

MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MAY - 2018

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INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND WORLD

President to preside over PM-headed panel on Gandhi 150th birth Anniversary

- President Ram Nath Kovind will preside over first meeting of National Committee for Commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019.
- The committee is headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has 114 members on board including Vice President M.
- Venkaiah Naidu, former Prime Ministers and Chief Justice of India, Lok Sabha Speaker, members of union cabinet, political party leaders, chief ministers, Gandhians, spiritual gurus and social workers among others.

Background:

- The birth anniversary of father of the nation will be commemorated from 2nd October, 2019 to 2nd October, 2020. Many events are planned to organised at both national and international level to propagate message of Mahatma Gandhi. In 2018-19 budget proposals, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had earmarked Rs. 150 crore for the celebrations.

Salient features :

- The 114-member committee will discuss policies, plans and preparatory activities for commemoration of birth anniversary. Its recommendations will be considered for implementation by government.
- The Ministry of Culture will be nodal ministry for celebrations. Chief Ministers of different states, leaders of various political parties, Gandhians, spiritual leaders and social workers are expected to attend the meeting.

15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to be held in Varanasi in January 2019

- The 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in holy city of Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) from January 21 to January 23, 2019.
- Its theme will be “Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India”. The mega event will be organised by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in association with Uttar Pradesh government.
- It will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Mauritian counterpart Pravind Jugnauth.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is celebrated every year in India on 9 January. The day also commemorates return of father of nation Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa in Mumbai (then Bombay) on January 9, 1915. The day is celebrated to mark contribution of overseas Indian community to the development of India.
- The day was formally established in 2003. Celebrations of the day are sponsored by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
- The 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas was held in Bengaluru (Karnataka) with theme “Redefining Engagement with the Indian Diaspora”.

- The annual Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Program since 2003 has been organised in the following cities:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>STATE</u>
10 th	2012	Jaipur	Rajasthan
11 th	2013	Kochi	Kerala
12 th	2014	New delhi	Delhi
13 th	2015	Gandhinagar	Gujrat
14 th	2017	Bengalaru	karnataka
15 th	2019	Varanasi	Uttar Pradesh

14 of Indian cities figure in World's 20 most polluted cities list: WHO

- According to Global Urban Air Pollution database released by World Health Organisation (WHO), 14 Indian cities have figured in list of world's 20 most polluted cities in terms of particulate matter PM2.5 levels in 2016.
- These 14 cities include Delhi, Varanasi, Kanpur, Faridabad, Gaya, Patna, Agra, Muzaffarpur, Srinagar, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Patiala and Jodhpur.
- They were followed by Ali Subah Al- Salem (Kuwait) and few cities in China and Mongolia. In terms of PM10 levels, 13 cities in India figured among the 20 most-polluted cities.

Background:

- The database measured levels of fine particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) from more than 4,300 cities in 108 countries.
- It estimates that around 7 million people die every year from exposure to fine particles in polluted air that penetrate deep into lungs and cardiovascular system.
- WHO recognizes air pollution is critical risk factor for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) as it causes diseases including stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections, including pneumonia.
- Since 2016, over 1,000 additional cities are being added to WHO's database, showing that more countries are measuring and taking action to reduce air pollution than ever before.

Salient features :

- Pollution related Deaths:** According to WHO database, ambient air pollution alone caused some 4.2 million deaths in 2016 across the globe, while household air pollution from cooking with polluting fuels and technologies has caused 3.8 million deaths in same period. It shows that 9 out of 10 people in the world breathe air containing high levels of pollutants.
- Global Scenario:** More than 90% of air pollution-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (including India), mainly in Asia and Africa. It is followed by low-and middle-income countries of Eastern Mediterranean region, Europe and Americas. More than 80% of people living in urban areas are exposed to air quality levels that exceed WHO limits. While all regions of world are affected, populations in low-income cities are most impacted.
- South Asia region:** It alone accounts for 1.5 million (40%) deaths by household air pollution and 1.3 million (30%) global deaths due to ambient air pollution. Member-countries in Southeast

Asia Region need to aggressively address double burden of household and ambient (outdoor) air pollution.

- **Lack of clean fuel:** Around 3 billion people (more than 40% of the world's population) still do not have access to clean cooking fuels and technologies in their homes, the main source of household air pollution.
- Since 2016, over 1,000 additional cities have been added to WHO's database, which shows more countries are measuring and taking action to reduce air pollution than ever before.

POSHAN Abhiyaan: India inks \$200 million loan agreement with World Bank

- The Union Government has signed \$200 million loan agreement with World Bank for National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan) for 315 districts across all states and union territories.
- The loan proceeds will be used for reducing stunting in children 0-6 years of age from 38.4% to 25% by 2022 under POSHAN Abhiyaan.

POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) was launched in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan in March 2018. It aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.
- It targets to reduce level of under-nutrition and other related problems by ensuring convergence of various nutrition related schemes. It also targets stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth rate.
- It will monitor and review implementation of all such schemes and utilize existing structural arrangements of line ministries wherever available.
- Its large component involves gradual scaling-up of the interventions supported by ongoing World Bank assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP) to all districts in the country by 2022.

Work Bank Load:

- The World Bank loan will be used for improving coverage and quality of ICDS nutrition services to pregnant and lactating women and children under 3 years of age.
- It will be also used for project in improving skills and capacities of ICDS staff and community nutrition workers, instituting mechanisms of community mobilization and behaviour change communication, strengthening systems of citizen engagement and grievance redress.
- It will be also used for establishing mobile technology based tools for improved monitoring and management of services for better outreach to beneficiaries during critical 1,000 day window for nutrition impact.
- It will additionally ensure convergence of all nutrition related schemes and provide performance based incentives to states and community nutrition and health workers, facilitating a focus on results.

Government approves green licence plates for private electric vehicles

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has approved green licence plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private e-vehicles and yellow for taxis to promote electric vehicles (eCurrent vehicles) in India.

- The purpose behind distinctive green number plates is easy identification of electric vehicles for preferential treatment in parking, free entry in congested zones besides other proposed benefits like concessional toll.

Need:

- As per estimate, India at present has 1 to 1.5 lakh electric vehicles. It is projected to grow to about 5% of total vehicles in next five years.
- Of the about 24 million vehicles sold in India in 2017-18, e-vehicles accounted for barely about 1%. Government has undertaken various measure aimed at promoting evehicle's use and government is considering exemption from permits for such vehicles.

Other Proposals:

- Besides, MoRTH is also contemplating permitting youth in age group of 16-18 years to drive scooters, which are gearless and this will lead to a big demand for e-scooters.
- Currently, under the Motor VEHICLES Act, 1988, those in the age group of 16-18 years are granted licence for below 50 CC gearless scooters.
- It is also contemplating to ask taxi aggregators to have incremental share of e-vehicles from 2020 onwards, which could be 1% of the fleet every year. Similarly, all public transport operators are also mandated to provide 1% incremental fleet from 2020 onwards.
- It is also going to request Union Finance Ministry for 50% rate of depreciation on EVs as against the rate of 15% for conventional vehicles. The proposals also include bringing down GST on batteries to 12% at par with the GST on EVs.

India, Nepal flag offs bus service between Janakpur and Ayodhya under Ramayan Circuit

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli jointly inaugurated direct bus service between Janakpur (Nepal) and Ayodhya (India). Both are sacred cities for Hindus and bus service was launched as part of India's Ramayan Circuit under Swadesh Darshan Scheme to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.

Salient features :

- The bus service was flagged off after PM Modi visited famed 20th century Janaki temple, dedicated to the Hindu goddess Sita, where he offered special prayers. Janakpur is known as birth place of Sita, the wife of Lord Rama. Janaki temple was built in memory of Sita in 1910.
- It is three-storey structure made entirely of stone and marble is 50-metre high and spread over 4,860 sq feet.
- This was overall third visit PM Modi to Nepal and first high-level visit from India side since the formation of the new Oli Government in Nepal.

15 destinations under Ramayan Circuit:

- The government has identified 15 destinations in India for development under Ramayana Circuit theme under Swadesh Darshan Scheme. They are Ayodhya, Nandigram, Shringverpur and Chitrakoot (Uttar Pradesh), Sitamarhi, Buxar and Darbhanga (Bihar), Chitrakoot (Madhya

Pradesh), Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh), Mahendragiri (Odisha), Nashik and Nagpur (Maharashtra), Bhadrachalam (Telangana), Hampi (Karnataka) and Rameswaram (Tamil Nadu).

Nepal to host 2018 BIMSTEC summit

- Nepal is going to host 2018 Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit. It was announced by Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli during his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kathmandu (capital city).

BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC is the sub-regional group of seven countries in South Asia and South East Asia lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity.
- BIMSTEC countries are India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka from South Asia and Myanmar, Thailand from South East Asia. They are collectively home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of global population.
- BIMSTEC was established on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration. It is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Its prime objectives include technological and economic cooperation among south Asian and south East Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- It is sector-driven cooperative organization, starting with six sector including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries.
- In 2008, it was expanded to embrace eight more sectors including agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change.

Zojila tunnel: PM Narendra Modi launches construction of Asia's longest road tunnel

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated construction of Rs 6,809 crore Zojila tunnel project in Jammu and Kashmir's Leh.
- It will be India's and Asia's longest and strategic bi-directional road tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.

Zojila Tunnel:

- It will be situated at altitude of 11,578 feet on Srinagar-Kargil-Leh National Highway (NH-1A). It consists of 14.150 km long two-lane bidirectional single tube tunnel with parallel 14.200 km long egress (escape) tunnel, making it Asia's longest bidirectional road tunnel.
- Its objective is to provide safe, fast and cheap all weather connectivity to strategically important Leh region in J&K which at moment is limited to at best six months because of snow on mountainous passes and threat of avalanches.
- It will reduce time taken to cross Zojila pass from present three and half hours to just fifteen minutes.
- The tunnel will have latest safety features like uninterrupted power supply (UPS), tunnel emergency lighting, fully transverse ventilation system, CCTV monitoring, variable message signs (VMS), traffic logging equipment, over height vehicle detection, tunnel radio system etc.
- The construction project will be implemented by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) through National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited

(NHIDCL) on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode. It will be completed in five years.

Bangladesh Bhavan inaugurated at Vishwa Bharti University in Santiniketan

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina inaugurated Bangladesh Bhawan at Vishwa Bharti University in Santiniketan, West Bengal.
- Bangladesh Bhavan in Santiniketan will house museum and library. It has been divided into four zones. Zone I is dedicated to pre-historic period of undivided Bengal.
- Zone II includes chronicle phases of the language movement, Zone III is dedicated to 1971 India-Pakistan (Bangladesh Liberation) War. Zone IV will educate visitors about Rabindra in Bangladesh.

Visva Bharati University:

- Visva Bharati is public central university located in Santiniketan, West Bengal. It was founded by Rabindranath Tagore on 23 December 1921 who called it Visva-Bharati, which means communion of the world with India.
- Until independence it was a college but after independence, it was given status of university and was renamed Visva-Bharati University in 1951. Prime Minister of India is Chancellor of the University.
- Some of its renowned alumni includes Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen, globally renowned filmmaker Satyajit Ray and leading art historian, R. Siva Kumar. It is West Bengal's only central university.

Bilateral trade between India and china resumes through Nathu la border:

- On 1st May 2018, the bilateral trade for 2018 between the traders of India and China commenced through the Nathu La border.

Bilateral trade between India and China resumes through Nathu La border:

In 2017, the India China Bilateral trade was stopped due to the Doklam standoff.

- In 2016-2017, goods worth Rs 3.54 crore were traded through the Sino-Indian border, Nathu La.
- The trade between India and China through Nathu La border resumed in 2006, 44 years after it was closed. It is located at an altitude of 14,200 feet.
- An official meeting was conducted between representatives from India and China including officials from ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) of India and PLA (People's Liberation Army) of China.
- Discussions were made on currency exchange, road connectivity and issues due to weather, etc.

Walmart acquires Flipkart for \$16 billion, world's largest ecommerce deal:

- Walmart Inc will acquire a 77 percent holding in Flipkart Group for \$16 billion.

Walmart acquires Flipkart for \$16 billion:

- Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal and other shareholders will hold the remaining shares.
- Japan's Softbank will exit Flipkart by selling entire 20 per cent stake to Walmart. Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal will exit Flipkart by selling his 5.5 % stake to Walmart.
- This is said to be the largest-ever deal in e-commerce. It is said that, Flipkart will maintain a separate brand and operating structure.

MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra Day and GUJRAT diwas:

On 1st May 2018, Gujarat and Maharashtra celebrated their Statehood Day:

- Maharashtra and Gujarat came into existence as states on 1st May 1960. Hence May 1 is marked as Maharashtra Day and Gujarat Day.
- On 1st May 1960 Maharashtra and Gujarat were formed on linguistic grounds.

Gujarat to launch month-long water conservation project from May 1:

- Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said that, the Gujarat government will start a month-long initiative named 'Sujalam Sufalam Water Conservation Initiative', from 1st May 2018 (Foundation Day of Gujarat) to increase its water conservation capacity.
- Activities like deepening ponds, desilting water reservoirs and check dams, cleaning and repairing Narmada canal networks, and executing rain water harvesting projects in urban areas will be done as a part of this initiative.
- Through this programme, the government has aimed to raise rain water conservation capacity in Gujarat by 11,000 lakh square feet.
- Rs 345 crore has been allotted for this initiative. Various government departments, voluntary organisations, industries, educational and religious institutes, and PSUs will be involved in this initiative.
- He added that, the Gujarat Government had an aim to revive 32 rivers, over a length of 340 kilometres, as part of the initiative.
- Deepening of over 4,000 ponds, 1,500 check dams, 200 water reservoirs, and cleaning and repairing of 5,400 kilometres of canals covering 6,000 villages will be performed.
- A committee led by Gujarat Chief Secretary J N Singh has been formed to oversee the project.

Maharashtra to get new airport in Sindhudurg:

Maharashtra State will get a new airport at ParuleChipi in Sindhudurg district, which is expected to be functional by September 2018.

More information about new airport in Maharashtra:

- This airport is being constructed under the aegis of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) by IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt. Ltd. on a design-build-finance-operate-transfer (DBFOT) basis.
- Estimated cost for constructing this airport is Rs. 520 crore.
- Sindhudurg airport will have a 2500-meter runway and in terms of passenger handling capacity, it will be able to handle 200 departing and 200 passengers arriving during peak hours.
- Post completion, this airport will provide better connectivity to the Konkan region of Maharashtra, parts of Goa, North Karnataka and Western Maharashtra.

Maharashtra became the first state to provide digitally-signed land record receipts:

On May 2, 2018, Maharashtra became the first state of India to provide digitally-signed land record receipts (also known as 7/12 receipts).

Maharashtra Govt. provides digitally-signed land record receipts:

- 7/12 receipt is the most important document which establishes the ownership of the land. Farmers are required to provide it while applying for loans. Besides, it is also used by the government during crop surveys and to extend various facilities.
- With digital authentication, the farmers will no longer have to visit revenue offices or the Maha e-seva centres. They would simply be required to quote the gat (group) number or survey number to bank or a government department, through which respective agency can ensure the 7/12 receipt online.
- Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis claimed that this initiative will enhance 'ease of doing business', would check irregularities and bring in transparency.

Maharashtra government nod to rename Maharashtra university after poetess bahinabai Chaudhari :

On 3rd May 2018, the Maharashtra government decided to recommend the decalartion of an ordinance to rename the Jalgaon-based North Maharashtra University after poetess Bahinabai Chaudhari.

Kaviyatri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University:

- This decision was taken by the Maharashtra state cabinet chaired by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.
- The North Maharashtra University is to be renamed as 'Kaviyatri Bahinabai Chaudhari North Maharashtra University'.
- Bahinabai Chaudhari is a renowned poetess of the 19th century. The cabinet also, approved a revised salary increase for the Bombay High Court desk officers, equivalent to the desk officers in the state secretariat.

Maharashtra becomes first state to sign MoU with GRIHA council for green buildings:

- On May 11, 2018, Maharashtra State Government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Centre's Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) Council to train state's Public Works Department (PWD) officials to rate government buildings.

Details about Maharashtra Govt's MoU with GRIHA:

- Maharashtra has thus become the first Indian state to sign such MoU with GRIHA.
- As per the terms of the agreement, GRIHA Council, would train Maharashtra's PWD's civil and electrical engineers and architects to rate government buildings on basis of set parameters
- Objective behind this rating exercise is to encourage environment friendly/green buildings, that are designed, constructed, maintained and demolished using environmentally responsible processes and materials.
- GRIHA Council was founded by TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi) with support from Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

Roll out of e-way system for intra-state movement of goods in the Maharashtra, Manipur and Union Territories

- On 25th May 2018, the e-Way Bill system for intra-State movement of goods was implemented for Maharashtra, Manipur and Union Territories (without legislature).

Roll out of e-Way Bill system for intra-State movement of goods:

- On 25th May 2018, the e-Way Bill system for intra-State movement of goods was implemented for:
- Maharashtra, Manipur, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep.
- The e-Way Bill system for inter-State movement of goods was launched on 1st April 2018.
- By 25th May 2018, 27 States / Union Territories will have implemented the e-Way Bill system for intra-State movement of goods.

Tata Motors a MoU with the Government of Maharashtra to promote e-mobility:

- The Tata Motors and Maharashtra Government have signed a MoU to deploy 1,000 Electric Vehicles across a range of passenger and commercial vehicles in Maharashtra.

Salient features :

- Tata Power Ltd, a Tata Group company, will help Tata Motors to set up EV Charging Stations in Maharashtra.
- The MoU has come as part of the World Environment Day celebrations.
- On the occasion, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis flagged off five Tigor EVs at the Gateway of India.
- The five Tigor EVs were provided by Tata Motors to the EESL (Energy Efficiency Services Limited) as part of its tender for the initiative.
- As part of the tender with EESL, Tata Motors has already manufactured 250 cars.

STATES

Sikkim's Pawan Chamling becomes India's longest-serving Chief Minister

- Sikkim's Pawan Chamling (68) created history by becoming longest-serving Chief Minister in India.
- He has completed 23 years, four months and 17 days of uninterrupted service in office. He surpassed earlier record held by Jyoti Basu, 5-term West Bengal CM who held office for 23 years.
- Basu was in office from June 21, 1977 to November 6, 2000.

Pawan Chamling

- Pawan Chamling was born on September 22, 1950, at Yangang, South Sikkim. He had dropped out of school after matriculation. He took his plunge into politics at age of 22 during the time when negotiations were underway for merger of the kingdom of Sikkim with India.
- He started his active political career at age of 32. He was elected as president of Yangang Gram Panchayat in 1982. In 1985, he was elected to the Sikkim Legislative Assembly for the first time.
- He had served as Minister for Industries, Information and Public Relations from 1989 to 1992 in Nar Bahadur Bhandari cabinet in the state.
- After a series of political upheavals in Sikkim, he formed Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) in 1993. He was sworn in as chief minister of Sikkim for the first time on December 12, 1994 and now has been in office for fifth consecutive term.

First organised census of Indus Dolphins begins in Punjab

- Punjab government along World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India are conducting first organised census of Indus Dolphins, one of the world's rarest mammals found only in India and Pakistan. The organized census aims at conservation of the species.

Salient features :

- The first organised census will be conducted over period of five days in 185 km stretch between Talwara and Harike Barrage in Beas River in Punjab where riverine fresh water Indus Dolphins are confined.
- It will be conducted two joint teams of Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation, Punjab and WWF-India.
- Its main objective is to establish accurate population of dolphins in order to plan conservation of species.

Indus Dolphin:

- Indus Dolphin is subspecies of freshwater river dolphin (which also includes Ganges River dolphin) found in Indus river (and its Beas and Sutlej tributaries) flowing through India and Pakistan.
- It is national mammal of Pakistan. It is a key indicator species of river's health. Its presence is considered as river is healthy. Indus dolphin like Ganges River dolphin is functionally blind and relies on echolocation to navigate, communicate and hunt prey in muddy river water.
- Only 1,816 Indus dolphins are reported to exist presently in lower parts of Indus River. They are patchily distributed in five small, sub-populations that are separated by irrigation barrages across course of Indus river and its tributaries.
- Their numbers have declined dramatically after construction of irrigation system.
- It listed by the IUCN as **endangered** on its Red List of Threatened Species. Indus Dolphin was also found in Sutlej decades back, but river pollution has caused its extinction in river.

Rythu Bandhu Scheme: Telangana government launches investment support scheme for farmers

- Telangana government has launched Rythu Bandhu (friend of farmers) Scheme, an investment support scheme to support livelihood of farmers. It is first of its kind investment support scheme for farmers to be launched by any state in India.

Salient features :

- Under this scheme, farmers will directly get financial support twice every year to maximize agricultural production and productivity.
- They will get investment support of Rs 8,000 per acre every year (Rs. 4000 each for monsoon and Rabi season) as crop investment support.
- About 58 lakh farmers who till over 1.42 crore acres of land in the state are expected to be benefitted from the initiative.
- The state government has already set aside Rs 12,000 crore in the 2018-19 budget exclusively for this scheme.

First all-woman Post Office Passport Seva Kendra starts operations in Phagwara, Punjab

- The Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) run by an all-woman team began its operations Phagwara, Punjab. It was inaugurated by Union Minister Vijay Sampla in the local head Post Office of Phagwara.

Salient features :

- This kendra was 192nd POPSK in the country and first one to be operated by an all-woman team. It was launched as part of Central Government's initiative for women empowerment.
- It will cater needs of people from Kapurthala, Nawandhar and Jalandhar rural districts. It will benefit people immensely in this area as town is NRI hub of Doaba region of Punjab.
- It will enable people of the region to get all facilities related to applying for and processing of passport applications.

Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK):

- POPSK is Government initiative led by Ministry of External Affairs (India) (MEA) and Department of Posts (DoP), where Head Post Offices (HPO) and post offices are being utilized for delivery of passport related services to citizens.
- It aims to develop passport related services on bigger scale and to ensure wider area coverage for simplifying process to traveling abroad.
- The first POPSK was inaugurated at the Mysuru Head Post office in Karnataka on January 25, 2017.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Kishanganga Hydroelectric project in J&K

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 300 MW Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project in Bandipora District of Jammu & Kashmir.
- He also laid foundation stone of 1000 MW capacity Pakal Dul Power Project.

Pakal Dul HydroElectric Project:

- Pakal Dul Dam is proposed 167m concrete-face rock-fill dam (CFRD) on Marusadar River, a tributary of Chenab River in Kishtwar district of J&K.
- The primary purpose of the dam is hydroelectric power generation. Its underground power house has four units each of 250 MW capacity (total 1000 MW).
- With 1000 MW capacity, it will be largest Hydro Power Project in J&K on completion. It will be also first storage project in J&K.
- Its project cost is shared by Government of India as well as the Government of J&K. It will have immense benefits for J&K by supplying power and also by improving water availability during lean season.

Kishangana HydroElectric Project:

- It is 37 m high concrete faced rockfill dam (CFRD) constructed on Kishanganga River in Jhelum River basin in Bandipore in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Its construction was started in 2007 and completed in 2016. It has underground power House with 3 Units of 110 MW capacity each (330 MW).
- Its all units were synchronised in May 2018. It will provide a free power of 13% to the state, which will be around Rs. 133 crore per year.

Chhatisgarh CM Raman Singh, MoS railways Ranjan Gohain flag off Antyodaya

Express:

On 1st May 2018, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh and union minister of state for railways Ranjan Gohain flagged off Antyodaya Express.

Antyodaya Express:

- Antyodaya Express **began its service from Raipur, Chhattisgarh** on its first day.
- It is a fully unreserved, well-equipped **weekly train between Durg and Firozpur Cantt.**
- The train features modern coaches, RO drinking water, mobile charging facilities, bio-toilets, LED lights etc.

Dalmia group adopts Gandhikota fort in Andhra :

Dalmia Bharat group has adopted the Gandikota Fort (located in in Kadapa district, Andhra Pradesh) under Central Government's 'Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan' scheme.

- Under 'Adopt a Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan' scheme, Union Ministry of Tourism had invited private and public sector companies to adopt as many as 116 ASI-protected monuments/sites to take up the responsibility for its maintenance, conservation and development.
- Gandikota Fort is a 14th century fort, overlooking a stunning gorge carved by the Pennar river in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is located close to Dalmia Bharat's cement factory in Kadapa district and will thus make it easier to monitor development and maintenance work being undertaken at the fort.
- Gandikota Fort has been adopted by Dalmia Group for a period of five years.
- Dalmia Bharat Group has also adopted Red Fort under the 'Adopt a Heritage:' scheme.

Gaj Yatra launched in Garo Hills of Meghalaya

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) rolled out 'Gaj Yatra', an awareness campaign to protect elephants from Tura in Garo Hills of Meghalaya.
- It was organised by the Wildlife Trust of India in collaboration with the State Forest Department.
- Under this campaign, an elephant mascot will be taken across districts frequented by jumbo herds for generating awareness among the people.
- It was launched to acknowledged good gesture of villagers from Garo Hills who had set aside part of their community-owned land to create village reserve forests for human-elephant harmony.

Gaj Yatra:

- Gaj Yatra is 18-month-long national campaign aimed to protect elephants, India's national heritage animal in 12 elephant range states.
- It was launched in August 2017 by Environment and Forest Minister Harsh Vardhan on the occasion of World Elephant Day 2017 (observed on August 12).
- The campaign is being led by Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). It aims to involve people from all walks of life in conservation of elephants.
- Under this campaign, WTI is securing 101 elephant corridors across in 12 elephant range states through its Right to Passage project, in partnership with Union government's Project Elephant, state forest departments and various NGOs.
- The aim this project is to rehabilitate people affected by man-elephant conflict in corridor areas while ensuring uninterrupted movement of elephants between key habitats.

Andhra Pradesh notifies new state symbols after bifurcation

- Andhra Pradesh Government notified its new state symbols after four year after bifurcation of undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2014 into two states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- These states symbols were notified by State department of environment, forest, science and technology.

New state symbols:

- **State bird:** Rose-ringed parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*). Locally known as Rama Chiluka.
- **State tree:** Neem (*Azadirachta indica*). Locally known Vepa Chettu.
- **State animal:** Black-buck (*Antelope cervicapra*). Locally known as Krishna Jinka.
- **State flower:** Jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*). Its adoption will promote jasmine, which is grown commercially in Guntur, Prakasam, Kurnool, Kadapa, Anantapur and Chittoor districts of state.

State symbols of Telangana

- **State bird:** Indian Roller (*coracias benghalensis*) or Palapitta. It also state bird of Odisha and Karnataka.
- **State tree:** Jammi Chettu (*prosopis cineraria*).
- **State animal:** Jinka or spotted deer.
- **State flower:** Tangidi Puvvu (*senna auriculata*). It is widely used in the state's famous Bathukamma festival.

Patratu Super Thermal Power Project: PM Narendra Modi lays foundation stone in Jharkhand

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid foundation stone for first phase (2400MW) of NTPC's coal based Patratu Super Thermal Power Project in Jharkhand.
- The project is 74: 26 Joint Venture between Government of Jharkhand (GoJ) and Patratu Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Ltd. (PVUN), a subsidiary company of NTPC. The Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) contract of project is awarded to BHEL.

Patratu Super Thermal Power Project:

- NTPC's PVUNL will develop project in two phases viz. 2,400 MW (3x800MW) in Phase-I and 1,600 MW (2x800 MW) in Phase-II later.

- The first unit is envisaged to be commissioned in 2022 and subsequently other two units each of 800 MW after interval of six months each from the preceding unit.
- This project will allocate 85% of power to Jharkhand that will benefit state in the long run and help in economic growth of region.
- It will ensure providing 24x7 power availability to households in Jharkhand under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) scheme.
- The project also complies with new emission norms with high efficiency ESP, FGD and Nox emission control systems.
- It has dry ash disposable system (second to NTPC Dadri), zero liquid discharge system, air-cooled condenser technology (only second to North Karanpura STPP) and rail loading facility for transportation of ash.

SCHEMES

GOBAR-DHAN Scheme launched to promote wealth and energy from waste

- The Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation has launched GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) – DHAN scheme at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) Karnal.
- It was launched under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) by Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharti.

Salient features :

- The GOBAR-DHAN Scheme aims to positively impact village cleanliness and generate wealth and energy from cattle and organic waste. It also aims at creating new rural livelihood opportunities and enhancing income for farmers and other rural people.
- Under it, villagers will be mobilized to create self-help groups (SHGs) and creative societies that will help in clean energy and green jobs initiative.
- The scheme focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG, thus keeping villages clean, increasing income of rural households and generation of energy from cattle waste.
- It is an important element of ODF-plus strategy under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin). The scheme envisages implementation of 700 bio-gas units in different states of the country in 2018-19.

Background:

- Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) comprises two main components for creating clean villages. They are creating open defecation free (ODF) villages and managing solid and liquid waste in villages.
- The Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation now is focusing on ODF-plus activities, including measures to enhance solid and liquid waste management after over 3.5 lakh villages, 374 districts and 16 States/UTs of the country were declared ODF.

Significance of Scheme:

- It will be hugely beneficial for country as India is home to highest cattle population in world which produces around 3 million tonnes of dung. It will encourage farmers to consider dung and other waste not just as waste but as source of income.
- It will provide many benefits to rural people by keeping villages clean and sanitized, improving livestock health and increasing farm yields. Under it, biogas generation will help to increase selfreliance in energy utilized for cooking and lighting.
- It will augment income of farmers and cattle herders. It will create new opportunities for jobs linked to waste collection, transportation, biogas sales etc.
- It will also provide stable fuel supply in market for oil companies and accessible credit in market through government schemes and banks for entrepreneurs.

Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana: Cabinet doubles investment limit for senior citizens

- The Union Cabinet has approved doubling of investment limit from Rs 7.5 lakh to Rs 15 lakh under Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY). It also extended time limits for subscription from May 2018 to March, 2020.
- These decisions were taken as part of Government commitment to financial inclusion and social security. It will boost social security initiatives for senior citizens and enable them upto Rs.10,000 pension per month.

Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY):

- PMVVY aims to provide social security during old age and protect elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.
- It is implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). The intended beneficiaries of the scheme are elderly persons aged 60 years and above.
- The scheme provides an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum for ten years, with an option to opt for pension on monthly, quarterly or half yearly and annual basis.
- The differential return, i.e. difference between return generated by LIC and assured return of 8% per annum is borne by Government as subsidy on annual basis.

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana: Cabinet approves setting up of 20 AIIMS

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved plan to set up 20 All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) across the country and upgrade 73 medical colleges.
- The decisions are part of the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY), which has been extended by two years till 2020 with financial outlay of Rs.14,832 crore.

Salient features :

- The decision to extend PMSSY is aimed at meeting shortfall in healthcare professionals and facilities across the country.
- Setting up of new AIIMS in various states under PMSSY will transform health education and training and also help to address shortfall of healthcare professionals.
- It will lead to employment generation for nearly 3,000 people in various faculty and non-faculty posts in each of AIIMS. Six of 20 AIIMS have already been established.

- The construction of new AIIMS will be fully funded by Central government and it will also bear operations and maintenance expenses of these facilities.

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY):

- PMSSY was announced in 2003. Its objectives are correcting regional imbalances in availability of affordable and reliable tertiary healthcare services and augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.
- It establishes AIIMS in various regions of India apart from different government colleges. It is funded from different centrally sponsored schemes relating to creating infrastructure on health.

SWAYAM: Government notifies 75 National Resource Centres for Higher Education faculty

- Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) launched initiative of online professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using massive open online course (MOOC) platform SWAYAM.
- Under its first phase of implementation, 75 discipline-specific National Resource Centres (NRCs) have been identified.

Salient features :

- Under this initiative, all in-service teachers, irrespective of their subject and seniority will get opportunity to keep abreast of latest developments in their disciplines through technology based online refresher course.
- The training materials will be uploaded and made available through SWAYAM platform to all the teachers every year. NRCs will publish list of faculty who have been certified by December, 2018. UGC will issue order and regulations for the purpose of Career Progression and APIs.

National Resource Centres (NRCs):

- These 75 discipline-specific NRCs include varied set of institutions under Ministry's Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) located in Central Universities, IISc, IUCAA, IITs, IISERs, NITs, State Universities, UGC's Human Resource Development Centres (HRDCs), National Institutes for Technical Teachers Training (NITTTRs), IITs, Open Universities.
- These NRCs are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in discipline, new and emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active –Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) programme:

- SWAYAM aims to bridge digital divide for students (especially most disadvantaged) who have hitherto remained untouched by digital revolution and have not been able to join mainstream of the knowledge economy.
- It is an indigenous developed IT platform that facilitates hosting of all the courses, taught in classrooms from 9th grade till post-graduation. Courses hosted by it can be accessed by anyone, anywhere at any time at free of cost.
- Its objective is to achieve the three cardinal principles of education policy – access, equity and quality. The interactive courses on this platform are prepared by best teachers in the country.

Government launches Samagra Shiksha scheme to improve quality of school education

- The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) launched Samagra Shiksha scheme to improve quality of school education.
- The scheme aims at improving quality of education, enhancing learning outcomes and using technology to empower children and teachers.
- The scheme subsumes three existing schemes: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) to treat school education holistically, from pre-school to Class XII.

Samagra Shiksha scheme:

- Samagra Shiksha Scheme aims at unifying learning from pre-school to class 12 levels by treating education holistically as continuum from pre-school to class 12.
- It encapsulates elements of previous scheme and focuses on digital education by giving emphasis on integration of two Ts – Teacher and Technology.

Objectives of scheme:

- Provision of quality education
- Enhancing learning outcomes of students
- Bridging social and gender gaps in school education
- Promoting vocationalisation of education
- Strengthening teacher education institutions like SCERTs and Diets to improve quality of teachers
- Providing annual grant of Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 per school for strengthening of libraries

Significance:

- Samagra Shiksha is first integrated scheme extending unified support to states from pre-school to senior secondary levels.
- It is paradigm shift in conceptual design of school education by treating school holistically as continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels.
- The scheme builds on grade-wise, subject-wise Learning Outcomes and largest National Achievement Survey (NAS)-2017-18 to strategize district level interventions for improving quality of education. It will help to shift focus of student learning from content to competencies.
- The scheme envisages active participation of all stakeholders especially parents, school management committee (SMC) members, community and state functionaries towards efforts to ensure quality education to children.
- It also extends benefits of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme, under which girls from disadvantaged sections are provided education with hostel facility from class 6-8 to class 6-12.
- The scheme focuses on strengthening teachers, the crucial pillar of education system by making SCERTs and DIETs nodal agencies for teacher training.
- These institutions will be strengthened to emphasize integration of in-service and pre-service training structures in states to make it need-focused and dynamic. This will strengthen quality of teaching in schools across levels.

Government to set up additional 100 One Stop Centres for women safety

- Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) in its Programme Approval Board (PAB) meeting has approved setting up additional 100 One Stop Centres (OSCs) for women affected by violence.
- These OSCs will be set up in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

One Stop Centres (OSC) scheme:

- Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) had launched Centrally Sponsored Scheme for setting up One Stop Centres (OSC). It is funded from Nirbhaya Fund.
- The purpose of these OSCs is to provide integrated services for women affected with violence such as police assistance, medical aid, psycho-social counselling, legal aid and counselling, temporary stay for 5 days etc. under one roof.
- These Centres are being established across the country to provide integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces in phased manner.
- So far, Ministry of WCD has set up 182 Centres since April, 2015. These centres have assisted over 1.3 lakh women affected by violence in 33 States/UTs.
- Every OSC is integrated with scheme of Universalization of Women's Helpline (181) of the WCD Ministry which is operational in 30 States/UTs.

Government to expand Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in Tribal Districts across country

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) is going to expand Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in tribal districts across the country. About 3000 such kendras are proposed to be set up in two years in all forested Tribal Districts.
- Initially, it will be taken up on priority in 39 districts with more than 50% tribal population and then gradually will be expanded to other Tribal Districts across the country.

Van Dhan Yojana:

- It aims at mainstreaming tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to Non Timber Minor Forest Produce (MFP) at grassroots level.
- It also aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans. Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from present 20% to around 60%.
- **Implementation:** It will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs at Central Level and TRIFED as nodal agency at National Level. At State level, state nodal agency for MFPs and district collectors will play pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendra:

- TRIFED will facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras in the tribal areas. These kendras will be cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each.
- They will provide skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.

- Locally the Kendras will be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in cluster.

4 states, 1 UT sign MoUs for implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme

- Four States and one Union Territory have signed first MoU with National Health Mission, Government of India for implementing Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Swasthya Suraksha Mission (PMRSSM). These states/UTs are Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Chandigarh (UT).
- These MoUs were signed during Ayushman Bharat Northern Region's first workshop on PMRSSM at Shimla, Himachal Pradesh.
- Through these MoUs, these four states and UT will formally commit to implement PMRSSM. The MoU clearly outlines roles of Central and State/UT Governments for implementation of PMRSSM.
- Similar regional workshops are also planned in due course of time across the country to sign MoU with States/UTs for rolling out of PMRSSM in each region.

Ayushman Bharat scheme:

- It is Centrally Sponsored health insurance scheme of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- **Beneficiaries:** The scheme will target over 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC) database.
- Beneficiaries can avail of services anywhere in India. This will help to bring a visible relief to the target families by mitigating financial risk arising out of catastrophic health episodes.
- **Insurance cover:** It will provide Rs. 5 lakh insurance cover per family per year, taking care of almost all secondary care and tertiary care procedures. There will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme.
- **Benefits covered:** Pre and post-hospitalisation expenses. It also covers all pre-existing conditions from beginning of policy. It will also pay defined transport allowance per hospitalization to beneficiary. The beneficiaries can avail benefits in both public and empanelled private facilities.
- **Wellness Centres:** Under it, government will set up 1.5 lakh wellness centres across the country by 2022 that will leverage on comprehensive primary health care for preventive, promotive and curative care. These centres will provide preventive, promotive, and curative care for non-communicable diseases, dental, mental, geriatric care, palliative care, etc.
- **Mission Council:** For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States for implementation of scheme, Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (ABNHPMC) will be set up at apex level. It will be chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.
- **Role of State Governments:** They are allowed to expand scheme both horizontally and vertically. They are also free to choose modalities of its implementation. They can implement through insurance company or directly through Trust/ Society or a mixed model.
- **Payments for treatment:** It will be done on package rate (to be defined by the Government in advance) basis. The package rates will include all costs associated with treatment.
- For beneficiaries, it will be cashless, paper less transaction. States/ UTs will have the flexibility to modify these rates within a limited bandwidth keeping in view their specific requirements.

Atal Pension Yojana's subscriber base crosses 1 crore mark: PFRDA

- According to Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), the subscriber base of Atal Pension Yojana (APY) has crossed 1 crore subscribers mark since its launch in May 2015.
- Till date, the scheme has collected Rs. 3,950 crore of contribution from subscribers. It has generated around 9.10% compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) since inception till March 2018.
- **Top ten states in APY mobilisation are:** Uttar Pradesh (1,401,631), Bihar (1,061,660), Tamil Nadu (814,917), Maharashtra (758,695), Karnataka (686,504), Andhra Pradesh (686,504), West Bengal (551,471), Madhya Pradesh (498,111), Rajasthan (497,962) and Gujarat (486,465).

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- APY was launched in June 2015 with aim to provide affordable universal access to essential social security protection to unorganized work force of country, which constitute more than 85 percent of the workforce. It had replaced earlier government-backed pension Swavalamban scheme targeted at the unorganised sector.
- It is available to all citizens of India in age group of 18-40 years (making minimum period of contribution by subscriber is 20 years). Under scheme, subscriber will receive minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 per month, depending on his contribution, from age of 60 years.
- There is no exit to scheme before age of 60. In case of death of subscriber, spouse of subscriber is entitled for same amount of pension till his or her death.

Prakash Javadekar Launches Samagra Shiksha Scheme For School Education

- On May 25,2018, The Union Minister of Human Resources and Development Mr. Prakash Javedekar launched the " Samagra Shiksha "scheme .
- This scheme is targeted towards providing education from pre-school till class 12.

Objective:

This will maintain quality of education, involvement of recent practices and inclusion of technology for the empowerment of students and teachers.

Salient Features of "Samagra Shiksha "scheme :

This scheme promises to increase the budgetary allotment for school education by 20% for the upcoming year.

- This scheme will consist of the three components considered earlier for school education . They are : Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA),Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Training .
- The budget has been enhanced for school education from Rs. 28000 crore from 2017-18 to Rs. 34000 crore from 2018-19. And it would be further increased to Rs. 41000 crore in 2019-2020.
- The number of schools to be benefitted by this scheme is : 11,50,000.
- The amount granted will be : Rs. 5000 for primary, Rs. 10000 for upper primary & Rs. 25000 for SSC and HSC schools.

- Another scheme called “ Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya Scheme “ has been extended from class 6-8 to class 6-12 for providing educational and hostel facilities to the girl child from disadvantaged sections of society.
- An annual grant of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 20000 would be given for strengthening libraries of the schools.
- “DIKSHA”– the national digital platform for teachers would put high quality teaching learning resources for ready use of teachers.
- The Scheme will support ‘Operation Digital Board’ in all secondary schools over a period of 5 years, so as to enhance the use of digital technology through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTH channels. The Digital initiatives like ShaalaKosh, Shagun, ShaalaSaarthi will be strengthened.

About Sarva shiksha Abhiyan:

- This scheme has been operational since **2000-01** by the then PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. IT aims to provide universal primary and elementary education to every child of the age group of **6-14** years as mandated by the 86th amendment of the constitution of India.

About Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan :

- This scheme was launched in **2009** and it aims to enhance the registration of students for secondary education from 52% to 75% and to ensure proper educational opportunities given to students belonging to age group of **15-16** years.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES:

World press freedom day – 3rd May:

On 3rd May 2018, World Press Freedom Day was celebrated all over the world.

World Press Freedom Day:

- In 1993, the UN General Assembly declared May 3 as World Press Freedom Day. 3rd May is the anniversary of the Declaration of Windhoek for media pluralism and independence.
- World Press Freedom Day is celebrated to highlight the fundamental principles of press freedom and to offer tribute to journalists who have sacrificed their lives while on duty.
- The theme for World Press Freedom Day 2018 is: Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law.

May 11: National Technology Day

- National Technology Day is being observed across India on May 11 to mark India's technological advancements and to promote the development of technology in various fields. The official theme for this year is "Science and Technology for a Sustainable Future".

Background:

- The day is being commemorated to celebrate the anniversary of first of the five nuclear tests of Operation Shakti (Pokhran-II) nuclear test, held from 11 to 13 May 1998 in Pokhran, Rajasthan.
- The operation was led by former President APJ Abdul Kalam, who was then Director of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- After conducting nuclear tests as part of Pokhran-II, India was declared as nuclear state by then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, making it sixth nation to join 'nuclear club' of nations as well as first country which was not a part of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT).
- India also conducted successful test firing of Trishul missile on May 11, 1998. Trishul missile was developed as part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) by DRDO.
- Trishul Missile got inducted by Indian Army and Indian Airforce. Moreover, Hansa 3, India's first indigenous aircraft was also first tested on May 11, 1998 in Bangalore. It was first of its kind general aviation two-seater plane used for flight training as well as personal flying.
- Based on these tremendous, groundbreaking achievements by Indian scientists, engineers, as well as technicians, May 11 was declared as the National Technology Day.
- To commemorate this day, Technology Development Board (TDB) has instituted National Award.
- This award is conferred on to various individuals and industries by the President for their successful achievement in commercialization of Indigenous Technology.

APPOINTMENTS

President appoints Uttam Pacharne as Chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi

- President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Uttam Pacharne as regular Chairman of Lalit Kala Akademi. He will have tenure of three years from the date on which he assumes the charge of his office.
- He will replace ML Srivastava, Joint Secretary (Akademies), Ministry of Culture who was appointed protem chairman of Akademi in March 2018.

Uttam Pacharne:

- He is eminent artist and sculptor and is widely respected person in field of art. He has held various important positions in various government organisations.
- He is recipient of National Lalit Kala Award (1985), Maharashtra Gaurav Puraska (1985), Junior National Award (1986) and Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar (2017).
- Currently, he is Member of Advisory Committee, Kala Academy, Goa and Member of Advisory Committee, P.L. Deshpande State Lalit Kala Academy and Director, Janseva Sahakari Bank Borivali.

Lalit Kala Akademi:

- It is India's national academy to promote and propagate understanding of Indian art, in and outside the country. It is also called as National Academy of Art.

- It is autonomous organisation funded by Ministry of Culture. It was established in 1954. It provides scholarships and fellow program and sponsors and organises exhibitions in India and overseas. It publishes bilingual journal.

President appoints new Governors of Odisha and Mizoram

- President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Kummanam Rajasekharan as Governor of Mizoram and Prof Ganeshi Lal as Governor of Odisha under Article 153 of the Constitution.
- Kummanam Rajasekharan will replace Lt. General (Retd.) Nirbhay Sharma who completed his tenure on May 28, 2018. Prof Ganeshi Lal will take charge from Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik had been given additional charge of Odisha.

Kummanam Rajasekharan:

- He was state president of Bharatiya Janata Party in Kerala (from 2015–2018). He started his political career as activist of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Sangh Parivar in Kerala in 1970.
- He was instrumental in spearheading Kerala's Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Balasadanams, Kshetra Samrakshana Samiti and Ekal Vidyalayas.
- Prior to entering politics, he was working as journalist as sub-editor of Deepika newspaper and other news-dailies such as Rastravaartha, Kerala Desam, Kerala Bhooshanam, and Kerala Dwani. In 1976, he joined as government employee in Food Corporation of India (FCI).

Prof Ganeshi Lal:

- Ganeshi Lal was a professor of Mathematics before becoming member of RSS. He was minister in HVP-BJP government under Chief Minister Bansi Lal from 1996-99 in Haryana.
- He was former president of Haryana BJP unit. He was member of Haryana Legislative Assembly (1996-2000) from Sirsa Constituency.

Constitutional provisions of Governor:

- Article 153: It says that there shall be Governor for each state. But 7th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1956 facilitated the appointment of the same person as a governor for two or more states.
- Article 156: Governor is appointed by President and hold office during the pleasure of President. It should be also noted that this article also mentions tenure of Governor. In this regard it says that Governor shall hold office for the term of 5 years from date he enters office.

Former SC judge CK Prasad appointed as Chairman of Press Council of India

- Government has appointed former Supreme Court Judge CK Prasad as Chairman of Press Council of India (PCI) for second term.
- His nomination was approved by three-member committee headed by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu. He was earlier appointed to post in November 2014 after Justice Markanday Katju stepped down.

Press Council of India (PCI):

- PCI is a statutory body with mandate to act as watchdog to oversee conduct of the print media. It derives its mandate from Press Council Act, 1978.

- **Composition:** It consist of Chairman (who has by convention, been a retired judge of Supreme Court) and 28 other members off whom 20 represent press, five are nominated from two Houses of Parliament and three represent cultural, literary and legal fields.
- **Functions:** It is statutory, quasi-judicial body acting as watchdog of press. It adjudicates complaints against and by the press for violation of ethics and for violation of the freedom of the press respectively.

R K Agrawal appointed President of National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed former Supreme Court Judge Justice R K Agrawal as President of National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC).
- He will succeed Justice D K Jain, who completed his term. Justice Agrawal was judge of Supreme Court from February 2014 to May 2018 and had served on bench of the apex court for four years.

National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC):

- NCDRC is quasi-judicial commission set up under Consumer Protection Act of 1986. It addresses grievances of aggrieved consumer for goods and services having value over Rs. 1 crore.
- It was established in 1988 and is headquartered in New Delhi. The commission is headed by sitting or retired judge of Supreme Court of India.

Statutory Provisions:

- Section 21 of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 posits that NCDRC shall have jurisdiction to entertain complaint valued more than Rs. 1 crore and also have appellate and revisional jurisdiction from orders of state commissions or district fora as case may be.
- Section 23 of Act provides that any person aggrieved by order of NCDRC, may appeal against such order to Supreme Court within period of 30 days.

POLITICAL

Election Commission to launch App to help voters to share malpractice proof

- Election Commission of India (ECI) is launching multi-lingual mobile application called Model Code of Conduct Violation Reporting App ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The app aims at empowering people across the country to share evidence of malpractice by political parties, their candidates and activists directly with ECI.

Salient features:

- Through this mobile app, ECI intends to encourage larger public participation in checking corrupt practices in elections and ensure free and fair election process. The app will be launched across the country as part of steps taken by ECI to prevent abuse of money and muscle power.
- The app allows sharing of photos and short audio and video clips related to electoral malpractices from spot itself. It also records geo-location of reported incidents and the officials concerned will immediately receive the alerts.

- This will ensure an effective response. The app was made available for first time in Bengaluru (capital of Karnataka) in run-up to recently concluded state assembly elections. It had registered total of 780 downloads and complaints were received from users. Accordingly, officials concerned in all the cases had taken actions.

Election Commission of India (ECI):

- ECI is permanent and independent constitutional body established directly by Constitution of India to ensure fair and fair elections in the country. It is multi-member body and currently has three members including Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) appointed by President of India.

FIRST IN MAHARASHTRA, INDIA AND WORLD

India's first National Sports University in Manipur: Union Cabinet approves ordinance

- The Union Cabinet has approved an ordinance to set up the country's first national sports university in Imphal (west), Manipur. The ordinance is on the lines of National Sports University Bill, 2017 which is pending in Parliament (introduced in Lok Sabha in August, 2017).

Salient features :

- The specialised university will be the first of its kind in the country and adopt best international practices. Manipur government has already allocated land for the proposed university.
- The proposal to set up national sports university in Manipur was initially announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The was approved in 2014-15 budget with Rs. 100 crore allocation.
- The proposed university is expected to bridge gap that exists in sports environment of country in various areas such as sports science, sports technology, high performance training.

National Sports University Bill, 2017

- The Bill establishes National Sports University in Manipur. It is mandated to promote sports education in areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management, and sports coaching.
- It will function as national training centre for select sports disciplines. It also empowers the University to grant degrees, diplomas and certificates.
- It also allows Government to establish campuses and study centres in other parts of the country.

Objectives of National Sports University

- Research, development and dissemination of knowledge in physical education and sports sciences.
- Strengthening physical education and sports training programmes.
- Generating knowledge capabilities, skills and competence at various levels.
- Training talented athletes to help them to evolve into international level athletes.

UNEP recognises Cochin International Airport as world's first fully solar energy-powered airport

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has recognised Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) in Kerala as the world's first fully solar energy-powered airport. CIAL is India's first airport to be constructed in public-private-partnership (PPP) model in 1999. It is the busiest and largest airport in the state of Kerala. It is only PPP airport in the country that has handled more than 5 million passengers in year. The airport has 15 MWp solar power plant near the cargo complex of airport comprising 46,150 solar panels laid across 45 acres.

Salient features :

- The solar power plant generates 50,000 units of electricity daily. It makes airport absolutely power neutral in terms of energy consumption as it consumes around 50000 to 60000 units of electricity per day. The plant system is without any battery storage as it is directly connected to the grid.
- The airport's green power project does not result in any carbon dioxide emissions.
- It also produces clean source of energy equivalent to non-clean energy produced from coal fired power plants by burning more than 3 lakh metric tonnes of Coals. This plant is also equivalent to planting 30 lakh trees.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):

- UNEP is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. It was founded as result of United Nations Conference on Human Environment in June 1972. It is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. UNEP also has six regional offices and various country offices.
- UNEP acts as catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote wise use and sustainable development of global environment.
- It works with wide range of partners, including UN entities, international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, private sector and civil society.

Ram Nath Kovind becomes second president to visit Siachen base camp:

On 10th May 2018, Ram Nath Kovind became the second president of India to visit Indian Army's Siachen base camp.

Ram Nath Kovind – second president to visit Siachen base camp:

- President Ram Nath Kovind is also the Supreme Commander of Indian armed forces. Siachen base camp is **also known as** the "Third Pole" where temperatures drop to minus 50 degrees Celsius sometimes.
- He was accompanied by Army Chief General Bipin Rawat. Ram Nath Kovind paid his respects at the Siachen war memorial to the martyrs.
- Nearly 11,000 army personnel have sacrificed their lives since the army began Operation Meghdoot on 13th April 1984 in Siachen.
- Ram Nath Kovind is the second Indian president to visit Siachen base camp. Former president APJ Abdul Kalam is the first Indian President who visited Siachen base camp in 2004.

India's longest rail-road to be inaugurated this year:

India's longest road and railway bridge "Bogibeel bridge", linking Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh is expected to be inaugurated in 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Bogibeel bridge:

- Civil work related to the Bogibeel bridge will be finished by July 2018. Two more months will be taken to complete electrical and signalling work.
- The bridge is 4.94 km long. This is said to be the second longest bridge of this kind in Asia. It has three lane roads on top and double line rail below.
- The bridge is 32 metres above the water level of the Brahamaputra River. This bridge will solve logistical issues for armed forces stationed at the China border to receive supplies from Tezpur.
- This is part of infrastructure projects planned by India for logistics improvement along the border in Arunachal Pradesh.
- At present, to travel from Dibrugarh to Arunachal Pradesh by train it takes over 500 km detour. After completion of this bridge, the travel will be less than 100 km.
- This project was approved in 1996. Construction of the bridge was initiated in 2002. It was declared as a national project in 2007.

Russia unveils world's floating nuclear power station:

- On 19th May, Russia unveiled the world's first floating nuclear power station at a ceremony in the port of the city of Murmansk where it will be loaded with nuclear fuel before heading to eastern Siberia.

Objectives:

- It will be primarily used to power oil rigs & supply electricity and heat to the most remote regions, supporting also growth and sustainable development.

Salient features :

- This is called Akademik Lomonosov was built by Rosatom in Saint Petersburg.
- It is a 144 by 30 metre (472 by 98 foot) ship holds two reactors with two 35 megawatt nuclear reactors .
- It is a 21,000-tonne barge that will produce enough electricity to power a town of 200,000 residents, far more than the 5,000 live in Pevek, Russia.
- The floating reactors can save 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year.

Shivaji Pathak becomes Youngest Indian Woman To Scale Mount Everest:

- On May 21, 2018, Shivangi Pathak (16) from Haryana became the youngest Indian woman to scale Mount Everest.
- She was inspired by Arunima Sinha, who was the first Indian amputee to scale the nearly 29,000 ft peak.

Objective:

Her aim was to establish that women can overcome every obstacle to achieve their goals.

About the Expedition:

This expedition was conducted by **Seven Summits Treks**.

- Along with her **Javier Camacho (Spain)** and **Jangbu Sherpa** has also climbed the Mt. Everest.
- Others involved in the expedition were Ngima Dorchi Sherpa, Raj Kumar Tamang, Pasang Tenji Sherpa, Dorchi Sherpa, Dawa Sherpa and Kami Sherpa .

SPORTS AND AWARDS

INSV Tarini team awarded Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017

- India's Navy all six women crew of INSV Tarini who completed India's first all-women circumnavigation expedition of the globe was conferred prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017.
- The crew included Lt Commander Vartika Joshi, Lt Commander Swathi Patarpalli, Lt Commander Pratibha Jamwal, Lt Aishwarya Bodapatti, Lt SH Vijaya Devi and Lt Payal Gupta.
- These six women were among recipients of Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017 who were presented with award by President Ram Nath Kovind on occasion of International Women's Day (March 8). However, the award was not be presented to them, as they were sailing then.

Navika Sagar Parikrama:

- The six women crew of INSV Tarini undertook task of circumnavigating globe, as part Indian navy's Navika Sagar Parikrama expedition.
- It was first ever circumnavigation of globe by all-women Indian crew. It was aimed to demonstrate thrust of India's Nari Shakti or women power on global platform.
- The six-member crew was led by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi. The expedition lasted for 254 days, which included 199 days at sea, covering a total of 21600 nautical miles.
- It was extremely challenging expedition as they encountered rough seas, high stormy conditions and severely cold temperatures.
- Besides, circumnavigating the globe, the crew also collected and updated meteorological, ocean and wave data on regular basis for accurate weather forecast by Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).
- It also reported marine pollution on high seas. The women crew during port halts, also interacted with local populace, especially children to promote ocean sailing and spirit of adventure.

Nari Shakti award:

- The award aims to acknowledge achievement of women by bestowing awards on eminent women and institutions in recognition of their service towards the cause of women empowerment.
- It was established in 1991 and since then it is conferred annually by President on occasion of International Women's Day on March 8 every year. It carries cash award of Rs. 1 lakh and certificate for individuals and institutions.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development announces this national level award for eminent women, organisations and institutions.

Olga Tokarczuk wins Man Booker International Prize 2018

- Polish author Olga Tokarczuk (56) awarded Man Booker International Prize 2018. It makes her first writer from Poland to win this prestigious English-language literary award.
- She won prize with English translation of her novel **Flights**, which charts multiple journeys in time, space and human anatomy.
- It was first published in Polish language in 2007 and was translated into English in 2017 by Jennifer Croft.

Olga Tokarczuk:

- Olga Tokarczuk is one of most critically acclaimed and commercially successful Polish writers of her generation. She is particularly noted for hallmark mythical tone of her writing.
- She is trained as psychologist at University of Warsaw. She has published collection of poems, several novels, as well as other books with shorter prose works.
- Her first novel, *The Journey Of The People Of The Book* was released in 1993. Her literary work has won several awards, both in her home country Poland and also abroad, including Poland's most prestigious 'Nike Literary Award' twice.
- She also has co-written screenplay for Polish crime film *Spoor*, which won the Alfred Bauer Prize at the Berlin film festival in 2017. It was also selected as Poland's entry for best foreign language film at 2018 Oscars.

Man Booker International Prize:

- Man Booker International Prize is counterpart to Man Booker Prize for English-language novels presented by the Man Group.
- It is open to books in any language that have been translated into English. It carries monetary award of £50,000 award which is split evenly between writer and translator.
- The authors are shortlisted by judges from a wide range of disciplines and all with passion for quality fiction.

Noble literature prize will not be Awarded this year :

On 4th May 2018, Swedish Academy said that, the Nobel Prize in literature will not be awarded this year due to sex-abuse allegations and other issues.

Nobel Literature Prize Will Not Be Awarded This Year:

- The Swedish Academy said that, **the Nobel Literature Prize 2018 will be given in 2019**. The Nobel Literature Prize is postponed for the first time in 70 years.
- The Swedish Academy has previously reserved the prize on seven occasions in: 1915, 1919, 1925, 1926, 1927, 1936 and 1949.
- The Swedish Academy has been in stress due to the #MeToo campaign since November 2017.
- The Academy has been alleged of sexual misconduct by the husband of one of its members.

Narendra Modi among Top 10 Most Powerful people in the World: Forbes:

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has secured a place among the 10 most powerful people in the world in Forbes' 2018 list of the world's most powerful people that was released on 8th May 2018.

Forbes' 2018 list of the world's most powerful people:

- The list is topped by Chinese President Xi Jinping. Reliance Industries (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani is the only Indian businessman who has appeared in the list. He has obtained 32nd rank.
- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has secured ninth rank on Forbes' 2018 list of the world's most powerful people.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin is in 2nd position. US President Donald Trump has secured third rank.
- The list features a total of 75 people. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been ranked 13. British Prime Minister Theresa May occupies 14thrank.
- Apple CEO Tim Cook is in 24th rank. Indian-origin Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella is in 40th place.
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Al Saud has been ranked 8th. US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell is in 11th rank.

Rishabh Pant's 128* highest ever score by an Indian in IPL:

On 10th May 2018, Delhi Daredevils' Rishabh Pant scored 128*(63) against SunRisers Hyderabad.

Rishabh Pant's 128* highest-ever score by an Indian in IPL:

- Rishabh Pant is a wicketkeeper-batsman. He is 20 years old.
- He has become the first Indian to reach the highest-ever score in the history of Indian Premier League.
- He has surpassed Chennai Super Kings' Murali Vijay, who had scored 127(56) against Rajasthan Royals in 2010.

Swachh Survekshan 2018 – Results

- Indore has emerged as the cleanest city in Government’s Swachh Survekshan 2018.

About Swachh Survekshan 2018:

- Swachh Survekshan 2018 was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), under the aegis of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).
- Last year’s cleanliness survey (Swachh Survekshan 2017) was limited to 434 cities. Swachh Survekshan 2018 was the first pan Indian exercise to assess cleanliness in urban India as it covered 4203 cities.
- Under Swachh Survekshan 2018, assessment was carried out from January 4 to March 10, 2018.
- It is to be noted that this year’s Swachh Survekshan was different as compared to previous surveys, as higher weightage was assigned to the feedback from citizens based on their daily experience.

Swachh Survekshan 2018 – Results:

Results of Swachh Survekshan 2018 were announced on May 16, 2018 by Minister of State for Housing Hardeep Singh Puri.

- Indore was adjudged cleanest city in Swachh Survekshan 2017 as well. In Swachh Survekshan 2018, Indore is followed by Bhopal and Chandigarh.
- Among state wise performance, Jharkhand has been adjudged the best performing state followed by Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.
- Based on the performance in Swachh Survekshan, 2018, awards will be conferred to 23 cities, 6 cantonment boards at National Level, 20 cities at Zonal Level and 3 states for best performance.

Swachh Survekshan 2018 – National Level Winners:

Award	Category (in terms of population)	City Name
India’s Cleanest City – No.1	National	Indore (Madhya Pradesh)
India’s Cleanest City – No.2	National	Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh)
India’s Cleanest City – No.3	National	Chandigarh
India’s ‘Cleanest big City’	Greater than 10 Lakh	Vijaywada (Andhra Pradesh)
India’s ‘Fastest Mover’ big City	Greater than 10 Lakh	Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh)

India's Best City in 'Citizens Feedback'	Greater than 10 Lakh	Kota (Rajasthan)
India's Best City in 'Innovation & Best Practices'	Greater than 10 Lakh	Nagpur (Maharashtra)

Asha Bhosale honoured with West bengal's highest civilian award Banga Bibhusan:

- On May 21, 2018, singer Asha Bhosle was awarded the Banga Bibhusan by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at an event in Kolkata.

Asha Bhosle – Banga Bibhusan:

- Writer Samaresh Majumdar, Bengali superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee and Justice (retd) Shyamal Kumar Sen were also awarded the Banga Bibhusan.
- Footballer Subrata Bhattacharya was presented the Banga Bhushan. Banga Bibhusan is the highest civilian award of West Bengal.
- Banga Bibhusan and Banga Bhushan were instituted by Mamata Banerjee in 2011, to honour the services of popular personalities in various fields.

SCIENCE-TECH

Harimau Shakti 2018: India and Malaysia joint military exercise begins

- The first ever bilateral joint military training exercise HARIMAU SHAKTI 2018 between India and Malaysia began in dense forests of Sengai Perdik, Hulu Langat, Malaysia.
- The exercise aims at bolstering cooperation and coordination between armed forces of both nations. It also seeks to share expertise of both contingents in conduct of counter insurgency operations in jungle terrain.
- This is for first time joint training exercise of this magnitude between Indian and Malaysia is being held on Malaysian soil.

Salient features :

- The exercise will be held from 30 April 18 to 13 May 2018. In it, Indian contingent is represented by 4 GRENADIERS, one of the oldest infantry battalions having rich operational experience in conventional as well as counter insurgency warfare.
- Malaysian contingent is represented by soldiers from 1 Royal Ranjer Regiment and Royal Malay Regiment, known for their experience in Jungle Warfare.

- The focus of exercise is on tactical operations in jungle warfare. It involves cross training phase followed by field training phase of seven days in jungles of Hulu Langat wherein both armies will jointly train, plan and execute series of training activities.
- Overall, the exercise will provide excellent opportunity to armies of both countries to hone their operational skills and also contribute to enhance strategic partnership between India and Malaysia.

InSight: NASA to launch its first mission to study deep interior of Mars

- NASA will launch its first-ever mission InSight (Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport) to study the deep interior of Mars on May 5, 2018.
- It will be launched from Space Launch Complex-3 at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California aboard United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket.
- The rocket will also launch two mini-spacecraft called Mars Cube One (MarCO) which is NASA's technology experiment.

InSight Mission:

- InSight is stationary lander that will be first NASA mission since Apollo moon landings to place seismometer, a device that measures quakes on soil of another planet.
- It has been envisaged as part of NASA's Discovery Program mission that aims to place stationary lander equipped with seismometer and heat transfer probe on surface of Mars to study red planet's early geological evolution.
- InSight is terrestrial planet explorer that will address one of most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science. It will help in understanding processes that shaped rocky planets of inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago.
- Its instruments include seismometer to detect marsquakes and probe that will monitor flow of heat in planet's subsurface.
- The robotic lander will perform a radio science experiment to study internal structure of Mars by deploying seismometer and a burrowing heat probe.
- It will measure Mars's vital signs such as pulse (seismology), temperature (heat flow probe) and reflexes (precision tracking). It will let scientists understand how different its crust, mantle and core are from Earth.

MarCO

- MarCO consists of two briefcase-sized CubeSats that will fly on their own path to Mars behind InSight. It will be first test of CubeSat technology in deep space or at another planet.
- They are designed to test new communications and navigation capabilities for future missions and may aid InSight communications but is independent of InSight mission.
- If successful, MarCOs will offer new kind of communication capability to deep space missions to Earth.

South Western Command conducts Exercise Vijay Prahar in Rajasthan

- South Western Command of Indian Army is conducting 'Vijay Prahar' exercise in Mahajan area close to Suratgarh in Rajasthan. In this exercise, over 20,000 troops are participating with fighting equipment for couple of weeks of fine-tune jointmanship with the Indian Air Force.

Salient features :

- The month-long exercise is aimed to orchestrate wide spectrum of threats which are planned to be tackled through high tempo joint air and land operation.
- It involves hundreds of aircrafts, thousands of tanks and artillery pieces supported by real time intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and logistic support.
- The exercise is being conducted to practice troops in penetrative manoeuvres across the obstacle ridden terrain under a nuclear umbrella.
- In it, formations of South Western Command will be practising and operationalising certain innovative concepts of operating in network centric environment.
- It will also deploy integrated employment of modern day sensors with weapon platforms, employment of attack helicopters in air cavalry role and bold offensive of application of the Special Forces.
- The formations will refine their drills and procedures for fighting in nuclear environment during course of the exercise.

South Western Command:

- The South Western Command of the Indian Army was established in April 2005 and became fully operational on 15 August 2005.
- It is headquartered at Jaipur, Rajasthan. The command's operational units include I Corps, formerly under Central Command, and X Corps transferred from Western Command.

Explained: Nipah Virus (NiV) Infection

- Kerala was on high alert as rare and deadly Nipah Virus (NiV) infection which was detected for the first time in the state.
- Its traces were found in blood and body fluid samples of two persons who died of viral fever in Kerala's coastal Kozhikode region. It was confirmed by laboratory results from National Institute of Virology, Pune.

Nipah Virus (NiV) Infection:

- Nipah virus (NiV) infection is zoonotic disease that causes severe disease in both animals and humans. Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae Family, Pteropus genus are natural host of the virus. It was first identified during outbreak of disease that took place in Kampung Sungai Nipah, Malaysia in 1998.
- **Transmission:** The virus spread fast and is mostly fatal. Infected bats shed virus in their excretion and secretion. The virus cannot be transmitted through air.
- But it is transmitted through direct contact with infected bats, pigs. Human to Human transmission from other NiV-infected people is also reported
- **Symptoms:** NiV infection can cause acute respiratory syndrome, breathing trouble, inflammation of the brain, fever, headache, drowsiness, disorientation and delirium. Patient can slip into coma within 48 hours.
- The mortality rate of patients infected with it is reportedly 70%. It is capable of causing diseases in domestic animals too. The
- **Treatment:** There is no vaccine for disease either for humans or animals. The main treatment for those infected is intensive supportive care and supportive medicines. In disease prone areas, fruits strewn on the ground should not be eaten, for safety.

Habitat loss may have triggered Nipah outbreak: WHO report

- According to report by World Health Organisation (WHO), human-triggered factors like habitat loss due to deforestation and climate change set off infectious outbreaks such as recent Nipah cases in Kerala.
- Due to habitat destruction by human activity, flying fox (fruit bat), a natural host of Nipah virus get stressed and hungry, which weakens its immune system, increasing virus load. It results in lot of virus spilling from urine and saliva of bats.

Findings of Study:

- There is strong evidence that emergence of bat-related viral infections can be attributed to loss of animal's natural habitats.
- Reproductive and nutritional stress are potential role players in Nipah and Hendra (Nipah equivalent in Australia) viruses spillover.
- Nutritional stress is mainly due to loss of food resources which is direct consequence of habitat loss and climate change brings bats closer to urban areas.
- Forest fragmentation and hunting bats for food also bring them closer to humans and is often an important cause of disease transmission. It can be seen from rapid urbanisation of bat-rich rainforests contributed to the emergence of Nipah virus in Malaysia.

Nipah virus:

- Nipah virus (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.
- Fruit bats or flying foxes of Pteropodidae Family, Pteropus genus are natural host of Nipah virus. The virus is present in bat urine and potentially, bat faeces, saliva, and birthing fluids.
- 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.

Rustom-2 drone to be delivered to armed forces by 2020: DRDO

- Indigenously developed Rustom-II Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will be delivered to armed forces by 2020 as per the contract. At present, its basic system is being perfected and attempts are being made to increase its flight altitude. Its manufacturing will be done by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and Bharat Electronics Ltd.

Rustom-II:

- Rustom-II is part of Rustom line of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) indigenously designed and developed by DRDO that includes Rustom-I, Rustom-H and Rustom-C.
- It is being developed for use of all three services of Indian Armed Forces, primarily for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.
- It is a long-endurance UAV that has an 20 hours approximate flight time. Its medium-altitude prototype can fly at over 22,000 feet. It is propelled by two 3-bladed NPO saturn engines (each

producing over 450 kg-force thrust). It stands 2.4m tall with wingspan of 20.6m and length of 9.5m.

- It can fly at around 280 km/h.
- Several critical systems and components of Rustom-II, like its airframe, flight control, avionics subsystems, landing gear etc, have been made indigenously and some in collaboration with private manufacturers.
- Rustom-II can carry variety of payloads like Long Range Electro Optic (LREO), Medium Range Electro Optic (MREO), Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Communication Intelligence (COMINT), Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) and Situational Awareness Payloads (SAP) that help in performing missions even during the night.

BrahMos supersonic cruise missile successfully test-fired to increase life from 10 to 15 years

- BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired from mobile launcher from Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Balasore (Chandipur), Odisha to validate some new features aimed at increasing its life from 10 to 15 years.
- The successful test will help in huge savings of replacement cost of BrahMos missiles held in inventory of Indian armed forces. It makes it first Indian missile whose life has been extended from 10 to 15 years.

BrahMos Missile

- BrahMos is supersonic cruise missile developed by joint-venture between Russia's Mashinostroyeniya and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It has been named after two rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva (river in western Russia).
- It is two-stage missile, the first one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant. It is selfpropelled guided missile that sustains flight through aerodynamic lift. It operates on 'fire and forget principal'. It is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against sea and land targets.
- It is claimed that missile has strike accuracy rate of 99.99% and it follows a variety of trajectories like high, high-low, low, surface-skim etc.
- It is capable of carrying warhead of 300 kilogram (both conventional as well as nuclear) and has top supersonic speed of Mach 2.8 to 3 (roughly three times speed of sound). It is hailed as world's fastest anti-ship cruise missile in operation.
- Its range was initially capped at 290 km as per obligations of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Since India's entry into the elite club, its range was extended to 450 km and plan is to increase it to 600km.
- It has been already inducted in Indian Army and Navy. The air-launched version of missile was test-fired in November, 2017 for first time from modified Su-30MKI aircraft, making it world's fastest supersonic cruise missile to be fired from a combat jet against a target.

Navika Sagar Parikrama: Indian Navy's all-women crew completes circumnavigating globe expedition

- Indian Navy's six-member all-women Navy crew onboard of INSV Tarini vessel reached Panaji, Goa after circumnavigating around globe in 254 days under Navika Sagar Parikrama expedition.

- It was first-ever all women Asian and Indian circumnavigation expedition of globe . The expedition had started on September 10, 2017 in Goa was aimed at promoting women empowerment aligned with Government of India's thrust for 'Nari Shakti'.

Salient features :

- Under this expedition, the crew covered 21,600 nautical miles in Indian-built sailing vessel INSV Tarini that visited five countries and crossed Equator twice. It sailed across four continents and three oceans and passed south of the Great Capes – Leeuwin, Horn and Good Hope.
- The expedition was completed in six legs, with five stopovers at Fremantle (Australia), Lyttleton (New Zealand), Port Stanley (Falkland Islands), Cape Town (South Africa) and Port Louis (Mauritius).
- The vessel was skippered by Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi, and other crew comprised of Lieutenant Commanders Pratibha Jamwal, P Swathi, and Lieutenants S Vijaya Devi, B Aishwarya and Payal Gupta.

Navika Sagar Parikrama:

- The voyage was undertaken in consonance with National policy to empower women to attain their full potential.
- It also aimed to showcase India's Nari Shakti on world platform and help revolutionize societal attitudes and mindset towards women by raising visibility of their participation in challenging environments.
- The voyage was also aimed to show case 'Make in India' initiative by sailing onboard indigenously built INSV Tarini.
- It also encouraged use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources as ship harnesses wind, a renewable energy.
- It also collated and updated meteorological, ocean and wave data on regular basis for accurate weather forecast by India Meteorological Department (IMD) and also collected data for monitoring marine pollution on high seas.

INSV Tarini:

- INSV Tarini is 55 foot sailing vessel built indigenously in India by M/s Aquarius Shipyard Pvt Ltd, Goa. It was inducted into Indian Navy in February 2017. It carried suite of six sails, including main sail, head sails (Genoa and stay sails), downwind sails and storm sail.
- The boat was named after famous 'Tara-Tarini' temple in Ganjam district of Odisha. The word 'Tarini' means boat and in Sanskrit it means saviour.
- Tara-Tarini is patron deity for sailors and merchants and is worshipped for safety and success at sea.
- INSV Tarini had advance Raymarine navigation suite and array of satellite communication systems for perfect navigation anywhere in world.
- It is sister vessel of INSV Mhadei which was used by Captain (Retd) Dilip Donde to successfully undertake India's first solo circumnavigation (from August 19, 2009 to May 19, 2010).
- It was also later used by used by Lt Commander Abhilash Tomy for his own single-handed, unassisted, non-stop circumnavigation (from November 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013).

Surya Kiran-XIII: India-Nepal joint battalion level exercise to be held in Uttarakhand

- The thirteenth edition of India-Nepal joint military exercise will be conducted at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand from 30 May to 12 June 2018. The joint military exercise aims to further enhance and strengthen level of defence cooperation between the two neighbouring nations.

Salient features :

- Surya Kiran-XIII exercise will see participation of nearly 300 soldiers from both Indian and Nepal Army.
- They will share their experiences gained during conduct of various counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in the past.
- The aim of this edition of exercise is to conduct battalion level joint training with emphasis on counter terrorism operations in mountainous terrain under the United Nations mandate.
- It also includes various aspects of disaster management and joint effort towards relief work.

SURYA KIRAN Exercise:

- Surya Kiran series of bilateral military exercises are conducted bi-annually, alternatively in India and Nepal.
- It is largest exercise in terms of troop's participation in series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries.
- It aims at promoting military relations and increasing interoperability armies of both countries. 12th edition of this exercise was held at Nepal Army Battle School (NABS) in Saljhandi, Nepal in September 2017.

Upgraded Pinaka rocket successfully test-fired

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test-fired upgraded guided version of Pinaka Rocket from Proof & Experiment Establishment (PXE) at Chandipur, Odisha.
- During the tests, two rounds were conducted and some more rounds have been planned.

Upgraded Pinaka:

- The guided version is Pinaka rocket (Pinaka mark-II) has evolved from earlier version of unguided Pinaka mark-I.
- The upgraded Pinaka mark-II has been fitted with navigation, guidance and control kit developed by Research Centre, Imarat (RCI).
- The conversion has helped to enhance range of Pinaka to more than 70 km (from earlier 40 km) and accuracy to 50m (from earlier 500m).

Pinaka Missile:

- It is jointly developed by Pune based Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad and RCI.
- It is fired using multibarrel rocket launcher (MBRL) which can fire 12 Rockets loaded with explosives within 44 seconds and destroy target area of 4 sq km at a time.
- It has capability to incorporate several types of warheads makes it deadly for enemy as it can even destroy solid structures and bunkers.
- The quick reaction time and high rate of fire of system gives an edge to Army during low amount conflict situation. It already has been inducted into Indian Army.