and finally, for a full term from 1999 to 2004.
- He was born on 25 December 1924 in Gwalior.
- He passed away on 16 August 2018.
- His birth anniversary is celebrated as Good Governance Day on 25th December.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. **55th Anniversary Parade of SSB**

- The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) celebrated its 55th Anniversary Parade at its 25th Battalion, Ghitorni.
- The SSB work under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Related Information

Central Armed Police Forces

- It refers to uniform nomenclature of five security forces in India from 2011 under the authority of Ministry of Home Affairs.
- They are:
 - (i) Border Security Force (BSF)- guard the border of India with Pakistan and Bangladesh

(ii) Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)-Largest of the Central Armed Police Forces

(iii) Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)-Provides security to various Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and other critical infrastructure installations, major airports across the country and provides security during elections and other internal security duties and VVIP protection.

(iv) Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)- deployed for guarding duties on the border with China from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Diphu La in Arunachal Pradesh

(v) Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)- guard the Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan Borders.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PIB

6. **Shortage of Urea**

- Contrary to the recent reports in media regarding urea shortages in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Department of Fertilizers (DoF), Government of India has provided details of monthly supply and stocks available at the State level.

Related Information

Urea

- Urea, also called carbamide, the diamide of carbonic acid.
- Its formula is H_2NCONH_2 .
- Urea has important uses as a fertilizer and feed supplement, as well as a starting material for the manufacture of plastics and drugs.
- It is a colorless, crystalline substance that melts at $132.7^\circ C$ ($271^\circ F$) and decomposes before boiling.
- Urea is the chief nitrogenous end product of the metabolic breakdown of proteins in all mammals and some fishes.
- The material occurs not only in the urine of all mammals but also in their blood, bile, milk, and perspiration.
- In the course of the breakdown of proteins, amino groups (NH_2) are removed from the amino acids that partly comprise proteins.

- These amino groups are converted to ammonia (NH₃), which is toxic to the body and thus must be converted to urea by the liver.
- The urea then passes to the kidneys & is eventually excreted in the urine.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

7. **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)**
 - Recently, NCSK has recommended that all states across India should have individual state Safai Karamchari Commissions in order to end the practice of manual scavenging.

Related Information

NCSK

- It is a statutory body that looks into matters concerning the Safai Karamcharis' welfare and makes recommendations to the government.
- It was constituted on 12 August 1994 for a period of 3 years under the provision of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993 to promote and safeguard the interests and rights of Safai Karamcharis.

Functions

- The Commission shall perform all or any of the following functions, namely
 - (a) recommend to the Central Government specific programmes of action towards the elimination of inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities for Safai Karamcharis under a time-bound action plan;
 - (b) study and evaluate the implementation of the programmes and schemes relating to the social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis and make recommendations to the Central Government and State Governments for better coordination and implementation of such programmes and schemes;
 - (c) investigate specific grievances and take suo moto notice of matters relating to non-implementation of :
 - (i) programmes or schemes
 - (ii) decisions, guidelines or instructions, aimed at mitigating the hardship of Safai Karamcharis etc.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

8. **International Gita Mahotsav, 2018**
 - International Gita Mahotsav 2018 concluded in Kurukshetra, Haryana.
 - In this year's edition, Mauritius was the partner country and Gujarat was the partner state.

Related Information

Bhagavad Gita

- The Bhagavad Gita often referred to as the Gita.
- It is a 700-verse Hindu scripture in Sanskrit that is part of the Hindu epic Mahabharata (chapters 23–40 of the 6th book of Mahabharata).
- The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide and charioteer Krishna.
- The Bhagavad Gita presents a synthesis of Hindu ideas about dharma, theistic bhakti, and the yogic paths to moksha.
- Gandhi referred to the Gita as his "spiritual dictionary".

Note: Mauritius to organize Gita festival in February 2019.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- TOI

9. **1st meeting of Follow-up Committee for implementation of Trilateral Chabahar Agreement held in Iran**

- The first meeting of the Follow-up Committee for implementation of the Trilateral Chabahar Agreement between **India, Afghanistan and Iran** was held in the port city of Chabahar in Iran.
- They agreed on the routes for the trade and transit corridors between the three countries.
- India Ports Global Limited company opened its office and took over operations at the at Chabahar on this occasion.
- The next Follow-up Committee meeting will be held in India in 2019.

Topic- GS-2- Bilateral and Regional Agreements

Source- AIR

27.12.2018

1. **Russia 'successfully' tested hypersonic missile**

- Recently, Russia tests its hypersonic missile after U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans to pull out of a key Cold War-era nuclear weapons pact.

Related Information

Mach Number

- It is the ratio of the speed of a body to the speed of sound in the surrounding medium.
- **Subsonic** if Mach no. < 0.8
- **Transonic** If Mach no. lies between 0.8 and 1.2
- **Supersonic** If Mach no. lies between 1.2 and 5.0
- **Hypersonic** If Mach no. lies between 5.0 and 10.0

Cruise Missile

- A cruise missile is a guided missile used against terrestrial targets that **remain in the atmosphere** and flies the major portion of its flight path at approximately constant speed.
- Cruise missiles are designed to deliver a large warhead over long distances with high precision.
- Cruise missiles can also be launched from air and fly within Earth's atmosphere

Ballistic missile

- A ballistic missile is a missile that follows a ballistic trajectory with the objective of delivering one or more warheads to a predetermined target.
- An intercontinental ballistic missile trajectory consists of three parts-
(a) The powered flight portion
(b) The free-flight portion- constitutes most of the flight time
(c) The re-entry phase- where the missile re-enters the Earth's atmosphere.
- Ballistic missiles can be launched from fixed sites or mobile launchers, including vehicles (e.g., transporter erector launchers (TELEs)), aircraft, ships, and submarines.

Types of hypersonic missile used by different countries

1. 3M22 Zircon Russia Hypersonic anti-ship cruise missile.
2. BrahMos-II (~300 km) India/Russia is a hypersonic missile currently under development in India and Russia.
3. High-Speed Strike Weapon missile based on Boeing X-51- United States
4. Kh-90 (3,000–4,000 km) Soviet Union/Russia is a hypersonic air-to-surface cruise missile developed in 1990 by the USSR and later by Russia.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- The Hindu

2. **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh to get separate High Courts**

- President issued orders constituting a separate High Court for Andhra Pradesh with effect from January 1, 2019.
- The High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad will now become the High Court for Telangana.
- The judges have also been allocated for the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- The translocation of judges also takes from Andhra Pradesh to Telangana.

HIGH COURT

- There shall be a High Court in each State (Art- 214) but Parliament has the power to establish a common High Court for two or more States.
- The High Court stands at the head of the Judiciary in the State.
- Important Articles:
Appointment (Art- 217),
The transfer from one High Court to another (Art- 222),
Removal (Art-217(1)),
Determination of dispute as to age (Art. 217(3)) of Judges of High Courts etc.
- Now the power to transfer of the High Court Judges remains no more a method of control over the High Court by the Union Government as the Supreme Court has prescribed a procedure for the purpose in a Reference made by the President of India in the exercise of his powers under Art. 143.

- The Supreme Court opined that the Chief Justice of India should obtain the views of the Chief Justice of the High Court from which the proposed transfer is to be effected as also that of the Chief Justice of the High Court to which the transfer is to be effected.
- The high courts are the principal civil courts of original jurisdiction in each state and union territory.
- However, a high court exercises its original civil and criminal jurisdiction only if the subordinate courts are not authorized by law to try such matters for lack of pecuniary, territorial jurisdiction.
- High courts may also enjoy original jurisdiction in certain matters if so designated specifically in a state or federal law.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. **Atal Ayushman Uttarakhand Yojana**
 - Atal Ayushman Uttarakhand Yojana has been launched by the Uttarakhand government.
 - This yojana is inspired by the Centre's 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme.
 - Under the scheme, each household in the state will be able to avail medical treatment of up to 5 lakh rupees annually.
 - The MoU signed between Government and private hospitals for free of cost OPD facilities will be available for children and elderly people in the state.

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 or Modicare

- 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.

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 centers will bring health care system closer to the homes of people.
- These centers will provide comprehensive health care, including for non-communicable diseases and maternal and child health services.
- The Budget has allocated Rs.1200 crore for this flagship programme.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Health and Issues

Source- AIR

4. **Madhya Pradesh: Kuno notified as a national park**

- Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh notified as 'national park'.
- The state government has declared Kuno National Park with the inclusion of an area spread along 404.0758 sq.km in addition to the earlier notified area of 344.686 sq km making a total of 748.7618 sq km area.
- Madhya Pradesh forest department was waiting for a change of government to notify Kuno as a 'national park' in compliance with the last condition imposed by a Supreme Court-appointed six-member committee for the much awaited 'translocation of Asiatic lions from Gir in Gujarat.'

Related Information

Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary

- Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary lies in the Sheopur district of northwestern Madhya Pradesh, a state in central India.
- It is part of the Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion.
- The Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary was selected as the reintroduction site for the endangered Asiatic lion because it is in the former range of the lions before it was hunted into extinction in about 1873.
- The lions are to be reintroduced from Gir Wildlife Sanctuary in the neighboring Indian state of Gujarat where they are currently overpopulated.
- This has involved the displacement of twenty-four villages of the Sahariya tribe, which had lived in the remote core area set aside for the reintroduction of the Asiatic lions, who agreed to move out.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

5. Tribal community Baduga of Tamilnadu celebrates annual Heddayamman festival

- The tribal Baduga community in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu is celebrating their annual Heddayamman festival.
- Thousands of devotees clad in the traditional white dress of the community flocked to places like Kannerimukku and Corbetta near Kotagiri and Hallu Kerai near Coonoor to pay obeisance to their presiding deity.
- People observe 48 days fast and walk-in religious processions, holding up a holy shaft which symbolizes the miracle of the traditional Baduga goddess.

Badugas

- The Badugas are an indigenous tribal group in the Nilgiris and occupy more than 400 remote hill villages in the district.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- AIR

6. **Tansen Samman -2018**
 - Sitarist Manju Mehta awarded 'Tansen Samman'-2018.

Related Information

Tansen Samaroh

- Tansen Samaroh or Tansen Sangeet Samaroh is celebrated every year in the month of December in Behat village of Gwalior district, Madhya Pradesh.
- The event is organized near the tomb of Tansen by the Academy of the department of culture, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Tansen Samman

- The prestigious 'National Tansen Samman' is a musical award conferred to the exponents of Hindustani music.
- The award is given to institutions for nurturing good music.
- It is being held in Gwalior since the past 94 years.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- Bussiness standard

7. **Another olive ridley nesting site soon**
 - The Odisha forest department is all set to add another olive ridley mass nesting site to its wildlife map.
 - Around 3-km stretch of the beach from Sunapur to Anantpur at Bahuda rookery is being developed as a possible olive ridley mass nesting site.

Related Information

Olive Ridley Turtle

- The Olive ridley sea turtle also is known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, are the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world.
- This species of sea turtle is found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- They can also be found in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Vulnerable – IUCN Red list**
- Some important nesting sites in India – Hope Island of Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary (Andra Pradesh), Gahirmatha beach (Odisha), Astaranga coast (Odisha), Beach of Rushikulya River.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

8. **Thailand 1st Southeast Asian nation to legalize medical marijuana and kratom**

- Thailand approved the licensed use of marijuana and kratom for medical use and research.

Related Information

Cannabis (drug)

- Cannabis, also known as marijuana among other names, is a psychoactive drug from the Cannabis plant used for medical or recreational purposes.
- The main psychoactive part of cannabis is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- Cannabis can be used by smoking, vaporizing, within the food, or as an extract.
- Cannabis is mostly used for recreation or as a medicinal drug, although it may also be used for spiritual purposes.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

28.12.2018

1. Establishment of National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)

- Recently, information about (NIMZs) was given by the Minister of State of Commerce and Industry in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.
- NIMZs are one of the important instruments of National Manufacturing Policy, 2011.
- NIMZs are envisaged as large areas of developed land with the requisite ecosystem for promoting world-class manufacturing activity.
- So far, three NIMZs namely Prakasam (Andhra Pradesh), Sangareddy (Telangana) and Kalinganagar (Odisha) have been accorded final approval and 13 NIMZs have been accorded in-principle approval.
- Besides these, eight Investment Regions along the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) project have also been declared as NIMZs.

Difference between SEZ and NIMZs

- The main objective of Special Economic Zones is the promotion of exports, while NIMZs are based on the principle of industrial growth in partnership with States and focuses on manufacturing growth and employment generation.

- NIMZs are also different from SEZs in terms of size, level of infrastructure planning, governance structures related to regulatory procedures, and exit policies.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

2. Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY)

- Recently the information about AGEY was given by the Minister of State for Rural Development, in Lok Sabha.

Related Information

- The Ministry is implementing AGEY, the sub-scheme under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).
- It helps to facilitate transport facilities in the rural areas and also provide job opportunities to members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NRLM.
- The scheme was launched in August, 2017.
- **It is already under implementation in 18 States.**
- State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) in consultation with Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) under DAY – NRLM identify routes where roads have been constructed under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) but has poor transport services.
- SHG members are then provided interest-free loans by the CBOs for operating vehicles on the identified routes based on financial viability.
- The scheme has the following two objectives:
 - (a) To provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote villages with key services and amenities for the overall economic development of the area by making use of the supports available within the framework of DAY-NRLM.
 - (b) To provide an alternative source of livelihoods to members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their families under DAY-NRLM by facilitating them to operate public transport services in backward rural areas, as identified by the States.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance
Source-PIB

3. NITI Aayog Releases Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational Districts

- The NITI Aayog today released the Second Delta ranking for the Aspirational Districts which measures the incremental progress made by them between June 1, 2018 and October 31, 2018.
- This Delta Ranking cover across six developmental areas of Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development & Basic Infrastructure.
- The ranking factors in validated data from Household Surveys conducted by NITI Aayog’s knowledge partners, namely, TATA Trusts and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (IDInsight).
- In the overall ranking, **the most improved districts** are as follows:

Rank	District	State
1.	Virudhunagar	Tamil Nadu
2.	Nuapada	Odisha
3.	Siddharthnagar	Uttar Pradesh
4.	Aurangabad	Bihar
5.	Koraput	Odisha

Note: The delta ranking of the Aspirational Districts combines the innovative use of data science with pragmatic administration, keeping the district at the locus of inclusive development.

‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme

- Launched by the PM in January 2018, with an aim to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.
- The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level ‘Prabhari’ Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a Mass Movement or a Jan Andolan.
- With States as the main drivers, this program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance
Source-PIB

4. RBI Panel on Economic Capital Framework

- RBI has constituted a panel on the economic capital framework under the chairmanship of Ex-RBI governor Bimal Jalan.
- The expert panel has been formed to address the issue of RBI reserves— one of the sticking points between the central bank and the government.

The terms of reference

- The committee would be to review status, need and justification of various provisions, reserves, and buffers presently provided for by the RBI, keeping in mind ‘public policy mandate of the RBI, including financial stability considerations.’
- The committee would submit its report within 90 days from the date of its first meeting.
- The committee will also review best practices followed by the central banks globally in making assessment and provisions for risks, to which central bank balance sheets are subjected.
- The panel would also suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain and to determine whether it is holding provisions, reserves, and buffers in the surplus or deficit of the required level.
- The committee would also propose a suitable profit distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding less provisions than required.

What is an economic capital framework?

- Economic capital framework refers to the risk capital required by the central bank while taking into account different risks.
- The economic capital framework reflects the capital that an institution requires or needs to hold as a counter against unforeseen risks or events or losses in the future.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics
Source- The Hindu

5. Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge Award

- Recently, as part of the Swachhta Pakhwada held from 1st to 15th November 2018, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) organized a Swachh Bharat Grand Challenge.
- This was organized to reward innovative solutions by DIPP recognized Start-ups in the country.
- Four Areas selected for the grand challenge:
 - (a) Sanitation
 - (b) Waste Management
 - (c) Water & Wastewater management
 - (d) Air Management

Related Information

Swachhata Pakhwada –

- It was started in April 2016 with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

6. 'Dwijing Festival'

- 3rd 'Dwijing Festival' celebrations commenced in the on the banks of the Aie river in Chirang district of Assam.
- It will be organized by Assam Tourism and Bodoland Tourism.

Dwijing

- The festival started as Aie River Festival in 2016-17 to promote river tourism in the rural areas under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).
- It started under the name of 'AIE RIVER WINTER FESTIVAL'.
- The association of the Hagrama Bridge, the longest rural river bridge of the state, with the festival increased its popularity.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and culture

Source-PIB

7. Mobile app for audio guides at 5 tourist spots soon

- Recently tourists visiting Amer Fort (Rajasthan), Kaziranga (Assam), Colva Beach (Goa), Kumarakom (Kerala) and Mahabodhi temple (Bihar) will be able to avail

themselves of an audio guide through a mobile application.

- Besides this, seven shortlisted agencies under 'Monument Mitras' project were handed over the Letters of Intent, which will give them the opportunity to associate their CSR activities with a heritage site if their Vision Bid is selected.
- Till now, ten MoU have been executed with various Monument Mitras for development, operation and maintenance of tourist amenities at heritage and tourist sites across India.

Related Information

About 'Adopt a Heritage'

- The "Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dhरोhar, Apni Pehchaan" project is a collaborative scheme between the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and State/UTs Governments.
- Its aims to make our heritage and tourism more sustainable through the development, operation and maintenance of world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities at ASI/ State heritage sites and other important tourist sites in India.

Note: Earlier this year, the Dalmia group was also awarded an agreement to develop and maintain Red Fort in Delhi for a period of five years.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- Indian Express

8. Central Railways introduced "ATES" technology

- Central Railways introduces 'ATES' technology to eliminate manual examination of trains.
- The mechanical branch of Central Railways' Nagpur division has introduced a new state-of-the-art technology called Automated Train Examination System (ATES) for the enhancement of train safety.

Related Information

Automated Train Examination System

- ATES will checks every train passing through the track on which it is installed and immediately warns about hot axle and brake binding cases.

- In the first phase, this system has been installed in Ajni where total two units have been installed one covering all down direction trains coming from Chennai and Mumbai to Nagpur and the other covering up direction freight trains.
- The sensors record the temperature of the axle box bearings of the train and the wheel. As soon as the temperature exceeds its threshold limit, alert messages are generated by the system indicating the excessive temperature of bearings and/or brake binding.
- After the alert message is received, the Railway engineers examine the train in the yard and attend the fault, thus avoiding potential danger.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PIB

9. Govt. to rename three islands of Andaman and Nicobar to honor Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- PM will rename three islands of Andaman and Nicobar during his visit to Port Blair on December 30, 2018.
- Ross Island, Neil Island and Havelock Island- will be renamed as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Island, Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep, respectively.
- The renaming will take place to mark the 75th anniversary of the day when Subhas Chandra Bose hoisted the national flag at Port Blair.

Related Information

- On December 30, 1943, Bose had hoisted a flag at Port Blair that had been freed from the British occupation after the Japanese captured the area during the Second World War.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

31.12.2018

1. **IRRI South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI SARC)**
 - Recently, With an aim to double farmers' income in 2022, the Prime Minister dedicated the country the 6th IRRI SARC campus in Varanasi to improve production of crop.

- This Rice Institute is expected to improve crop production, seed quality and the nutritional value of rice.
- It will also work with national partners to enhance farmers' knowledge and income and deliver advanced research, teaching and services in the connection.

Related Information

How IRRI SARC help Indian Farmer?

- It provides the education and training arm of IRRI SARC, IRRI Education.
- It will also teach scientists and agriculture leaders about the latest technologies and innovations for sustainable farming
- It has laboratories for digital crop monitoring and assessment, and demonstration fields where variety testing is conducted,
- The major aim of IRRI is to improve livelihood and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among those countries which depend on rice-based agri-food systems.

International Rice Research Institute

- The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an international agricultural research and training organization.
- It is headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna in the Philippines.
- IRRI is well known for its contribution to the "Green Revolution" movement in Asia during the late 1960s and 1970s, which involved the breeding of "semi dwarf" varieties of rice that were less likely to lodge (fall over).
- IRRI's semi-dwarf varieties, including the famous IR8, saved India from famine in the 1960s.
- It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research center in Asia.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Institution

Source- The Hindu

2. **India submits Sixth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD)**
 - India submitted its Sixth National Report (NR6) to the Convention on Biological Diversity during the inaugural session of the 13th National Meeting of the State Biodiversity

Boards organized by the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), New Delhi.

- The submission of national reports is a mandatory obligation on parties to international treaties, including the CBD.

Highlights of the report

- The NR6 provides an update of progress in achievement of 12 National Biodiversity Targets (NBT) developed under the convention process in line with the 20 global Aichi biodiversity targets.
- India has exceeded two NBTs, it is on track to achieve eight NBTs and with respect to two remaining NBTs, and the country is striving to meet the targets by the stipulated time of 2020.
- According to the report, India has exceeded the terrestrial component of 17 per cent of Aichi target 11, and 20 per cent of corresponding NBT relating to areas under biodiversity management.
- India has also made noteworthy achievement towards NBT relating to access and benefit sharing (ABS) by operationalising the Nagoya Protocol on ABS.

About CBD

Convention on Biological Diversity

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), known informally as the Biodiversity Convention, is a multilateral treaty.
- The Convention has three main goals including.
 - the conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity)
 - the sustainable use of its components
 - the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.
- Its objective is to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.
- The Convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992 and

entered into force on 29 December 1993.

- CBD has two supplementary agreements - Cartagena Protocol and Nagoya Protocol.
- The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology from one country to another.
- The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity is a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- It provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- PIB

3. **National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) Bill, 2018**
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the draft National Commission for Homoeopathy, Bill, 2018.
 - This bill seeks to replace the existing regulator Central Council for Homoeopathy (CCH) with a new body to ensure transparency.

Related Information

- The draft bill provides for the constitution of a National Commission with three autonomous boards entrusted with conducting overall education of Homoeopathy by Homoeopathy Education Board.
- The Board of assessment and rating to assess and grant permission to educational institutions of Homoeopathy and Board of ethics.
- The registration of practitioners of Homoeopathy to maintain National Register and ethical issues relating to practice are under the National Commission for Homoeopathy.
- It also proposes a common entrance exam and an exit exam which all graduates will have to clear to get practicing licenses.

- Further, a teacher's eligibility test has been proposed to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions.
- It further aims at bringing reforms in the medical education of Homoeopathy in lines with the National Medical Commission proposed for setting up for Allopathy system of medicine.
- The CCH had been earlier superseded by Board of Governors through an Ordinance and subsequent amendment of Act.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- PIB

4. **Amendment in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for Amendment in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to make punishment more stringent for committing sexual crimes against children.

Salient Features:

- The POCSO Act, 2012 was enacted to Protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well-being of children.
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age, and regards the best interests and welfare of the child as matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child.
- The act is gender neutral.
- The amendment different Section of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is made to address the aspects of child sexual abuse in appropriate manner.
- The modification is made to address the need for stringent measures required to deter the rising trend of child sex abuse in the country.
- The amendments are also proposed in section-9 to protect children from sexual offences in times of natural

calamities and disasters and in cases where children are administered, in any way, any hormone or any chemical substance, to attain early sexual maturity for the purpose of penetrative sexual assault.

Benefit

- The amendment is expected to discourage the trend of child sexual abuse by acting as a deterrent due to strong penal provisions incorporated in the Act.
- It may protect the interest of vulnerable children in times of distress and ensures their safety and dignity.
- The amendment aims to establish clarity regarding the aspects of child abuse and punishment thereof.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- PIB

5. **Greenhouse gas emissions up 22% between 2010 and 2014**
 - India's total greenhouse gas emissions grew by more than 22 per cent between 2010 and 2014, reaching a level of 2.6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2014 according to latest report submitted in India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the UNFCCC.
 - India had submitted its first BUR in 2016, reporting its emissions data till the year 2010. This time it has submitted data till 2014.

Highlights of BUR Report

- The BUR report says the energy sector, followed by agriculture, is still the biggest carbon emitter and contributed a majority share to India's carbon emission in 2014.
- The sector accounts for 73 per cent emissions, agriculture 16 per cent, Industrial Process and Product Use (IPPU) 8 per cent and the waste sector 3 per cent

Related Information

India's obligation towards the convention

- As part of its Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDC), India has also promised to ensure that at least 40 per cent of its electricity generation in 2030 would happen from non-fossil

fuel sources, and that its emissions intensity, or emissions per unit of GDP, would reduce by at least 33 to 35 per cent by the year 2030 from 2005 levels.

- India has committed itself to substantially increase its forest cover, promising to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes by 2030 as compared to 2005 levels.

Salient Feature for BUR

- The scope of BUR is to provide an update to India's first BUR to UNFCCC.
- The BUR contains five major components — National Circumstances; National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; Mitigation Actions; Finance, Technology and Capacity Building Needs and Support Received and Domestic Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) arrangements.

Major impact:

- Submission of India's Second BUR will fulfil the obligation of India to furnish information regarding implementation of the Convention, being a Party.

Background:

- India is a Party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- The Convention joins upon all Parties, both developed country Parties and developing country Parties to furnish information, in the form of a National Communication regarding implementation of the Convention. Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC in its sixteenth session.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Indian Express

6. **Centre gives nod to draft Bill on Indian medicine**
 - The Union Cabinet has approved the draft National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2018.
 - The NCIM will promote “availability of affordable healthcare services in all parts of the country”,

Feature of the bills

- The draft bill provides for the constitution of a National Commission with four autonomous boards entrusted with conducting overall

education of Ayurveda, under Board of Ayurveda and Unani, Siddha & Sowaigpa under Board of Unani, Siddha and Sowaigpa.

- There are two common Boards namely, Board of assessment and rating to assess and grant permission to educational institutions of Indian systems of Medicine and Board of ethics and registration of practitioners of Indian systems of medicine to maintain National Register and ethical issues relating to practice under the National Commission for Indian Medicine.
- It also proposes a common entrance exam and an exit exam, which all graduates will have to clear to get practicing licenses.
- Further, a teacher's eligibility test has been proposed in the Bill to assess the standard of teachers before appointment and promotions.
- The draft bill is aimed at bringing reforms in the medical education of Indian medicine sector in lines with the National Medical Commission proposed for setting up for Allopathy system of medicine.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- PIB

7. **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**
 - Recently Pakistan has said that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a bilateral economic project and has no military dimensions.
 - This statements given by the Pakistan after a US media report that alleged that China has hatched a secret plan to build fighter jets and other military hardware in Pakistan as part of the \$60 billion project

Related Information

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), massive bilateral project to improve infrastructure within Pakistan for better trade with China and to further integrate the countries of the region.
- CPEC is part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative—to improve connectivity, trade, communication, and cooperation between the countries of Eurasia—announced by China in 2013.

- CPEC has been compared to the Marshall Plan for the rebuilding of post-World War II Europe in its potential impact on the region, and numerous countries have shown interest in participating in the initiative.
- The goal of CPEC is both to transform Pakistan's economy—by modernizing its road, rail, air, and energy transportation systems—and to connect the deep-sea Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to China's Xinjiang province and beyond by overland routes.
- Xinjiang borders the countries of Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, and the ancient Silk Road ran through its territory.
- This would reduce the time and cost of transporting goods and energy such as natural gas to China by circumventing the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea.

Topic-GS Paper-2-International relation

Source- The Hindu Business

8. Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar:

- Recently, the SCBAPP an annual awards instituted by the Centre to recognise the excellent work done by individuals and institutions in the country in the field of disaster management.

Related Information

- Three eligible institutions and individuals will be given the 'Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar' every year.
- The Puraskar cash rewards ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 51 lakh.
- If the awardee is an institution, it will be given a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 51 lakh and the prize money will be utilised for disaster management-related activities only.
- If the awardee is an individual, the person shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh.
- An application by an institution does not debar any individual from that institution to apply for the award in his individual capacity.

Who are eligible for this award ?

- Only Indian nationals and Indian institutions can apply for the award.
- For institutional awards, voluntary organisations, corporate entities, academic, research institutions, response, uniformed forces or any other institution may apply for the award.
- The applicant must have worked in the area of disaster management like prevention, mitigation, preparedness, rescue, response, relief, rehabilitation, research, innovation or early warning related work in India.
- The application must be accompanied by details of the work done in disaster management and must highlight achievements in any one or more of the areas like saving human lives, reduction in impact of disasters on lives, livestock, livelihoods, property, society, economy, or environment.
- Mobilisation and provision of resources for effective response during disasters, immediate relief work in disaster hit areas and communities, effective and innovative use of technology in any field of disaster management and disaster mitigation initiatives in hazard prone areas are some of the other criteria.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

9. Pakistan approves issuance of renminbi-denominated bonds

- Recently, Pakistan's cabinet has approved the issuance of first-ever renminbi-denominated bonds or Panda Bonds.
- It help to raise loans from China's capital markets, as the country moved a step forward to give the Chinese currency a status at par with the US dollar.

Benefit of the Bond

- The approval for issuing bonds in the Chinese capital markets came on the heel of the Finance Ministry's decision to delay issuance of dollar-denominated Eurobonds, worth USD 3 billion.
- It will help for the government successfully continues its multi-pronged approach for bridging the foreign financing needs and building foreign exchange reserves.

- the bonds will help the government diversify the investor base of capital market issuance and provide a source of raising renminbi (RMB).

Related Information

- As part of the long-term plan of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), both countries had decided to use renminbi (RMB) as the second international currency to lessen Pakistan's reliance on dollar.
- "Pakistan shall promote the construction of Gwadar Port Free Zone

and explore RMB offshore financial business in Gwadar Free Zone.

- China, in the recent years, has become Pakistan's largest trading partner and also the country with which it has the highest trade deficit.
- The reliance on Chinese currency would help finance the trade deficit from Chinese sources.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relation

Source- The Hindu Business



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