

MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND INDIA

India gets Its 37th World UNESCO World Heritage site:

- On June 30, 2018, At the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO at Manama in Bahrain , India's nomination of the "Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai " was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list.
- As recommended by the World Heritage Committee, India accepted the renaming of the ensemble as "Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai".

About the nomination:

- This makes Mumbai city the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- This achievement is expected to give a tremendous fillip to domestic and international tourism leading to increased employment generation, creation of world-class infrastructure and augmentation of sale of local handicrafts, handlooms and heritage memorabilia.

About India's standing in UNESCO Heritage list:

- India has managed to get inscribed seven of its properties/sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO.
- India now has overall 37 World Heritage Inscriptions with 29 Cultural, 07 Natural and 01 Mixed sites.
- In addition, 42 sites from the country figures in the Tentative List of World Heritage and the Ministry of Culture would be recommending one property every year for nomination to UNESCO.
- India stands second largest in number after China in terms of number of World Heritage properties in ASPAC (Asia and Pacific) region, it is overall sixth in the world.

About the Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai :

- The Ensemble consists of 94 buildings primarily of 19th century Victorian Gothic revival and early 20th century Art Deco style of architecture with the Oval Maidan in the centre.
- Together, this architectural ensemble represents the most remarkable collection of Victorian and Art Deco buildings in the world.
- The 19th century Victorian buildings form part of the larger Fort precinct situated to the east of the Oval Maidan.
- These public buildings include the Old Secretariat (1857-74), University Library and Convention Hall (1874-78), the Bombay High Court (1878), the Public Works Department Office (1872), Watson's Hotel (1869), David Sassoon Library (1870), the Elphinstone College(1888), etc.
- The Art Deco styled buildings to the west of the Oval Maidan were raised in early 20th century on the newly reclaimed lands at Marine Drive and symbolised the shift in expression to represent contemporary aspirations.

UNESCO Heritage Sites:

Rank	Country	Cultural World Heritage Sites	Natural World Heritage Sites	Mixed World Heritage Sites	Total Number
1	Italy	48	5	0	53
2	China	36	12	4	52
3	Spain	40	3	2	46
4	France	38	3	1	43
5	Germany	38	3	0	42
6	India	27	7	1	37

JP Nadda addresses 8th BRICS Health MINISTERS ' MEETING At Durban, South Africa:

On 20th July 2018, J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, addressed the 8th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting held in Durban, South Africa.

J P Nadda addresses 8th BRICS Health Ministers' Meeting:

J P Nadda in his address said that, India is committed to eliminate TB by 2025.

- He said that India is committed to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as articulated in its National Health Policy.
- He stated that to achieve the vision of UHC, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched the 'Ayushman Bharat' (Long Live India) programme.
- Through the Health and Wellness Centres the programme aims to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services and National Health Protection Mission for secondary and tertiary care aims to cover nearly 100 million families.
- He said that India's achievement in reducing the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) by 77%, from 556 per 100000 live births in 1990 to 130 per 100 000 live births in 2016 was commended by Regional Director, WHO SEARO.
- With this achievement India is on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of MMR below 70 by 2030.
- He added that, schemes like Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan, enabling women to access antenatal check-ups, obstetric gynaecologists and to track high-risk pregnancies, etc., and Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram have been rolled out.
- He said that in order to reduce the burden of non-communicable disease (NCD)s, India has already begun universal screening for prevention and management of 5 common NCDs including hypertension, diabetes and 3 common cancers of oral cavity, breast and cervix throughout India.

- He said that India has started AMRIT (Affordable Medicines & Reliable Implants for Treatment) Deendayal pharmacies to offer medicines for cancer, cardiovascular diseases and cardiac implants at low price.

Cabinet approves Special Remission to Prisoners on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi:

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has today given its approval to grant Special Remission to Prisoners as part of Commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- As part of commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the following categories of prisoners will be considered for special remission and released in three phases.
- In Phase-I, the prisoners will be released on 2nd October, 2018 (Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi), in Phase-II prisoners will be released on 10th April, 2019 (Anniversary of Champaran Satyagrah) and in Phase-III, prisoners will be released on 2nd October 2019 (Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi):-
 - (a) Women convicts of 55 years of age and above, who have completed 50% of their actual sentence period.
 - (b) Transgender convicts of 55 years of age and above, who have completed 50% of their actual sentence period.
 - (c) Male convicts of 60 years of age and above, who have completed 50% of their actual sentence period.
 - (d) Physically challenged/disabled convicts with 70% disability and more who have completed 50% of their actual sentence period.
 - (e) Terminally ill convicts.
 - (f) Convicted prisoners who have completed two-third (66%) of their actual sentence period.
- Special remission will not be given to prisoners who have been convicted for an offence for which the sentence is sentence of death or where death sentence has been commuted to life imprisonment; Cases of convicts involved in serious and heinous crimes like Dowry death, Rape, Human Trafficking and convicted under POTA, UAPA, TADA, FICN, POCSO Act, Money Laundering, FEMA, NDPS, Prevention of Corruption Act, etc.
- Ministry of Home Affairs will issue advice to all States and UTs asking them to process the cases of eligible prisoners. State Governments and UT Administrations will be advised to constitute a Committee to examine the cases. State Governments will place the recommendations of the Committee before Governor for consideration and approval under Article 161 of the Constitution. After the approval, the prisoners will be released on 2nd October 2018, 10th April, 2019 and 2nd October, 2019.

STATES

Varanasi would be the host of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2019:

- On July 10, 2018, It was announced that the next Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in the holy city of Varanasi in January 2019.
- The theme of the three-day event will be the 'Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India'.
- Events scheduled to happen on that day : Ganga aarti in Varanasi, Kumbh Mela in Allahabad and Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi.
- Varanasi is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's parliamentary constituency.

Odisha Government launches 'Green Mahanadi Mission'

- The Chief Minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik launched the 'Green Mahanadi Mission' on July 24, 2018.
- The CM launched the mission by planting a sapling on the bank of river Mahanadi during his visit to Boudh and Subarnapur districts in western Odisha. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister called upon people to go for plantation drive during this monsoon.

What is Green Mission?

- The 'Green Mahanadi Mission' is a plantation drive under which 2 crore saplings will be planted along the Mahanadi river and its tributaries.

Objective

- The main objective of the mission is to stop soil erosion on river banks and recharge the groundwater reserve.
- The mission aims to protect the Mahanadi River and keep it alive.

Salient features:

- Under the mission, more than five crore saplings will be planted over an area of 41,000 hectares.
- The massive plantation drive will be undertaken along the banks of Mahanadi, Ib and Tel rivers.
- Over two crore trees will be planted along the rivers in the state.
- The volunteers will plant fruit-bearing trees like mango, jackfruit and jamun within one km radius of the river bank.
- The plantation will be done on either side of major rivers of Odisha as well along the roadside length of about 5,000 km over a period of five years at an expenditure of around Rs 5,000 crore.
- The plantation drive will be carried out in 16,500 hectare and 500 km. It will be implemented jointly by the departments of Forest, Horticulture and Watershed Development.

3 States UP, Jharkhand and Maharashtra launched SWACHH surveshan Grameen 2018:

- On July 24, 2018, 3 states namely, UP, Jharkhand and Maharashtra launched the Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018) announced by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation on July 13th, 2018.

Salient features :

- In UP, it was launched by Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow .
- In Jharkhand , it was launched by Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Shri Raghubar Das.
- In Maharashtra, it was launched by Cabinet Minister, Water Supply and Sanitation Department, Government of Maharashtra Shri Babanrao Lonikar.
- In Maharashtra, **one million** Varkaris gathered at Pandharpur on the occasion of Aashadhi Ekadashi to participate in this launch.
- The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake a ranking of States and Districts on the basis of their performance on SBM-G parameters.

About Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG-18):

- An independent survey agency will conduct the survey in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018, and the results will be announced in the form of a ranking of all districts and States.
- The top performing States and Districts are expected to be awarded on 2nd October 2018.
- As a part of this survey:
- 6980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered.
- 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these 6980 villages will be visited .
- Feedback of 50 lakh citizens will be collected through direct on online feedback.

West Bengal Assembly passes resolution to rename state as 'Bangla':

On 26th July 2018, the West Bengal Assembly passed a resolution to rename West Bengal as 'Bangla' in three languages: Bengali, English and Hindi.

West Bengal to 'Bangla'

- This move has been made with an aim to move up in the alphabetical sequence of state names, as West Bengal is last in the list now.
- West Bengal has to wait for approval from the Home Ministry on the resolution.
- Earlier, the Centre had rejected West Bengal's proposals of having 3 names Bangla (in Bengali), Bengal (in English) and Bangal (in Hindi).
- Also, in 2011, West Bengal government's proposal to rename West Bengal as "Paschim Bango" was also rejected by the Centre.

Rationale behind renaming:

- The state government first proposed the renaming in 2016. West Bengal parliamentary affairs minister Partha Chatterjee had then argued for the change saying bureaucrats and politicians from the state often complain that they are asked to speak at the end of every national-level meeting in Delhi.
- This was because the speakers' lists at such meeting are prepared according to alphabetical order of the states they represent. If West Bengal gets the new name, it will leapfrog from bottom of the list to the top of the pecking order.
- The renaming will help the state appear at the fourth spot after Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam in the alphabetic order of the states.

Bhitarkanika national park has become the largest habitat of the endangered estuarine crocodiles in India:

- Bhitarkanika national park in Odisha has become the largest habitat of the endangered **estuarine crocodiles** in India with a record number of 101 nesting sites.

Bhitarkanika national park – largest habitat of the endangered estuarine crocodiles in India:

- A total of 101 nesting sites of estuarine crocodiles were found by enumerators. In 2017, 80 nesting sites were spotted.
- A 25 % increase in nesting sites has been witnessed. A female crocodile lays 50 to 60 eggs.
- At least 1698 crocodiles, including albino species, were counted in 2018 along the water-bodies of Mahanadi delta region. In 2017, this count was 1682.
- Estuarine crocodiles are also spotted in Sundarban areas of West Bengal. This region has India's largest mangrove cover.
- The mangrove wetlands in Andaman Islands are home to the estuarine crocodiles.

MAHARASHTRA**Maharashtra government allocates Rs 15 crore for Acharya Balshastri Jambhekar Sanman Yojana:**

On 4th July 2018, Maharashtra government allocated Rs 15 crore for the implementation of a pension scheme for senior journalists, called Acharya Balshastri Jambhekar Sanman Yojana.

Maharashtra government allocates Rs 15 crores for pension scheme for journalists:

- Maharashtra government has made a provision of Rs 15 crore for implementing the Acharya Balshastri Jambhekar Sanman Yojana.
- The provision has been made under the grants-in-aid (non salary) to the Director of Publicity.
- It has also allocated Rs 250 crore to National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) as the state's share to the special purpose vehicle of Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.

- It has been decided to offer additional funds of Rs 159.63 crore for the purchase of two helicopters for the air travel of very very important persons (VVIPs).
- Also, it has been decided to make an additional provision of Rs 35 crore for CCTV projects in Nagpur, Nashik, Aurangabad etc.
- It has been decided to make a provision for newly generated basic infrastructure facilities for the naxal-hit Gadchiroli district.

Maharashtra govt schools to get electricity at lower rates :

- On July 10, 2018, Education Minister of Maharashtra Government Vinod Tawde announced the launch of a scheme for electrification of schools in the state.
- Under the scheme, state-run schools will be provided electricity at government rates and the bill amount will be directly deposited in their accounts.
- The budgetary provision for school education includes funds for digital schools, educational material and computerisation, among others.
- Additionally, the education department will join hands with the Zilla parishad to conduct a structural audit of all schools in the state.

Background:

- 13,844 schools in the state **don't** have electricity and 44,330 students are not aware of computer.
- Seven of the 36 districts in the state have 100 per cent digital schools and 1.7 lakh teachers have become tech- savvy.

Elphinstone station of Mumbai renamed as Prabhadevi by Western Railways:

- On July 17, 2018, Western Railways renames **Elphinstone Road station** to **Prabhadevi** on Mumbai's suburban section.
- This change will come into effect from July 19th, 2018.
- The station code for the renamed station is PBHD.
- Previously it was named Elphinstone road station after Lord Elphinstone , Governor of Bombay from 1853 to 1860.
- From 12:00 am, July 19, Thursday, Elphinstone Road station, which made news after a deadly stampede on staircase of the FOB claimed 14 lives and injured several in September 2017, will be known as Prabhadevi station.
- The decision to rechristen the station was taken last year in July, a few days after Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus was renamed Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus.
- In December 2017, the Maharashtra legislature had approved a Bill to rename Elphinstone Road station, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) and Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

Mumbai Weather Live: a mobile application that to provide information on extreme weather events in Mumbai launched by the The union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES):

- On July 29, 2018, The Union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) launched a mobile application named **Mumbai Weather Live** that will provide information on extreme weather events in **Mumbai**.
- It would cover alerts on events like : Heat waves, thunderstorms, heavy rains.
- It also launched forecasts for Char Dham and Amarnath pilgrims that can be accessed by registered users of through website of IMD or MapmyIndia.
- It has also launched an air-pollution emergency prediction system which could be ready for launch by October 2018.
- It would provide: monsoon forecasting, weather or climate parameters, ocean state, earthquakes, tsunamis and data related to earth systems for public safety.
- The Ministry with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) would also launch 'push SMS alerts' for mobile users across the country.
- The technology for this has already been approved in Uttarakhand and Andhra Pradesh.

Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai declared as World Heritage Site by UNESCO

- The World Heritage Committee on June 30, 2018 declared the Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai as the World Heritage Property, thus, inscribing the site on the UNESCO's World Heritage list under Criteria (ii) and (iv) as defined in the UNESCO's Operational Guidelines.
- This inscription makes Mumbai the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The decision was taken during the meeting of World Heritage Committee in Manama under the chair of Shaikha Haya Bint Rashed al-Khalifa of Bahrain.
- Apart from the Mumbai site, the committee inscribed three other cultural sites on the World Heritage List. These sites are Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars region of Iran, Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region of Japan and Sansa, Buddhist Mountain Monasteries in Korea.

POLITY

Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 notified by the government:

- On July 1, 2018, The Government notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 via Gazette Notification.

Features of the Electoral Bonds:

- Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person, who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- Electoral Bonds can be bought individually or jointly with other individuals.
- Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of Representation of People Act, 1951 & which secured not less than 1% of the votes polled in last General Election or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive Electoral Bonds.

- The Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day.
- Electoral Bonds shall be valid for fifteen calendar days from the date of issue and no payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the validity period.
- State Bank of India (SBI), in the 3rd phase of sale, has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 11 Authorised Branches (as per list enclosed) w.e.f. 01.05.2018 to 10.05.2018.

Justice Adarsha Kumar Goel appointed Chairperson of National Green Tribunal :

- Justice **Adarsh Kumar Goel** has been appointed the chairperson of National Green Tribunal.

Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel :

- Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel retired as Supreme Court judge on 6th July 2018.
- The post of the chairperson of National Green Tribunal was vacant for the last 8 months following Justice Swatanter Kumar's retirement on 19th December 2018.
- Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel was elevated to Supreme Court on 7th July 2014. Earlier he was Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court and the Gauhati High Court.
- He was born on July 7, 1953. He had also served as executive chairman of the Haryana State Legal Services Authority.

About National Green Tribunal (NGT):

- Purpose – disposes cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources
- First chairperson of NGT – Justice Lokeshwar Singh Panta, appointed on October 18, 2010.

PRESIDENT NOMINATES FOUR MEMBERS TO RAJYA SABHA :

- In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 80 of the Constitution of India, and on the advice of the Prime Minister, the President of India has made four nominations to the Rajya Sabha.
- The nominated members are- Ram Shakal, Rakesh Sinha, Raghunath Mohapatra and Sonal Mansingh.

Nominated member of the Rajya Sabha:

- Under article 80 of the Constitution, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.

Powers and privileges:

- Nominated members enjoy all powers, privileges and immunities available to an elected member of Parliament.

- They take part in the proceedings of the House as any other member.
- They, however, are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India.
- But in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote.
- A nominated member is allowed six months, should he decide to join a political party after he has taken his seat in the House in terms of article 99 of the Constitution.
- A nominated member has also been exempted from filing his assets and liabilities under Section 75A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951 which requires the elected member to do so within 90 days of his making or subscribing oath/affirmation.
- Under MPLADS, the Nominated Members of the Rajya Sabha may select any Districts from any State in the Country for implementation of their choice of work under the scheme.

Rationale behind the principle of nomination:

- By adopting the principle of nomination in Rajya Sabha, the Constitution has ensured that the nation must also receive services of the most distinguished persons of the country who have earned distinction in their field of activity, many of whom may not like to face the rough and tumble of the election.
- By nominating them to Rajya Sabha, the State not only recognises their merit and confers honour on them, but also enables them to enrich the debates by their expertise and knowledge that they have in different areas.

Rajya Sabha passes Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013:

- The Rajya Sabha on July 19, 2018 passed the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 by a voice vote. The Bill seeks to amend the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.
- The bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha after thorough deliberations with the Standing Committee and the Law Commission and finally after consultations in the Select Committee
- Now the Bill will be tabled in the Lok Sabha. The Bill makes the act of bribing a public servant an offence.

Provisions of the Bill:

- The Bill introduces the offence of giving a bribe as a direct offence. However, a person who is compelled to give a bribe will not be charged with the offence, if he reports the matter to law enforcement authorities within seven days.
- The Bill makes specific provisions related to giving a bribe to a public servant, and giving a bribe by a commercial organisation.
- The Bill redefines criminal misconduct to only cover misappropriation of property and possession of disproportionate assets. It does not cover circumstances where the public official: (i) uses illegal means, (ii) abuses his position, or (iii) disregards public interest and obtains a valuable thing or reward for himself or another person.
- The Bill modifies the definitions and penalties for offences related to taking a bribe, being a habitual offender and abetting an offence.

- It introduces the powers and procedures for the attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption.
- The Bill adds the provision for prior sanction to prosecute former officials. The Act only provided for the prior sanction to prosecute serving public officials.
- It deletes the provision that protects a bribe giver from prosecution, for any statement made by him during a corruption trial. This may prevent bribe givers from appearing as witnesses in court.
- Under the Act, a person is proven guilty for the offences of taking a bribe, being a habitual offender or abetting an offence. The Bill amends this provision to only cover the offence of taking a bribe.
- It provides more stringent punishment for the offences of bribery, both for the bribe giver and the bribe taker. It provides for seven years of imprisonment or a fine or both for the bribe givers.

Background:

- The amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 was necessitated from the obligation of India to review the existing provisions of the Act so as to bring it in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
- This led to the introduction of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 in the Rajya Sabha in August 2013. However, it could not be passed as the Bill contemplates an important paradigm shift in defining offences relating to bribery.
- Later, the views of the Law Commission of India were sought on the proposed amendments. The Bill incorporates the recommendations given by the 20th Law Commission headed by Justice (retd) AP Shah in its 254th Report.
- These amendments were first brought by the UPA government in 2013. The bill was then referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Law Commission and then in December 2015 to a select committee. The report of the select committee was submitted in 2016 and again the bill was moved in August 2017, but could not be taken up.
- As per the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013, only the leader of the opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha is a member of the selection committee. A party should have at least 55 seats or 10 per cent of the strength of Lok Sabha for its leader to get the LoP status. Congress is the largest opposition party but does not have the requisite number of seats to get the LoP post. SO DIDN'T PASSED TILL NOW.

“When a man can enter, a woman can also go”: SC on Sabarimala ban:

- The Supreme Court on July 18, 2018 observed that banning the entry of women in Kerala's Sabarimala temple by the temple authorities is unconstitutional and questioned the authorities regarding the same.
- The court stated that women have the right to enter and pray like men at the Sabarimala temple in Kerala as the fundamental right of freedom to practice religion is provided to all persons by

the Constitution. The observation was made by a five-judge constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra.

- The bench also comprised Justices R F Nariman, A M Khanwilkar, D Y Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra.

Salient features :

- The arguments in the case included that the ban on the entry of women into the popular temple was a kind of discrimination on the ground of sex and based on the assumption that menstruating women are “polluted”.
- The Supreme Court bench termed the notification of the Devaswom board, which runs the temple, banning entry of women of a particular age group as absurd.
- It said exclusion of a particular age group of women forces them to disclose their menstruation stage and it violates their privacy.
- The court was informed by the Kerala government that it also supported the entry of women of all age groups in the temple. The government also filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court regarding the same.
- Despite much debate and discussion, the hearing remained inconclusive and would continue on July 19.

Who said what!:

- **CJI Dipak Misra:** “On what basis you (temple authorities) deny the entry. It is against the Constitutional mandate. Once you open it for the public, anybody can go.”
- **Justice DY Chandrachud:** “The right to pray is equal for both men and women. Your (intervener) right to pray being a woman is equal to that of a man and it is not dependent on a law to enable you to do that.”
- “When a man can enter, a woman can also go. What applies to a man, applies to a woman also,” the bench said.
- Senior advocate **Raju Ramachandran**, who is assisting the court as amicus curiae, also supported the entry of women into the shrine and said that the denial was violative of the fundamental rights.

Observations made by the Court:

- In a public place of worship, a woman can enter, where a man can go. What applies to a man, applies to a woman.
- Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature. Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?
- Article 25 (1) mandates freedom of conscience and right to practise religion. “All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”. This means right to pray is a constitutional right.
- Also, the Constitution upholds the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.
- Therefore, the discrimination is a violation of the rights to equality and gender justice.

cVigil: Election Commission launches app to report model code violations:

- The Election Commission of India has launched Cvigil mobile application for citizens to report any violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during elections.
- The app aims at empowering people across the country to share evidence of malpractice by political parties, their candidates and activists directly with ECI.
- At present its beta version has been released and will be made available for use during forthcoming Assembly elections Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan.

Salient Features of cVigil:

- It will allow anyone in election-bound state to report violations of MCC. By using this app, vigilant citizens can immediately report on incidents of misconduct anonymously and in real-time by clicking picture or record video of upto two minutes and uploading it on the app.
- The identity of the complainant will be kept confidential and will be provided with Unique ID to track and receive the follow up updates on the mobile. The app also has inbuilt features to prevent its misuse. It will be active only in States where elections have been announced.
- The app also facilitates sharing of geo-tagged photographic and video evidence without disclosing identity of sender. The uploaded information will be transmitted to control room and from there to field units or flying squads, mapped on Geographic Information System (GIS) for further action.

Background

- So far, complaints about violations of MCC often were not followed instantly, leading to violators escaping detection from action squads.
- Besides, lack of any documented evidence in form of pictures or videos was seen as hurdle in verifying complaint.
- Further, absence of robust response system to quickly and accurately identify scene of occurrence of violations with help of geographical location details hampered election officers' ability to apprehend violators.
- The cVigil app is expected to fill in all these gaps and create fast-track complaint reception and redressal system.

LS Speaker accepts no-confidence motion against ruling government:

- The Speaker of Lok Sabha, Sumitra Mahajan admitted a no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against the ruling government on July 18, 2018, on the opening day of the Monsoon session of Parliament.
- The no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi government brought by the TDP and opposition parties will be taken up for debate on July 20, 2018.

Salient features :

- The discussion held for the full day, followed by voting on the issue.
- The Speaker announced that there will be no question hour on the day of the debate.
- The House will also not have any other business on the day except for the discussion on the no-confidence motion.
- During the Zero Hour, the Speaker named all the opposition members who had moved similar no-confidence motion notices and said that TDP's Kesineni Srinivas would move his motion as his party was the first to bring up the matter.

- During the Budget session, notices for a similar motion had been rejected by Mahajan, on the grounds that the House was not in order.

Objective:

- The opposition parties have brought in the no-confidence motion against the ruling government on issues including grant of special status to Andhra Pradesh, lynchings, atrocities against women and the dalits and the dilution of a law meant for Scheduled Caste.

Parliament passes Bill for merger of five subsidiary banks with SBI:

- The Indian Parliament on July 30, 2018 passed the State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 that merges the subsidiary banks with the State Bank of India (SBI).
- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha by then Union Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley on July 21, 2017.

Provisions of the Bill:

- The merger of these subsidiary banks is already in effect from April 1, 2017. The merger was approved by the Union Government in February 2017.
- The Bill seeks to repeal the State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959, the State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956. These Acts established the State Bank of Bikaner, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Travancore, and State Bank of Hyderabad, the subsidiaries of the SBI.
- It amends the State Bank of India Act, 1955 to remove references related to subsidiary banks. These references include: (i) the definition of a subsidiary bank in the 1955 Act, and (ii) powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for a subsidiary bank.

Why was there a need of this merger?

- The merger of subsidiaries with the SBI is a part of the PSU Banks Consolidation Plan that was proposed by the Union Government in March 2016 at a congregation of bankers and government officials where various issues pertaining to banks were discussed.
- The move aims to stimulate the flow of credit to fuel private investment.

Significance of the merger:

- With this merger, SBI will join the league of top 50 banks globally in terms of assets. Currently, no Indian bank features in the top 50 banks of the world.
- The total customer base of the SBI will now reach to 37 crore people with a branch network of around 24000 and nearly 59000 ATMs across the country. The merged entity will have a deposit base of more than Rs 26 lakh crore and advances level of Rs 18.50 lakh crore.
- Soon, the bank will rationalise its branch network by relocating some of the branches to maximise reach. This will help the bank in optimising its operations and improve its profitability.
- Integration of treasuries of the associate banks with the treasury of SBI will bring in substantial cost saving and synergy in treasury operations.

ECONOMICS AND HRD

1st July 2018 CELEBRATED AS 'GST day', to commemorate the first year of the unprecedented reform of Indian taxation.

- On 1st July 2018, Indian Government celebrated the 1st Anniversary of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as GST day.

GST day – July 1:

- GST was launched on the 1st July 2017 at a grand ceremony in the Central Hall of Parliament.
- Union Minister for Railways, Coal, Finance & Corporate Affairs Piyush Goyal presided over as the Chief Guest of the event. Minister of State for Finance, Shiv Pratap Shukla was the Guest of Honour.
- The Constitution (**122nd Amendment**) Bill, 2014 was introduced in the Parliament on 19th December 2014. It was enacted as Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016.
- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council was notified with effect from 12th September 2016.
- The GST Council consists of the Union Finance Minister as Chairman, the Minister of State (Revenue) and the State Finance/Taxation Ministers as members.
- The council makes recommendations to the Union and the States on all GST related issues. The Council has met 27 times so far.
- Four Laws called CGST Act, UTGST Act, IGST Act and GST (Compensation to States) Act were passed by the Parliament and were notified on 12th April 2017.
- All the other States (except Jammu & Kashmir) and Union territories with legislature have passed their respective SGST Acts.
- GST levied by the Centre is called Central GST (Central tax / CGST). GST levied by the States is called State GST (State Tax / SGST).

India named world's sixth largest economy by surpassing France: World Bank data:

- On July 11, 2018, India has become the world's **sixth** largest economy overtaking France, according to World Bank data on gross domestic product (GDP) of countries for 2017.
- India has recorded a GDP of USD 2,597,491 million, followed by USD 2,582,501 of France, while United Kingdom recorded a GDP of USD 2,622,434 million.
- India has recovered from the effects of **demonetisation** and the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** World Bank has predicted the GDP of India in FY2019 to be 7.3%.
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also stated that it expected India to re-emerge as one of the fastest growing major economies in the 2018 – 2019 period, projecting the country's growth rate at 7.4 percent in 2018.
- Further, the international financial organisation forecasted a rate of growth of 7.8 percent for 2019.

The economies of other countries:

Country	GDP in USD
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USA	US \$19.390 trillion
China	US \$12.237 trillion
Japan	US \$4.872 trillion
Germany	US \$3.677 trillion
UK	US \$2.622 trillion
India	\$2.597 trillion
France	US \$2.582 trillion

RBI to issue new 100 Rupee notes with motif of 'Rani Ki Vav':

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would issue new Rs. 100 note with motif of '**Rani Ki Vav**' next month.
- This note is part of the revised design series introduced after demonetization in November 2016.
- This note will have Gujarat's '**Rani Ki Vav**' (queen's stepwell) along with the Swachh Bharat logo and slogan on its reverse. Gandhi ji's placement will be the same.
- The base colour of the note is lavender. The note has other designs, geometric patterns aligning with the overall colour scheme, both at the obverse and reverse.
- Dimension of the banknote will be 66 mm x 142 mm. All the Rs. 100 notes issued by the Reserve Bank of India in the earlier series will continue to be legal tender.

Global Innovation Index (GII): India ranks 57th:

- In recently released Global Innovation Index (GII) 2018, India was ranked 57th among 130 countries.
- It was 11th edition of GII and was jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).
- This year, India has moved up 3 places as compared to 60th rank in GII 2017 and emerged as top-ranked economy in Central and South Asia.

Salient features :

- **India:** India has maintained its top place in central and south Asia region. It has consistently moving up on global ranking from 81st in 2015 to 57th this year. In fact, it has climbed up the list third year in row. It ranked at 66th position in 2016 and 60th last year.
- **Strengths:** These indicators have helped India to improve its ranking. It includes India's human capital (graduates in science & engineering), growth rate of GDP per worker, exports of information and communication technology (ICT) and services, productivity growth and creative goods exports etc.

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

Global Innovation Index (GII):

- The GII global ranking is published by World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) – a specialized agency of United Nations in association with Cornell University and graduate business school INSEAD.
- It ranks nations based on 80 indicators, ranging from intellectual property filing rates to R&D, online creativity, mobile application creation, computer software spending, education spending, scientific & technical publications and ease of starting business.
- India's Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is one of the knowledge partners which assists GII team in bringing out the annual ranking.
- GII is published annually since 2007 and is considered leading benchmarking tool for business executives, policy makers and others seeking insight into state of innovation around the world. It is being used by them to evaluate progress on continual basis.

Human Resource Development Ministry Launches Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 750 Higher Education Institutions to get together for Development of Rural India:

- Human Resource Development Ministry today launches Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 in New Delhi. Addressing the launching ceremony at AICTE headquarters through video message, Minister of Human Resource Development Shri Prakash Javadekar said that the students are the real agents of change who can develop, empower and brighten the future of the country.
- Shri Javadekar said that Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 is in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision to transform India, in which students from colleges and universities will go to nearby villages to get acquainted with the life of the village people and the problems faced by them in day to day life.
- He reiterated the quote of Mahatma Gandhi that India lives in villages and every village has its own specialty and challenges also. He added that this unique initiative of HRD ministry will serve as real Bharat Darshan for students and it is also an opportunity for them to learn about the basic challenges faced by rural people and to bring out practical solutions for their betterment.
- The Minister advised students to involve local village people at every stage of problem identification and solving issues relating to health, cleanliness, waste management, plantation, financial inclusion, women and child development etc. Shri Javadekar informed that the Ministry will bring out a practical handbook relating to Unnat Bharat Abhiyan. The Minister also congratulated the delegation from across India present on this occasion and gave his best wishes for the success of this endeavour.
- Addressing the launching ceremony of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0, the Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Dr. Satya Pal Singh said that India had witnessed the migration of rural population in the past, but now the process of sustainable development through the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0 will help to reverse this migration.
- He congratulated the Human Resource Development Ministry for launching the higher version of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan and expressed the confidence that commitment of the HRD Ministry will make this campaign a success. He appealed to the professors and students of the Higher

Education Institutions to motivate the rural public, particularly the young generations for social economic development of the villages through various schemes and initiatives of rural development. Dr. Satya Pal Singh also congratulated the Indian Institute of Technology – IIT Delhi for developing excellent technology to take the development process to the rural areas.

- Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, with the intention to enrich Rural India. The knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of the country are to be leveraged to bring in transformational change in rural developmental process.
- It also aims to create a vibrant relationship between the society and the higher educational institutes, with the latter providing the knowledge and technology support to improve the livelihoods in rural areas and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private organisations in the society.
- Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0, the institutions have been selected on a Challenge Mode and the scheme has been extended to 750 reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country.
- Also, scope for providing Subject Expert Groups and Regional Coordinating Institutes to handhold and guide the participating institutions has been strengthened.
- IIT Delhi has been designated to function as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme and the Ministry intends to extend the coverage to all the reputed Higher Educational Institutes, in a phased manner. Each selected institute would adopt a cluster of villages / panchayats and gradually expand the outreach over a period of time. .
- Institutes through their faculty and students, will carry out studies of living conditions in the adopted villages, assess the local problems and needs, workout the possibilities of leveraging the technological interventions and the need to improve the processes in implementation of various government schemes, prepare workable action plans for the selected villages. Such knowledge inputs would make their way into the development programmes in rural areas.
- The Institutes would be expected to closely coordinate with the district administration, elected public representatives of panchayat / villages and other stakeholders and will become very much a part of the process of development planning and implementation.
- In this process, faculty and students of such institutes would be re-oriented and connected to the rural realities so that their learning and research work also becomes more relevant to the society.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES :

World Population Day- July 11:

- World Population Day is celebrated every year on July 11. July 11 was established as World Population Day in 1989 by the United Nations.
- Theme for 2018:- “Family Planning is a Human right”.

Purpose of World Population Day:

- It aims to spread awareness on issues such as overpopulation, under-population and birth control.

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

July 12, 2018 celebrated as International Malala Day:

- July 12 is celebrated as International Malala Day as on July 12, 2013, Malala Yousafzai’s 16th birthday, she spoke at the UN to call for worldwide access to education. Today Malala turns 21.
- According to World Bank, not educating girls or creating barriers in their school education globally costs between \$15-30 trillion.
- Less than two-thirds of girls in low-income countries complete primary school and only one in three girls completes lower secondary school.
- According to the report, currently 132 million girls around the world between the ages of 6 and 17 are still not in school — 75 per cent of whom are adolescents.
- In the 18 countries for which simulations were carried with demographic projection tools, the average reduction in population growth was estimated at -0.18% adding that the reductions in annual population growth rates are, however, different depending on which country is considered.
- In India, the largest of the 18 countries, the reduction was estimated at only -0.08 percentage point because the country has already gone through much of its demographic transition.

About Malala Yousafzai:

- Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate.

Nelson Mandela International Day:- July 18:

- On 18th July 2018, Nelson Mandela International Day was observed all over the world.
- Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks the **100th birth anniversary of Nelson Mandela**, who was born on 18th July 1918.
- The Nelson Mandela Foundation has dedicated Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 to Action Against Poverty.
- In 2009, UN General Assembly declared 18 July as Nelson Mandela International Day.
- The UN General Assembly also adopted the revised United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and approved that they should be known as the “Nelson Mandela Rules”.
- Nelson Mandela is the late President of South Africa. He had spent 27 years in prison in his struggle against racism, poverty and social injustice.

Who was Nelson Mandela?

- Nelson Mandela was the former President of South Africa as well as an **anti-apartheid activist**, philanthropist and political leader.
- Mandela emerged as a key leader in the resistance to racist apartheid laws, being arrested multiple times and later being sentenced to life in prison in 1964 after being tried for conspiring to overthrow the government.
- Amid growing pressure both internally and throughout the world, the South African government finally released Mandela after 27 years in 1990. He soon worked alongside President F.W. de Klerk to dismantle the apartheid regime in 1991 and usher in the peaceful 1994 general election in which he was elected as the country's new president.
- During his presidency from May 1994 to June 1999, Mandela worked to promote racial reconciliation, fight poverty and expand healthcare for all South Africans. After leaving office, he remained active in many philanthropic efforts throughout the world, particularly ending the HIV/AIDS crisis and reducing poverty.

World Hepatitis Day:2018- July 28:

- On 28th July 2018, World Hepatitis Day 2018 was observed all over the world.
- 28 July is observed as World Hepatitis Day every year. This day was chosen as it is the birthday of scientist Dr Baruch Blumberg, who discovered hepatitis B virus (HBV).
- He also developed a diagnostic test and vaccine for the virus. World Hepatitis Day, aims to enhance the national and international efforts on prevention and treatment of hepatitis.
- WHO (World Health Organisation) has declared **theme** for World Hepatitis Day 2018 as: "**Test. Treat. Hepatitis**".

National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme launched in New Delhi on World Hepatitis Day:

- WHO and Government of Mongolia conducted several events in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia to commemorate the World Hepatitis Day 2018.
- On 28th July 2018, **National Viral Hepatitis Control Program** was launched in New Delhi on the occasion of World Hepatitis Day.
- Health Minister JP Nadda said that, the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program will provide laboratory testing and management of viral Hepatitis.
- This will be decentralized and extended to Health and Wellness Centres in a phased manner.
- Also, a commemorative stamp for the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program was launched to create awareness on this issue.

8th International Tiger day celebrated on July 29, 2018:

July 29 is celebrated as International tiger day or Global Tiger day.

- **Objective:**It is done to raise awareness for tiger conservation.

- Salient features : It was created in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit where leaders of 13 tiger range countries resolved to double its number in the wild by 2022. The slogan was 'T X 2'.

India's role:

- India conducts a census to assess tiger population every four years. The cycles of the estimation have already been completed in 2006, 2010 and 2014.
- In 2006, there were 1,411 tigers, which increased to 1,706 in 2010 and 2,226 in 2014.
- Only 3,890 tigers are left in the world, out of which 2,226 are in India.

Commemoration of Global Tigers Day 2018:

- To commemorate this day, walls of **Amravati railway station** are being covered with wildlife paintings, to create awareness about the importance of protection of tigers.
- A new initiative to make people earn livelihood has been started by **Melghat Tiger Reserve** in **8 villages** near Dhyanganga Sanctuary in Buldana district.
- According to the tiger census, carried out in 2017, Melghat has 41 adult tigers and 18 cubs.
- It is under The Project Tiger which now says that India has more than 50 reserves.

Conservation efforts:

- The concentrated efforts of independent activists, government policies, amendments to the Wild Life Protection Act, and rising awareness have helped push the number of the wild cats to 2,226 in 2014, when the last tiger census was held.

Concerns and challenges:

- India has one of the lowest per capita forest areas in the world. Forests as carbon sinks are deemed to be a major mean of controlling climate change. Depletion of forests is responsible for reduction of tiger habitats.
- Reduced food base: As forestlands fall to development projects, habitable land for animals that make for the tiger's food base are also reduced.
- Poaching: Another issue that has hindered tiger conservation in India and globally is poaching, which will persist as long as there is an illegal market for tiger body parts.
- Climate change: Rising sea level as a result of climate change is on the verge of wiping out Sundarbans, one of the last remaining habitats of the Bengal tigers.

Background:

Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Bhutan, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, China, Malaysia, Russia, Nepal and Myanmar are among the few countries that have wild tigers.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES:

Release of Rs 500cr to SCI to promote cruise tourism under Centre's 'Sagarmala Project': Nitin Gadkari:

On July 6, 2018, Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has said, under Sagarmala project, Centre will provide 500 crore rupees to Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) to lease out cruises to promote cruise tourism.

i. This was announced at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) Annual Awards event in Mumbai.

About Cruise Tourism:

- No GST may be applied for first 5 years in order to give a boost to cruise tourism business.
- The Government is promoting use of methanol and ethanol fuels to be used in cruise to bring down fuel cost. For that state-run Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers is setting up a dedicated facility in Thal in Maharashtra.
- For the sea trade to shift to the cleaner fuels, Cochin Shipyard is setting up a facility in the financial capital where such reconstruction will be carried out.
- Cruise tourist companies were suggested to bring cruises from abroad and refurbish them in India which will be cost-effective for them.
- Furthermore, the Government of India has formed a task force of the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Shipping and appointed an international consultant who has given a roadmap on how to develop cruise tourism in the country.
- The roadmap would focus on ease of doing business, immigration system, carrier security fee system, customs and port regulations need to improve. The second is marketing of cruise tourism and the third is general port infrastructure.
- The Government is looking towards doubling the foreign tourist arrivals in three years.
- It may attract up to 700 vessels from its present strength of 70 vessels a year.
- The government is focussing on five ports: Mumbai, Goa, Mangalore, Chennai and Kochi, to be developed as cruise hubs.
- Accordingly close to 4 million passengers are expected to visit India in the coming years, and 3 million passengers are expected to take cruises from Mumbai Port.
- Additionally for the switch to cleaner fuels, on a pilot basis, 10 buses each will be run on the cleaner and cheaper fuels in Guwahati and Mumbai.

"Jal Bachao, Video Banao, Puruskar Pao" fortnightly Contest launched on Water Conservation: Ministry of Water Resources.

- On July 12, 2018, the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has launched a video contest titled "Jal Bachao, Video Banao, Puruskar Pao". It is a fortnightly contest that will run till 4th November 2018.

Objective:

- To engage with the people of India on the important issues of water conservation and water management.

Salient features :

- This contest will be run by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation in collaboration with MyGov portal of Government of India.
- In this contest, **3** winners will be chosen every fortnight.
- Any Indian citizen can upload their video entries on YouTube and enter the publicly accessible link on the Video link section of MyGov contest page www.mygov.in.
- The duration of the videos should be minimum 2 minutes and up to 10 minutes in Hindi, English or any other regional language and must not violate any provision of the Indian Copyright Act, 1957 or the Intellectual Property Rights of any third party.
- The parameters of judgement are on the basis of elements of creativity, originality, composition, technical excellence, artistic merit, quality of video, content and visual impact.
- The prize amount is Rs 25,000/-, Rs 15,000/- and Rs 10,000/- for first, second and third positions respectively.
- This way the people of India will make and upload videos capturing the efforts, significant contributions, best practices in the field of Water Conservation, Optimum Water Utilization and Water Resource Development and Management in different parts of the country including any innovative advertisement/commercial on Water Conservation.

President launches Solar Charkha Mission:

- President Ram Nath Kovind launched Solar Charkha Mission under which Government will disburse subsidy of Rs 550 crore to thousands of artisans, generating employment in rural areas. It was launched during the event of Udyam Sangam (National MSME Conclave) on the occasion of World MSME Day.
- President Ram Nath Kovind today launched the Solar Charkha Mission covering artisans in 50 identified clusters and the Sampark portal -- a digital platform to connect five lakh job seekers with recruiters -- at an event to mark the important economic role played by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- Appreciating the role of the MSME sector in leveraging the demographic dividend of the country and promoting inclusive growth in rural and backward areas, Ram Nath Kovind pointed out that the sector accounted for around 60 per cent employment in India.
- "According to a survey, there are about 6.5 crore MSMEs in India which have created over 11 crore job opportunities. Such enterprises have registered over 10 per cent growth in recent times which is much more compared to large enterprises," the President said inaugurating the Udyam Sangam-2018.
- The Solar Charkha Mission will entail a subsidy of Rs 550 crore in the initial two years for 50 clusters and every cluster will employ 400 to 2000 artisans. The mission will generate employment in rural areas and contribute to the green economy.
- The digital platform 'Sampark portal' will be useful in creating a skill pool of workers and connecting trained youth with job opportunities, Ram Nath Kovind said.
- The President expressed hopes that the government will look for new solutions so that micro and small entrepreneurs may be able to occupy a space at the global level.

- Referring to Udyam Sakhi portal of the MSME Ministry, he said that it will empower women and weaker sections by providing training to 80 lakh women.
- The President appreciated the work done by Arunachalam Muruganatham in promoting women's hygiene by manufacturing low-cost sanitary napkins and the fact that a film documenting his struggle (Padman) has been made. He said that many more such films documenting the contributions of innovative MSMEs should be produced.

Government reduces minimum annual deposit under Sukanya Samriddhi scheme

- The Union Government has reduced the minimum annual deposit requirement for accounts under Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana from Rs 1000 to Rs 250.
- The minimum initial deposit to open the account has also been reduced to Rs 250. The move is aimed at enabling more people to take advantage of the girl child savings scheme.
- The government has amended the Sukanya Samriddhi Account Rules, 2016 for the purpose.

About Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana:

- The Sukanya Samriddhi scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2015, as a part of the Union Government's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign.
- The savings scheme mainly aims to target the parents of girl children. It is a small deposit scheme, under which, a parent or legal guardian can open an account in the name of the girl child until she attains the age of 10 years.
- The scheme is meant to meet the education and marriage expenses of a girl child. It encourages parents to build a fund for the future education and marriage expenses for their female child.
- It aims to provide a bright future for girl children by ensuring them proper education and care free marriage expenses.
- The scheme has well been accepted by the masses in wake of the financial security and independence it would provide to the girl child as well as their parents and guardians.

Other Details:

- The account for the girl child can be opened in any post office branch and designated public sector banks.
- Only one account is permissible for every girl child under this scheme. The maximum limit for deposits in the account has also been set at Rs 1, 50,000 per year
- The deposits made to the account, and also the proceeds and maturity amount, would be fully exempted from tax under section 80C of the Income Tax Act.
- Deposits can be made up to 14 years from the date of opening of the account. After this period, the account will only earn interest as per applicable rates.
- Till November 2017, more than 1.26 crore accounts have been opened across the country in the name of girl children, securing an amount of 19,183 crore rupees.
- The interest rate on Sukanya Samriddhi account is revised every quarter, just like other small savings schemes and PPF.
- For the July-September quarter, the rate has been fixed at 8.1 per cent.

- The maturity duration of the account is 21 years from the date of opening the account.

Kerala Government declares Kozhikode and Malappuram districts free from Nipah virus

- Kerala Government has declared Kozhikode and Malappuram districts free from Nipah virus infection.
- These districts were declared as temporarily Nipah free as no positive case of the infection was reported till completion of double incubation period of the virus.
- Earlier in June 2018, state government had lifted the travel advisory issued in the wake of the virus for travelling to any part of the state.
- It also had lifted high alert in districts and said the virus has been brought under control and its spread checked. Educational institutions were also reopened.

Nipah Virus (NiV) Infection:

- NiV infection is zoonotic disease (disease transmitted to humans from animals) that causes severe disease in both animals and humans. The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus, and is closely related to Hendra virus.
- **Origin:** It was first identified in 1999 during outbreak among pig farmers in Malaysia and Singapore. It gets its name from Sungai Nipah, a Malaysian village, where pig farmers became ill with encephalitis. In these subsequent outbreaks, there were no intermediate hosts of the virus. In Bangladesh in 2004, humans got infected after consuming date palm sap that had been contaminated by infected fruit bats.
- **Natural Host:** Fruit bats of *Pteropodidae Family, Pteropus genus* are natural host of the virus. The virus is present in bat urine and potentially, bat faeces, saliva, and birthing fluids. Presumably, first incidence of NiV infection occurred when pigs in Malaysian farms came in contact with fruit bats who had lost their habitats due to deforestation.
- **Transmission:** The virus spreads fast and is mostly fatal. Infected bats shed virus in their excretion and secretion. It cannot be transmitted through air. It is transmitted through direct contact with infected bats, pigs. Human to Human transmission from other NiV-infected people is also reported.
- **Signs & Symptoms:** NiV infection in humans has range of clinical presentations i.e., from asymptomatic infection to acute respiratory syndrome and fatal encephalitis (inflammation of brain). After exposure and incubation period of 5 to 14 days, illness presents with 3-4 days of fever and headache, followed by drowsiness, disorientation and mental confusion. These signs and symptoms can progress to coma within 24 to 48 hours. The mortality rate of patients infected with NiV infection is reportedly 70%. It is capable of causing diseases in domestic animals too.
- **Treatment:** There is no vaccine for NiV disease either for humans or animals. The main treatment for those infected is intensive supportive care and supportive medicines. NiV Infection can be prevented by avoiding exposure of infected people without protective gear. In disease prone areas, fruits strewn on the ground should not be eaten, for safety.

SPORTS AND AWARDS:

Australia wins Champions Trophy 2018 (hockey):

- On 1st July 2018, Australia won the Champions Trophy hockey 2018 in Breda, the Netherlands.

Australia wins Champions Trophy 2018:

- In the finals, India lost 1-3 to Australia in shootout in the finals of Champions Trophy hockey.
- Australia won their 15th gold medal at Champions Trophy. India won their second silver medal. In the 2016 edition also, India had lost to Australia and settled for silver medal.

Shot putter Inderjeet Singh gets 4- year ban for dope violation:

- On 4th July 2018, the anti-doping disciplinary panel of **NADA** gave a 4 year suspension to shot putter Inderjeet Singh for testing positive for anabolic steroids in a dope test before the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.
- Inderjeet Singh was one of the first athletes to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.
- But he was provisionally suspended on 26th July 2016 after he tested positive for banned substances: androsterone and etiocholanolone.
- The panel said that he has violated article 2.1 of anti-doping code. However the panel said that, NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency) and NDTL (National Dope Testing Laboratory) did not follow well known and established procedures while collecting the sample.

Ramon Magsaysay Award: Two Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk are among six individuals declared winners:

- On 26th July 2018, two Indians Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk were named winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award.
- A total of 6 persons were declared winners of 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award.
- Bharat Vatwani is awarded for leading the rescue of thousands of mentally ill destitute people and reuniting them with their families.
- Sonam Wangchuk is awarded for his contribution in the field of education, culture and progress of communities in remote northern India.
- The recipients of Ramon Magsaysay Award 2018 will receive a certificate, a medallion, and a cash prize.
- They will be presented the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2018 at an award ceremony that will be held on 31st August 2018 at the Cultural Centre of the Philippines.

About Ramon Magsaysay Award:

- Established in – 1957
- Named after – Ramon Magsaysay, the third president of Philippines
- Presented – every year
- Awarded to – individuals who exhibit selfless service and transformative influence

- President of Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation – Carmencita Abella

Gopalkrishna Gandhi to receive 24th Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award:

- **Gopalkrishna Gandhi** has been chosen for the 24th Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award for his contribution in promoting communal harmony, peace and goodwill.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi – 24th Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award:

- Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a former governor of West Bengal. He will be presented with this award at an event on 20th August 2018 at Jawahar Bhawan in Delhi.
- The award contains a citation and a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh. The award is presented on the birthday anniversary of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- The award was instituted to honour Rajiv Gandhi's remarkable contribution to promote peace, communal harmony and struggle against violence.

Shivangi Pathak from Haryana scales Mount Kilimanjaro:

- Haryana's **Shivangi Pathak** has successfully scaled Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak of Africa.

Shivangi Pathak scales Mount Kilimanjaro:

- Shivangi Pathak is 17 years old. Recently, she became the youngest Indian woman to reach the peak of Mount Everest. She was given title 'The Eagle of Mountain'.
- Now, she has scaled the 5,895m high Mount Kilimanjaro from the Marangu route **in 3 days** from 21st July to 24th July 2018.

Dipa Karmakar becomes first Indian to win gold at Gymnastics World Cup

- Dipa Karmakar, one of India's leading gymnasts, scripted history on July 8, 2018 by becoming the first Indian gymnast to win a gold medal in the vault event of the FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Challenge Cup at Mersin, Turkey.
- The win comes as Karmakar returned to action after a long layoff of almost two years due to a knee injury. The 24-year-old, who hails from Tripura, scored 14.150 to clinch the gold.

Salient features :

- This is Dipa's first medal in a World Challenge Cup. She had topped the qualification also with a score of 13.400.
- In her first attempt, Dipa had a difficulty score of 5.400 while collecting 8.700 in execution for a total of 14.100. She improved the score in her second attempt to 14.200 (5.600+8.600), giving her a total average of 14.150.

- The contestants who came second and third included Rifda Irfanaluthfi of Indonesia who clinched the silver with 13.400 points and Goksu Uctas Sanli from Turkey, who took the bronze with a score of 13.200.
- Dipa had also qualified in the balance beam finals by finishing third in the qualification with a score of 11.850. However, she ended up finishing fourth in the event.
- She was accompanied at the event by her coach, Bisheshwar Nandi.
- On August 10, 2016, Karmakar became the first female gymnast from India to qualify for the final vault event at the 2016 Rio Olympics, with a score of 14.833.

About Dipa Karmakar:

- She missed out on the bronze medal, finishing 4th in the finals of the Women's Vault event with an overall score of 15.066.
- She is the first Indian female gymnast ever to compete in the Olympics, and the first Indian gymnast to do so in 52 years.
- Karmakar is only the fifth woman in gymnastics history to land the Produnova vault or the handspring double front.
- She first gained attention when she won a bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, becoming the first Indian female gymnast to do so in the history of the Games.
- She also won a bronze medal at the Asian Gymnastics Championships and finished fifth at the 2015 World Artistic Gymnastics Championships, creating another set of firsts for India.
- For her commendable performance in Rio Olympics 2016, the Indian Government honoured her with the Khel Ratna award in August 2016.
- she also received the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian award, in 2017.

Hima Das becomes first Indian woman to win gold in World Junior Athletics:

- Indian sprinter Hima Das scripted history on July 12, 2018 by becoming the first Indian woman athlete to win a gold medal in the women's 400m final race at the IAAF World Under-20 Athletics Championships, held in Tampere, Finland.
- The 18-year-old, a pre-tournament favourite, finished the race in 51.46s. However, this wasn't her personal best, as she had clocked 51.13 last month in Guwahati at the National Inter-State Championships.
- With the win, Das has become the first Indian woman, be it junior or senior, to win a gold medal at any level in a World Championship.
- She is also the first Indian, man or woman, to have won a gold in a track event at the world level.
- In fact, Das is the first Indian track athlete to have won a medal in the history of this competition.
- She now joins Indian star Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who won a gold medal in the 2016 edition of the IAAF World U20 Championships, which were held in Bydgoszcz, Poland.
- Other Indian medal winners at the World Junior Championships include Seema Punia, who won bronze in discus throw in 2002 and Navjeet Kaur Dhillon, who also won a bronze medal in discus throw in 2014.

About Hima Das:

- The sprinter belongs to Dhing village in Assam's Nagaon district. She took up serious running only in 2017.
- Das had earlier clocked an Indian U-20 record of 51.32 seconds to finish sixth in the Commonwealth Games 400m final in Gold Coast in April 2018.
- Since then, she has improved her timings. She bettered her previous performance and lowered India's U-20 record in 400m by clocking 51.13 seconds in the recent National Inter-State Championships in Guwahati.
- In the IAAF World Under-20 Athletics Championships, Das was the favourite to win the gold, as she was the U-20 season leader in this quarter-mile event.
- Running in lane number 4, Das was behind Romania's Andrea Miklos at the final bend but produced a stunning show during the final 50m stretch to cross the finishing line well ahead of others to clinch the gold.
- While Miklos settled for silver with 52.07 seconds, USA's Taylor Manson came third with 52.28 seconds.

Dhoni completes 500 international games:

- The Indian team's senior most player Mahendra Singh Dhoni today reached the coveted milestone of playing 500 international matches during the second T20 International against England, days ahead of his 37th birthday.
- The Indian team's senior most player Mahendra Singh Dhoni today reached the coveted milestone of playing 500 international matches during the second T20 International against England, days ahead of his 37th birthday.
- In doing so, Dhoni became the third Indian after Sachin Tendulkar (664) and Rahul Dravid (509) to breach the 500 match barrier in international cricket.
- Today's T20 International was Dhoni's 92nd in the shortest format.
- This apart, the former India captain has played 90 Test matches and 318 One Day Internationals.
- In 90 Tests, he had scored 4876 runs with six hundreds and 33 half centuries before calling it a day.
- In the 318 ODIs, he has so far scored 9967 runs with 10 tons and 67 half tons. In the 91 T20's before the current match, he had scored 1455 runs with two half centuries.
- In 499 international matches so far, he has taken 602 catches and effected 178 stumpings.

Olympian Dipa Karmakar to be named Tripura's brand ambassador:

- On July 11, 2018, The BJP Tripura state committee proposed the government to appoint gold medal winner in the prestigious FIG World Challenge Cup in Mersin in **Turkey** Dipa Karmakar, as brand ambassador of the state.
- 24 year old Dipa had created history becoming the first Indian to finish fourth in gymnastics at the Olympics.
- She is also the first from her country to win a gold medal in an international gymnastics event.

Background:

- The Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has been relentlessly working to make Tripura a model state within next three years.
- It will be good if the government makes her ambassador of the state to promote tourism, horticulture and investment hub.

Anjolie Ela Menon awarded Kalidas Samman for visual arts from

- Madhya Pradesh Government has conferred prestigious National Kalidas Samman on noted artist Anjolie Ela Menon (78) for her contribution to visual arts.
- The award was conferred in recognition of her insightful and sensitive portrayal of the identity and spirit of women through her meaningful paintings in a variety of media.

Anjolie Ela Menon:

- She is counted among India's most accomplished artists. She is a well-known muralist and one of India's leading contemporary artists.
- Her preferred medium is oil on masonite, but she also has worked in other media, including glass and water colour.
- She is recipient of numerous national and international awards including the Padma Shri. She recently received a doctorate from Rabindra Bharati University.

Kalidas Samman:

- It is prestigious arts award presented annually by Government of Madhya Pradesh. The award is named after Kālidāsa, a renowned Classical Sanskrit writer of ancient India.
- It was first awarded in 1980. It was initially conferred in alternate years in fields of Classical Music, Classical Dance, Theatre and Plastic Arts. From 1986-87 onwards, it was presented in all four fields every year.
- The award is presented for outstanding achievement in one of the four categories. Some of the previous recipients are Pandit Ravi Shankar, MF Husain, Pandit Jasraj, Shambhu Mitra, Habib Tanvir, Ebrahim Alkazi etc.

Cabinet approves renaming of Agartala Airport as Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala

- The Union Cabinet approved proposal of renaming Agartala Airport in Tripura as 'Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala. The decision comes in the wake of long pending demand of people of Tripura as well as Government of Tripura for paying tribute to Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore:

- He was the king of Tripura from 1923 to 1947 before its merger with India. He was enlightened and benevolent ruler. He is considered the father of modern architecture in Tripura, as entire planning of present-day Tripura was initiated during his rule.

- As a visionary ruler, he had travelled extensively across globe and took several steps for all-round development of Tripura.
- He is also considered one of the pioneers in land reforms. In 1939, he reserved land for local Tripura tribals, which was later instrumental in creation of Tripura autonomous district council.

Background:

- Agartala Airport was constructed in 1942 on the land donated by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore. Due to his initiative, an aerodrome at Agartala was constructed that has evolved as second busiest airport in North East and provides crucial air connectivity to Tripura. Hence, Agartala Airport was renamed after him as a befitting tribute to Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.

India invites US President Donald Trump to be Republic Day chief guest in 2019

- Union Government has invited United States President Donald Trump to be the chief guest at 2019 Republic Day celebrations.
- The invite was reportedly followed up with multiple rounds of diplomatic talks. If President Trump accepts the invitation, he will be second serving US President after Barack Obama to be invited as chief guest of Republic Day Parade.
- It will indicate importance of the Indo-U.S. relationship.

Background

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had invited US President Trump and his family to India when he visited Washington in June 2017.
- His daughter Ivanka Trump, who is seen as President's adviser, had travelled to India in September 2017 as head of US delegation for Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) at PM Modi's invitation.
- Earlier Chief guests of India's Republic Day parades are 2018- 10 Leaders of ASEAN Countries (It was first Republic Day event that saw participation of many leaders at same time as chief guests), 2017- Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi), 2016- Francois Hollande (President of France), 2015- Barack Obama (US President), 2014- Shinzo Abe (Japanese Prime Minister), 2013- Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (King of Bhutan), 2012- Yingluck Shinawatra (Then Prime Minister of Thailand), 2011- Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Then President of Indonesia).

BOOKS:

“Winning Like Sourav: Think & Succeed Like Ganguly” by Abhirup Bhattacharya:

- The book “Winning Like Sourav: Think & Succeed Like Ganguly” has been written by Abhirup Bhattacharya.

Winning Like Sourav: Think & Succeed Like Ganguly:

- This book speaks about Sourav Ganguly's trust on talented youngsters that gained India one of its greatest cricketers of all times – Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

- Sourav Ganguly is also credited for encouraging players like Yuvraj Singh, Mohammed Kaif, Zaheer Khan, Virender Sehwag, Harbhajan Singh and building the concepts of 'Team India' and 'Men in Blue'.
- Sourav Ganguly turned 46 years on 8th July 2018. Abhirup Bhattacharya has previously authored "Winning Like Virat: Think and Success Like Kohli".

Ramachandra Guha pens "Gandhi: The years that changed the world(1914-1918)" book:

- A book titled "Gandhi: The years that changed the world (1914-1948)" has been written **Ramachandra Guha**. This book will be released in September 2018.

Gandhi: The years that changed the world (1914-1948):

- This book will be published by **Penguin Random House India**. Ramachandra Guha is a popular historian and author. He is 60 years old.
- He has written several bestselling books like "India After Gandhi" and "Gandhi Before India".
- "Gandhi: The years that changed the world (1914-1948)" is said to be the most definitive new biography of Gandhi.
- This book will narrate the story of Gandhi's life, from his departure from South Africa to his assassination in 1948. It will also tell the history of Indian freedom movement.
- This book also contains Gandhi's arguments with B.R. Ambedkar, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Subhas Chandra Bose, etc. This book is a follow up to "Gandhi Before India" (2013).

NILGIRI TAHR – MOVING TOWARDS EXTINCT:

- As per the latest studies, climate change is threatening the Nilgiri tahr. It is estimated that the endangered wild goat could lose approximately 60% of its habitat, starting from the 2030s.

Background:

- There are only around 2,500 tahrs left in the wild and their population — "small and isolated, making them vulnerable to local extinction" — shows a "decreasing" trend, as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Nilgiri Tahr-Salient features :

- IUCN status- EN
- It is listed in **Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Currently, the only populations with more than 300 individuals are in Eravikulam National Park and in the Grass Hills in Anamalai.

SCIENCE AND TECH:

India's first private Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) and Light Bullet Proof Vehicles (LBPV) manufacturing factory to be set up in Kota:

- India's first private sector unit for manufacturing Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) and Light Bullet Proof Vehicles (LBPV) will be set up by DCM Shriram Industries Group on the campus of Shriram Rayons in Kota.

India's first private UAV and LBPV manufacturing factory:

- Shriram Rayons, a company of DCM Shriram Industries Group, has been manufacturing rayon tyre cord in Kota for the past 54 years.
- On 5th July 2018, the company obtained a licence from the centre to manufacture UAV and LBPV.
- The UAV and LBPV are indigenously designed and developed by the DCM Shriram Industries Group.
- Shriram Rayons' Kota unit, has been developed on 11 acres. It will be India's first private sector company to manufacture UAVs and LBPVs.
- Total of 3000 LBPVs and 500 UAVs will be produced annually after the plant is set up.
- These UAVs and LBPVs would be used by defence and para-military forces in India. UAVs will help in surveillance and LBPV will protect defence and para-military forces from light automatic weapon fire, IED blasts and small grenade attack.
- The UAVs would fly to a height of 500 to 2000 km. LBPVs can function in tough terrains. It also has off-road abilities.
- The company would release first samples of the defence products within the next 18 months. The plant will be equipped with three-layer security.
- DCM Industries Group is a 124-year-old company. It has entered defence equipment manufacturing after the launch of 'Defence Procurement Procedure 2016' by the central government.
- The new defence unit of Shriram Rayons in Kota is established under 'Make in India'.

India successfully test-fires Brahmos supersonic missile :

- On 16th July 2018, the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired from an Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur, Odisha.

Successful test firing of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile:

- This test was done under extreme weather conditions like high speed wind against the missile system and various other extreme conditions.
- The success of the test increased the life of the missile by 2 to 5 years.
- Range of the missile: up to 290km with supersonic speed.
- Cruising speed: up to Mach 3.0 that is 3 times the speed of sound.
- Brahmos is a supersonic missile. It has been produced together by India and Russia. It was named Brahmos after the rivers Brahmaputra of India and Moskva of Russia.
- BrahMos is a joint venture of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia.
- BrahMos has been operationalised in the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force.
- BRAHMOS is an important force multiplier in battlefields. It has great land-attack, anti-ship capabilities with multi-role and multi-platform abilities.

E-Aksharayan a desktop software to enable editing of text printed on scanned documents launched by IT Ministry:

- On July 31, 2018, The IT ministry launched a desktop software e-Aksharayan in a conference for Indian Languages Technology Industry 'Bhashantara', in New Delhi.

Objective:

- To enable editing and printing of text in scanned documents

About E-Aksharayan:

- The software e-Aksharayan was launched in 7 Indian languages.
- They are namely: Hindi, Bangla, Malayalam, Gurmukhi, Tamil, Kannada & Assamese.
- This software would scanned printed Indian language documents into a fully editable text format in Unicode encoding.
- This would cease the gap in Internet accessibility due to non-availability of content in Indian languages.

Other releases and announcements:

- Mobile Testing Data in all 22 Indian languages in mobile handsets IS standard 16333 (Part 3) was released.
- It would help in message readability and inputting of text in the phones for all 22 Indian official languages.
- Development of text to speech tech in 12 Indian languages is underway.
- Development of technology that will allow people to select complete name of website in any script is also underway between Data Xgenplus and ICANN.

Background:

By 2021, Indic language users will grow from current 234 million to reach 536 million.

ISRO CONDUCTS PAD ABORT TEST

- ISRO recently conducted the first 'pad abort' test critical for a future human space mission. The Pad Abort Test demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad.

What is PAT?

- PAT (pad abort test) is the first in a series of tests to qualify a crew escape system technology of a manned mission in the future.

What is Crew Escape System?

- It is an emergency escape measure to quickly pull the astronaut cabin along with crew out to a safe distance from launch vehicle during a launch abort.

BRAHMOS MISSILE

- BrahMos, the supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired recently. The test-firing conducted from a Mobile Autonomous Launcher was part of service life extension programme for Indian Army under extreme weather condition.

About BrahMos missile:

- Weighing 2.5 ton, BrahMos ALCM is the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft. It has been modified by HAL to carry weapons.
- It is a world-class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role and is capable of being launched from land, sea and air.
- BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia.
- The name Brahmos has been taken from two rivers – Brahmaputra and Moskva.
- The heavyweight missile, integrated with the long-range fighter, is seen as a force multiplier for the IAF.
- The Brahmos cruise missiles have an effective strike range of around **290-300 km**.
- The land and warship versions have already been inducted by the armed forces.

NASA to launch Parker Solar Probe to touch the Sun :

- The US space agency NASA on July 20, 2018 announced to launch the Parker Solar Probe, a robotic car-size spacecraft, to study the Sun and reveal multiple mysteries behind the star.
- The spacecraft will be launched in August 2018 on the United Launch Alliance Delta IV Heavy from Cape Canaveral in Florida.
- This planned seven-year mission will fly into the Sun's corona within 3.8 million miles (6.1 million km) from the solar surface, seven times closer than any other spacecraft.

Parker Solar Probe:

- Parker Solar Probe is part of NASA's Living with a Star Program to explore aspects of the Sun-Earth system that directly affect life and society.
- The spacecraft has been designed to endure wicked heat while zooming through the solar corona to study the outermost part of the stellar atmosphere that gives rise to the solar wind.
- Parker Solar Probe will fly down within 4 million miles of the sun's surface, facing heat and radiation like no spacecraft before it.
- It will provide new data on solar activity and will help scientists in forecasting major space-weather events that impact life on Earth.

What made this mission a reality:

- Technology like the heat shield, solar array cooling system and fault management system has made such a mission a reality.
- The heat shield called the Thermal Protection System (TPS) is a sandwich of carbon-carbon composite surrounding four and half inches of carbon foam.
- The solar array cooling system allows the solar arrays to produce power under the intense thermal load from the Sun and the fault management system protects the spacecraft during the long periods of time when the spacecraft can't communicate with the Earth.

The probe holds the answers of scientists' outstanding questions:

- Parker Solar Probe will explore the corona, a region of the Sun only seen from Earth when the Moon blocks out the Sun's bright face during total solar eclipses.
- The corona holds the answers of scientists' outstanding questions about the Sun's activity and processes. Scientists hope to learn the secret of the corona's enormously high temperatures.
- The spacecraft is also expected to reveal the mechanisms at work behind the acceleration of solar energetic particles, which can reach speeds more than half as fast as the speed of light as they rocket away from the Sun.

Parker Solar Probe uses four suites of instruments

- The spacecraft carries several instruments to study the Sun remotely or directly. Together, the data from these instruments will help scientists answer three foundational questions about the Sun.
- **FIELDS suite:** Led by the University of California, Berkeley, the FIELDS suite measures the electric and magnetic fields around the spacecraft. FIELDS captures waves and turbulence in the inner heliosphere with high time resolution.
- **WISPR instrument:** The Wide-Field Imager for Parker Solar Probe (WISPR) instrument is the only imaging instrument aboard the spacecraft.
- **SWEAP suite:** The SWEAP (Solar Wind Electrons Alphas and Protons Investigation) suite uses two complementary instruments to gather data. It measures properties as velocity, density, and temperature to improve our understanding of the solar wind and coronal plasma.
- **ISOIS suite:** The ISOIS suite (Integrated Science Investigation of the Sun) measures particles across a wide range of energies. The symbol 'O' stands for the Sun.

Tejas: Indigenous fighter aircraft commences operations from Sulur Air Force Station:

- Indigenous fighter aircraft Tejas of No 45 Squadron (The Flying Daggers) of Indian Air Force (IAF) has formally commenced operations from Sulur Air Force Station in Tamil Nadu. With deployment of Tejas, its squadron 'Flying Daggers' took up active wartime role towards safeguarding national skies.

Salient features :

- Southern Air Command (SAC) based at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala has been entrusted with responsibility of integrating Tejas fighter aircraft in IAF's Concept of Operations.
- It has been involved in training aircrew of fighter aircraft Tejas. Sulur Air Force Station will now undertake operations and maintenance of the indigenous fighter aircraft.

Tejas fighter aircraft

- Tejas is the first advanced fly-by-wire Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) designed, developed and manufactured indigenously by state owned Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL).
- It is lightweight single-seat multi-role jet fighter. It has been pegged as world's smallest and lightest supersonic fighter. It is powered by a single engine. It has tailless and compound delta wing design.
- It was developed and manufactured under Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters. It is equipped with satellite-aided Inertial Navigation System. It has digital computer-based attack system and autopilot mode.
- It can fire Air to Air missiles, carry bombs and precision guided ammunition. It has limited reach of a little over 400-km. It will be mainly used for close air-to-ground operations.
- **Note:** LCA Tejas is not India's first indigenous fighter to be inducted into IAF. In April 1967, IAF had formed the first operational squadron with the indigenous HF-24 Marut fighter.

Ministry of Earth Sciences has unveiled state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System– SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting):

- Science & Technology, Earth Sciences; Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan unveiled a state-of-the-art Air Quality and Weather Forecast System– SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting) at Chandni Chowk in Delhi today.
- The giant true colour LED display gives out real-time air quality index on 24x7 basis with colour coding along with 72-hour advance forecast.
- The system, first of its kind in the country, was developed indigenously in record time by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- The minister said based on the Air Quality Index on a particular day, Health advisory and related precaution will be notified to prepare citizens well in advance. Dr. Harsh Vardhan, further added that in addition to monitoring and forecasting of regular air quality and weather parameters, the Chandni Chowk air quality station will also measure sun's UV-Index and will provide measurement of online automatic ultrafine particles PM1 and Mercury, both of which have direct relevance to human health. Based on UVI, skin advisories will be issued on display.

- “Our mission model project SAFAR is implemented in four cities of India – Delhi, Pune, Mumbai and Ahmedabad as an operational service. According to a preliminary economic assessment of the benefits of the system, if 5% of people suffering from air-pollution related diseases take advantage of the advisories and precautions in Delhi alone, it would result in a saving of nearly Rs. 2,500 crores in terms of health-related cost benefit,” said Dr Harsh Vardhan, addressing a large gathering at Town Hall in Chandni Chowk.
- The system will be an integral part of India’s first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi and will strengthen the existing air quality network of SAFAR, Central Pollution Control Board and Delhi Pollution Control Committee.
- SAFAR will accelerate public awareness and preparedness of air pollution and weather extremes. It will also lead to better understanding of linkages among emissions, weather, pollution and climate. It will monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction.
- In addition to regular air quality parameters like PM2.5, PM10, Sulfur Dioxide, Ozone, Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Monoxide, the system will also monitor the existence of Benzene, Toluene and Xylene.
- Besides health, SAFAR system would benefit cost savings to several other sectors like agriculture, aviation, infrastructure, disaster management skill, tourism and many others, which directly or indirectly get affected by air quality and weather.