

**UPSC**

**Contemporary Issues  
&  
Current Affairs  
August 2018**

**By Jawwad Kazi**

**The**  
**UNIQUE**  
**academy**



**Published by**  
'Unique Academy Publications Pvt. Ltd.'  
1202/39, Vastu Chambers,  
Opp. Fergusson College Main Gate  
Shirole Rasta, Pune 4.  
Ph. 020-25530950  
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Current Affairs August - 2018  
(Study Material)**

**By Jawwad Kazi**

*<https://t.me/jawwadkazicurrentaffairs>*

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**Year 2018**

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Cover Design : **Unique Academy Publications Team**

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Typesetter : **Unique Academy Publications Team**

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Printed By : **M. S. Process**, Sadashiv Peth, Pune.

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## 1

# Decline of Parliamentary Productivity

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Akali Dal MP Naresh Gujral presented a private member bill—<b>The Parliament (Enhancement of Productivity) Bill, 2017</b>—in the Rajya Sabha.</li> <li>• Proposed to <b>increase the minimum sittings and hold special sessions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Aim:</b> To restore Parliament's <b>productivity</b> as the country's premier Constitutional body <b>by fixing a minimum number of days that the Parliament should be in sessions.</b></li> <li>• <b>The bill received immediate support from many members who said the number of sittings of the house be raised to over 100</b></li> </ul>
The Parliament (Enhancement of Productivity) Bill, 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To curb frequent disruptions, <b>the opposition should also be given equal and adequate voice in Parliament.</b></li> <li>• <b>The time be allotted to parties should be equal rather than based on their current strength</b> in the house.</li> <li>• Parliament should be <b>in session for a minimum of 100 days</b></li> <li>• The bill also proposes an <b>additional two-week long specials session</b> only to deliberate over <b>at least two matters of public importance</b>—exclusive of all government and legislative business</li> <li>• <b>Modification in the structure of deciding the Parliament agenda</b> during the special session to provide stronger voice to the non-ruling parties to propose topics of discussion.</li> </ul>
Need to introduce Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Since the inception of Parliament of India in 1952, Parliament used to devote 100 to 120 days of a year to sit in sessions.</b></li> <li>• <b>Decline over the decades, bringing down this number to 70 to 80 days in a year.</b></li> <li>• <b>Disruptions</b> have become a rather <b>common feature in the Indian democracy.</b></li> <li>• This causes grave <b>monetary loss, wastage of time, and most importantly, delay in the decision-making on vital issues of public importance or hasty passing of laws without sufficient deliberation.</b></li> <li>• Currently, there is <b>no rule to dictate the minimum number of days</b> the Parliament should mandatorily be in session.</li> <li>• During the last budget session, on an average, <b>Lok Sabha worked for 21 per cent</b> of its scheduled time, while <b>Rajya Sabha worked for 27 per cent.</b></li> <li>• Till last budget session of the 16th Lok Sabha, the average productivity of Lok Sabha was 85 per cent, and that of Rajya Sabha was 68 per cent.</li> </ul>
Decline of parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliament has shown a <b>considerable decline in terms of institutional capacity</b></li> <li>• <b>'Parliamentary paralysis'</b> has seriously eroded the democratic ethos and tradition, with the result that we have inappropriate socio-economic policies and ineffective laws to govern the country.</li> <li>• The Parliament sessions have become shorter, and are often marred by disruptions.</li> <li>• Instead <b>of holding debates and forming national consensus</b> loud protests and settling of political scores are resorted to.</li> </ul>
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The analysis has been carried out on the basis of three governance indicators - <b>law-making, social inclusion and institutional effectiveness.</b></li> </ul>
Number of Days reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the 1950-60s, Parliament used to meet, on an average, <b>125-130 days in a year.</b></li> <li>• This has come down to just <b>65-70 days in the last decade.</b></li> <li>• <b>The highest number of sittings of the Lok Sabha was 151 - in 1956. The year 2017 was the year of the lowest number of sittings - 57.</b></li> </ul>
Number of Bills passed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first Lok Sabha from <b>1952-57 had 677 sittings in which 319 bills were passed.</b></li> <li>• 15th Lok Sabha had 357 sittings and passed 181 bills; the 16th Lok Sabha has had 226 sittings and passed only 129 bills (up to the 11th session).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A similar trend in the sittings of Rajya Sabha and the passage of bills.</li> <li>• Till 1998, the assurances made by the ministries concerned during the debate in Parliament and its implementation percentage were 100, except in 1995, when it was 99.93%.</li> <li>• Then onwards, there has been a mismatch between assurances and implementation.</li> <li>• <b>It hit the lowest - 21.94% - in 2015.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Amount of time lost</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of time lost due to <b>interruptions and adjournments</b> have increased from 5.28% during the 11th Lok Sabha to <b>41.6% during the 15th Lok Sabha.</b></li> <li>• Thus the <b>quality of debate/ discussions</b> in Parliament to enact laws has substantially declined over a period of time.</li> </ul>
<b>Social inclusion of Parliament.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Inclusion - To what extent Parliament has been able to accommodate the different social communities and groups, making it a representative of Indian society.</li> <li>• Special focus is on the political inclusion of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, women, religious and other minorities.</li> <li>• The current Lok Sabha consists of             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 81 MPs - 14.9% of its strength - of SC category against 16.6% of the total population of Scheduled Castes;</li> <li>2. 49 MPs - 9% - are from Scheduled Tribes, against an ST population of 8.6%;</li> <li>3. 62 women MPs constitute 11.4% of the Lok Sabha, while women constitute 49% of India's population;</li> <li>4. there are 23 Muslim MPs - 4.2% of Lok Sabha - while the community makes up 10.5% of the country's population.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Overall, the social base of Parliament has expanded, along with the rise of Other Backward Classes, since the 10th Lok Sabha.</li> <li>• <b>It is evident that SCs, women and Muslims are under-represented in Parliament, women especially so.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Criminal representatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per data from the <b>Association of Democratic Reforms, 186 MPs out of 543 are facing criminal charges in the current Lok Sabha ie 1/3rd.</b></li> <li>• The ruling single largest party has 282 MPs, and out of these 98 are facing criminal cases.</li> </ul>
<b>Other determinants that shape the quality and substance of Parliament</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. knowledge and wisdom of MPs</li> <li>2. political consciousness</li> <li>3. research support to the MPs</li> <li>4. commercialisation and criminalisation of politics</li> <li>5. erosion of ethics in politics</li> <li>6. lack of professionalism in politics</li> <li>7. influence of caste in candidate selection</li> <li>8. individual integrity</li> <li>9. commitment of MPs to the welfare of people in their constituencies.</li> </ol>
<b>The major reasons for decline of Parliament in India have been</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growing authority of the <b>Cabinet</b></li> <li>2. Changing socio-economic composition.</li> <li>3. Changing <b>quality of debate and irrational conflict</b> and hatreds among members..</li> <li>4. Lack of enlightened <b>public opinion</b> to enforce accountability on representatives.</li> <li>5. Political <b>populism and nepotism.</b></li> <li>6. Lack of accommodative as well as assertive posture on the part of leadership in view of coalition politics</li> <li>7. Growing <b>penetration of elites and vested interests</b> in the main stream of the political arena.</li> <li>8. <b>Elections becoming a costly affair</b> have rendered the genuine leaders taking recourse to social activities instead of political participation.</li> <li>9. Lack of provisions in the Constitutions governing the power and privileges of Parliamentarians.</li> <li>10. The failure to fully acknowledge the dimension of society and economy have problematized the functioning the Parliament.</li> </ol>

<p><b>National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended that a <b>minimum number of working days for Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha should be fixed at 120 and 100 respectively.</b></li> <li>• Vice President Hamid Ansari while inaugurating the Whips Conference in 2008 had suggested an increase in the number of sittings of parliament to 130 days per annum.</li> <li>• Some <b>state legislative assemblies have addressed this problem by specifying a minimum number of working days in their rules of procedure.</b></li> <li>• The Orissa assembly has a mandatory provision specifying the number of days that it would meet.</li> <li>• Since the constitution empowers parliament to make its own rules for functioning, it can make a rule to the same effect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Office Staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An important issue parliament faces is that of resources for its members.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parliament secretariat is staffed with highly skilled and professional officers and has a well-stocked library.</li> <li>• MPs are given typing pool inside parliament and computer and internet at their homes and a mobile phone with free call facility.</li> <li>• They are also given an allowances for secretarial help and maintaining their constituency office.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• To scrutinise legislation they have to <b>examine bills on a wide range of subjects, technical and nuanced in nature and full of legalese.</b></li> <li>• To represent their constituents they should have a good understanding of the needs of lakhs of people spread over a large geographical area.</li> <li>• In keeping the government accountable they are up against a minister who has the entire resources of the government of India at her/his disposal.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Without competent research staff it is impossible for any MP to comprehend the complex policy questions that come up for debate in parliament.</b></li> <li>• <b>Similarly without adequate staff in the constituency they cannot understand or respond to the issues faced by their constituents.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>The press often highlights the amount of money spent on MPs' salaries and allowances.</b></li> <li>• The cost of providing these resources is a cost worthy of spending as it braces the MPs to keep the government accountable to the public.</li> </ul>
<p><b>On private member bill</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another practice in parliament is that of the non-passage of private member bills.</li> <li>• <b>All MPs other than ministers and the presiding officers are referred to as the private members. Besides the bills introduced by ministers private members are also entitled to introduce bills in parliament.</b></li> <li>• The second half of every Friday, when parliament is in session, is reserved for debating private member bills and other business raised by private members.</li> <li>• Although several bills have been introduced the last time a private member bill was passed was in 1970. <b>Till date only 14 private member bills have been passed.</b></li> <li>• The problem is two fold;             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>since only half a day is reserved in a week for private member business a majority of private member bills do not even get debated.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can be addressed by changing the rules of procedure of both houses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <b>even after a debate is held, an MP does not press for his bill to be taken up for consideration and passing by the house.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instead of having the house decide whether the bill should be passed or not, by a voice vote or a recorded vote, the <b>MP withdraws the bill at the request of the minister.</b></li> <li>• The withdrawal of the bill would have made sense if the MP did so after extracting an assurance from the minister that the government would introduce a similar bill.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>1. Strengthening the institution of parliament is not an impossible task – it requires better <b>imagination and a sustained effort</b> to build consensus.</p>

	2. <b>Research staff and adequate office resources to MPs, ensuring that parliament is convened for a minimum number of days, giving MPs the right to vote according to their conscience on issues which do not affect the fate of the government</b> can go a long way in ensuring that parliament functions in a manner that the constitution framers intended it to do.
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## 2

# Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill 2018

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2018</b> was introduced in <b>Lok Sabha</b> by the Minister for Law and Justice.</li> <li>• It seeks to <b>amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration, and</b></li> <li>• <b>defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Objective- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>to encourage institutional arbitration for settlement of disputes</b></li> <li>• <b>make India a centre of robust Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Amendments will facilitate achieving the goal of improving institutional arbitration by - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>establishing an independent body to lay down standards,</b></li> <li>• <b>make arbitration process more party friendly,</b></li> <li>• <b>cost effective and</b></li> <li>• <b>ensure timely disposal of arbitration cases.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
What is arbitration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general meaning of “<b>arbitration</b>” is settlement of dispute by arbitrator .</li> <li>• <b>Arbitrator</b> - He is an independent person or body officially appointed to settle a dispute, <b>but without recourse to a Court of Law.</b></li> <li>• The parties repose confidence in the judgement of the arbitrator and show their <b>willingness to abide by his decision.</b></li> </ul>
What is Conciliation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<b>Conciliation</b>” means the action of <b>mediating between two disputing people or groups.</b></li> <li>• Conciliation means bringing two opposing sides together <b>to reach a compromise in an attempt to avoid taking a case to trial.</b></li> </ul>
Background:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, was amended by the <b>Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015</b> in order to make arbitration process user friendly, cost effective and ensure speedy disposal and neutrality of arbitrators.</li> <li>• However, to give a boost to institutional, arbitration vis-a-vis <i>ad hoc</i> arbitration and to remove some practical difficulties in applicability of the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2015, a High Level Committee (HLC) under the <b>Chairmanship of Justice B. H. Srikrishna, Retired Judge, Supreme Court of India, was constituted by the Central Government</b></li> <li>• <b>The HLC was given the mandate</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to <b>examine the effectiveness</b> of existing arbitration mechanism by studying the functioning and performance of Arbitral Institutions in India;</li> <li>2. to devise a <b>road map to promote</b> institutionalized arbitration mechanisms in India;</li> <li>3. to evolve an <b>effective and efficient arbitration eco-system for commercial dispute resolution</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>• The HLC submitted its Report on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 and has recommended for amendments in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.</li> <li>• <b>The proposed amendments are as per the recommendations of the High Level Committee.</b></li> </ul>
	<b>Salient Features</b>
Arbitration Council of India:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill seeks to establish an <b>independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its functions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) framing <b>policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators</b>,</li> <li>(ii) making policies for the <b>establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters</b>, and</li> <li>(iii) maintaining a <b>depository of arbitral awards (judgments)</b> made in India and abroad.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Appointment of arbitrators:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the 1996 Act, parties were free to appoint arbitrators. In case of disagreement on an appointment, the parties could request the Supreme Court, or the concerned High Court, or any person or institution designated by such Court, to appoint an arbitrator.</li> <li>• Under the Bill, <b>the Supreme Court and High Courts may now designate arbitral institutions</b>, which parties can approach for the appointment of arbitrators.</li> <li>• For <b>international</b> commercial arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the <b>Supreme Court</b>.</li> <li>• For <b>domestic</b> arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the concerned <b>High Court</b>.</li> <li>• In case there are no arbitral institutions available, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court may maintain a <b>panel of arbitrators</b> to perform the functions of the arbitral institutions.</li> <li>• An application for appointment of an arbitrator is required to be disposed of <b>within 30 days</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Relaxation of time limits:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the <b>1996 Act</b>, arbitral tribunals are required to make their award within a <b>period of 12 months for all arbitration proceedings</b>.</li> <li>• The Bill proposed to <b>remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Completion of written submissions:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, there is no time limit to file written submissions before an arbitral tribunal.</li> <li>• The Bill requires that the written claim and the defence to the claim in an arbitration proceeding, should be completed within six months of the appointment of the arbitrators.</li> </ul>
<b>Confidentiality of proceedings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill provides that all details of arbitration proceedings will be kept confidential except for the details of the arbitral award in certain circumstances.</li> <li>• Disclosure of the arbitral award will only be made where it is necessary for implementing or enforcing the award.</li> </ul>
<b>Applicability of Act, 2015:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill clarifies that the 2015 Act shall only apply to arbitral proceedings which started on or after October 23, 2015.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Aspects in Arbitration</b>	
<b>Other Recommendations of the Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee recommends the creation of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC), with officials from the Ministries of Finance, External Affairs and Law.</li> <li>• Hiring external lawyers having expertise in BITs to boost the Government's legal expertise. At present, India is facing around 20 disputes with regard to BITs.</li> <li>• Creating a designated fund to fight BIT disputes.</li> <li>• Appointing counsels qualified in BITs to defend India against BIT claims.</li> <li>• Boosting the capacity of Central and State Governments to better understand the implications of their policy decisions on India's BIT obligations.</li> <li>• Creation of the post of an International Law Adviser (ILA) to advise the Government on international legal disputes.</li> </ul>
<b>Benefits of Arbitration over Litigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>speed and informality</b> of the arbitration process.</li> <li>• Arbitration can be a shorter process, and if no attorneys are needed it can be less costly.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The two parties to the arbitration have control over the <b>selection of the arbitrator</b>, as compared to a court case in which the judge and jury selection is out of the hands of the two parties.</li> <li>• Arbitration is a <b>less formal process</b>, which makes the process move faster.</li> <li>• Arbitration <b>hearings are private</b>, and the results are not part of the public record.</li> </ul>

<b>Drawbacks of Arbitration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>lack of a formal evidence process</b> - relying on the skill and experience of the arbitrator to sort out the evidence, rather than a judge or jury.</li><li>• No interrogatories or depositions are taken, and no discovery process is included in arbitration.</li><li>• The <b>lack of a formal appeals process</b>, and the (usually) binding nature of the process.</li><li>• Mandatory arbitration clauses in consumer contracts and employment contracts often <b>work in favor of the company</b> rather than the employee or consumer.</li><li>• <b>Arbitrators may not be unbiased.</b></li><li>• The fact that arbitration hearings are not public may put <b>one side at a disadvantage.</b></li></ul>
<b>Critical aspects of Bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>What about existing mechanism?</b></li><li>• The Legal and Treaties (L&amp;T) division of the External Affairs Ministry is mandated to offer legal advice to the government on all international law matters, including BIT arbitrations.</li><li>• Instead of creating a new office, we can strengthen the L&amp;T division.</li><li>• The division could be made the designated authority to deal with all BIT arbitrations and can act as the coordinator of the proposed Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC).</li><li>• The IMC should have a member from the Commerce Ministry as well as it deals with India's trade agreements that also cover investment protection.</li></ul>



## 3

## Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>President has given assent to the <b>Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018</b>, that <b>provides for stringent punishment including death penalty for those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years.</b></li> <li>The amendment replaces the criminal law amendment ordinance promulgated on April 21 after the rape and murder of a minor girl in Kathua and another woman in Unnao.</li> </ul>
<b>Highlights of the Bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bill amends the IPC, 1860 to increase the <b>minimum punishment for rape of women from seven years to ten years.</b></li> <li>Rape and gang rape of girls <b>below the age of 12 years will carry minimum imprisonment of twenty years and is extendable to life imprisonment or death.</b></li> <li><b>Rape of girls below the age of 16 years is punishable with imprisonment of twenty years or life imprisonment.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Key Issues and Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bill amends the IPC, 1860 to increase the punishment for rape of girls. <b>However, punishment for rape of boys has remained unchanged.</b></li> <li>This has resulted in <b>greater difference in the quantum of punishment</b> for rape of minor boys and girls.</li> <li>The Bill imposes death penalty for rape of girls below the age of 12 years.</li> <li>There are <b>differing views on death penalty</b> for rape.</li> <li>Some argue that death penalty has a deterrence effect on the crime and therefore helps prevent it.</li> <li>Others argue that death penalty would be disproportionate punishment for rape.</li> </ul>
<b>Features of bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This Act ie. Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 shall be deemed to have come into force on the 21st day of April, 2018.</li> <li>The Act will further amend the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.</li> <li>The Home Ministry drafted Criminal Law (Amendment) Act stipulates stringent punishment for perpetrators of rape, particularly of girls below 16 and 12 years.</li> <li>Death sentence has been provided for rapists of girls under 12 years.</li> <li>The minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of seven years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.</li> <li>According to the new law, in case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which means jail term till the convict's "natural life".</li> <li>The punishment for gang rape of a girl below 16 years will invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict.</li> <li>Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided with the minimum jail term being 20 years which may go up to life in prison or death sentence.</li> <li>Gang-rape of a girl under 12 years of age will invite punishment of jail term for the rest of life or death, the Act says.</li> <li>The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial.</li> <li>It has prescribed the time limit for investigation of all cases of rape, saying it has to be mandatorily completed within two months.</li> <li>The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.</li> <li>There will also be no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gang-rape of a girl under 16 years.</li> </ul>
	<b>Should those who rape minors get the death penalty?</b>

<p><b>Arguments For</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The death penalty is warranted in today’s age because <b>it acts as a strong deterrent.</b></li> <li>• People are governed by laws and people should fear violating the rule of law.</li> <li>• If law is to ensure justice then it must fulfil two purposes.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People should have faith in the law which has been enacted. And</li> <li>2. The law should generate fear in the hearts of potential criminals and violators.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• If a child below the age of 12 becomes the victim of a traumatic event like rape, we have to deal with the offender or offenders firmly.</li> <li>• Anyone who takes advantage of a child’s innocence must be dealt with firmly under the law of the land.</li> <li>• Raping a child deserves a very harsh sentence, and that sentence is death.</li> <li>• <b>Faith in the law will be restored only if there is a severe deterrent to those committing heinous acts</b></li> <li>• Retributions of the heinous crime committed on the child can be ensured through capital punishment.</li> <li>• It will ensure that the person does not get a parole at a later stage and repeats his earlier crime.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arguments Against</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decision has been taken on account of the huge public outcry and not sound reasoning.</li> <li>• Government enacting harsher legislation <b>to portray their concern instead of identifying solutions to address the cause.</b></li> <li>• It did this after the <b>Nirbhaya rape</b> case by enacting the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 which overturned the well-entrenched philosophy of juvenile justice.</li> <li>• A <b>fallacy</b> has been created by the state that the punishment for rape/gang rape prior to the ordinance was not sufficient for ‘justice’ to the child.</li> <li>• <b>Punishment for such offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (the POCSO Act) extended to life imprisonment, irrespective of the child’s age, which met the principle of proportionality.</b></li> <li>• POCSO Act was enacted to: create an enabling environment for children finer calibration of sexual offences; special procedures for children in police stations and in courts; acknowledgement of the fact that children require support while journeying through the criminal justice system; and rehabilitative measures. Their <b>demand was not the death penalty.</b></li> <li>• <b>Though the POCSO Act did positively respond in certain aspects, the enabling provisions have not been implemented, thus denying children the envisaged ‘protection’.</b></li> <li>• Moreover, <b>the IPC/the POCSO Act arises only after the sexual offence is committed.</b></li> <li>• Instead of attempting to instil fear in the minds of potential rapists of minors, the state should concentrate on winning the confidence of children through skilled investigation, modern forensic gathering, and establishing structures/appointing human resources under the POCSO Act.</li> <li>• To ensure ‘justice’, the state should provide the child certainty of healing/ rehabilitation; certainty that sexual violence will be condemned by state actors; certainty of support to the child within and outside the criminal justice system; certainty that the due process of law will be followed in all cases of sexual offences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Some Important Statistics about Child Abuse and death penalty</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no evidence to show so, which is noted in <b>Report No. 262 of the Law Commission of India on the death penalty: “After many years of research and debate among statisticians, practitioners, and theorists, a worldwide consensus has now emerged that there is no evidence to suggest that the death penalty has a deterrent effect over and above its alternative — life imprisonment.”</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report further adds: <b>“In focusing on death penalty as the ultimate measure of justice to victims, the restorative and rehabilitative aspects of justice are lost sight of. Reliance on the death penalty diverts attention from other problems ailing the criminal justice system.”</b></li> <li>• The <b>‘Study on Child Abuse: India 2007’</b>, published by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, <b>shows that 72.1% of child respondents did not report sexual assault of penetrative form to anyone.</b></li> <li>• One of the reasons is that mostly the <b>perpetrator is a ‘known accused’.</b></li> <li>• <b>‘Crime in India: 2015’</b> indicates that <b>94.8% of the accused under Section 4 (penetrative sexual assault) and Section 6 (aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO Act were ‘known accused’.</b></li> <li>• It is apprehended that the <b>death penalty will increase pressure on the child to not report the crime.</b></li> <li>• The conviction rate reflected in <b>‘Crime in India: 2016’</b> is low — 28.2% under Sections 4 and 6 of the POCSO Act.</li> </ul>
<b>POCSO Act</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This act is applicable to the whole of India and <b>provides protection to children under the age of 18 years against sexual offences.</b></li> <li>• <b>Definition of sexual abuse –</b></li> <li>• penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as</li> <li>• sexual harassment and pornography, and deems a sexual assault to be “aggravated” under certain circumstances,</li> <li>• such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority vis-a-vis the child, like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.</li> <li>• It has raised the <b>age of consensual sex from 16 years as per Indian Penal Code, 1860 to 18 years.</b> This means that –             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any person (including a child) can be prosecuted for engaging in a sexual act with a child irrespective of whether the latter consented.</li> <li>• A husband or wife can be prosecuted for engaging in a sexual act with his or her spouse under the age of eighteen years.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right enshrined in the <b>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.</b></li> <li>• The inclusion of a specific target (SDG 16.2) in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to end all forms of violence against children gives renewed impetus towards the realization of the <b>right of every child to live free from fear, neglect, abuse and exploitation.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB, PRS, UNICEF</b>



## 4

## Article 35A &amp; Article 370

<p><b>What is Article 35A?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 35A is a provision in the Constitution that <b>empowers the Jammu and Kashmir legislature to define permanent residents</b> of the state and their special rights and privileges.</li> <li>• It was added through the <b>Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954, issued under Article 370.</b></li> <li>• The <b>Presidential Order of 1954</b> provided the framework for the <b>division of powers between J&amp;K and the Centre under Article 370</b></li> <li>• The Jammu and Kashmir Constitution was adopted on November 17, 1956. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It defined a Permanent Resident as a person who was a state subject on May 14, 1954, or who has been a resident of the state for 10 years, and has lawfully acquired immovable property in the state, the article.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What does it provide for?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saving of laws with respect to permanent residents and their rights.- Notwithstanding anything contained in this Constitution, no existing law in force in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and no law hereafter enacted by the Legislature of the State,-</li> <li>• defining the classes of persons who are, or shall be permanent residents of the State of Jammu and Kashmir; or</li> <li>• conferring on such permanent residents any special rights and privileges or imposing upon other persons any restrictions as respects- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. employment under the State Government;</li> <li>2. acquisition of immovable property in the State;</li> <li>3. settlement in the State; or</li> <li>4. right to scholarships and such other forms of aid as the State Government may provide,</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>shall be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with or takes away or abridges any rights conferred on the other citizens of India by any provision of this part."</p>
<p><b>Why in NEWS?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Supreme Court adjourned the case after Centre argued that the local body elections are long overdue in the state and Article 35A remains an emotive issue in the Valley. The apex court granted the request and postponed the hearing till January 2019.</li> <li>• In 2014 a NGO called We the Citizens filed a writ petition seeking the striking down of Article 35 A.</li> <li>• The Centre told the court that the petition against Article 35A raised "very sensitive" questions that required a "larger debate", following which the court referred the matter to a three-judge Bench and set six weeks for final disposal.</li> <li>• The State government had earlier argued that its special status was sourced from the 1954 Presidential Order, which gave special rights to the State's permanent residents.</li> <li>• The PIL hearing comes in the backdrop of an earlier Jammu and Kashmir High Court, which ruled that Article 370 assumed a place of permanence in the Constitution and the feature was beyond amendment, repeal or abrogation. The court said Article 35A gave "protection" to existing laws in force in the State.</li> </ul>

<p><b>West Pakistan refugees in J&amp;K move SC challenging Article 35A</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees of West Pakistan, who had migrated to India during the 1947 partition, have moved the Supreme Court challenging Article 35A of the Constitution. Petition:</li> <li>• There were around 3 lakh refugees from West Pakistan but those settled in Jammu and Kashmir have been denied the rights guaranteed under Article 35A which are given to the original residents of the state.</li> <li>• The plea claimed that the refugees and their children are not allowed to hold any position higher than sweeper and the children are not entitled to gain education in government universities or avail any scholarship to gain education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criticism of Art 35A</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 35A was not added to the Constitution by following the procedure prescribed for amendment of the Constitution of India under Article 368.</li> <li>• Article 370 does not confer on the President legislative or executive powers so that he can amend the Constitution or perform the function of Parliament.</li> <li>• It has been brought about by the executive organ when actually the right of amendment of the Constitution lies with the legislative organ. Therefore, it is, allegedly, ultra vires the basic structure of the Constitution since it violates the Constitutional procedures established by law.</li> <li>• The PRC classification created by Article 35A suffers from the violation of Article 14, Equality before the Law. The non-resident Indian citizens cannot have the rights and privileges, same as permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir.</li> <li>• It facilitates the violation of the right of women to 'marry a man of their choice' by not giving the heirs any right to property, if the woman marries a man not holding PRC.</li> <li>• Therefore, her children are not given Permanent Resident Certificate and thereby considering them unfit for inheritance – not given any right to such a woman's property even if she is a permanent resident</li> <li>• The industrial sector &amp; whole private sector suffers due to the property ownership restrictions.</li> <li>• Children of non-state subjects do not get admission to state colleges</li> <li>• It gives a free hand to the state government and politicians to discriminate between citizens of India, on an unfair basis</li> <li>• It impacts the status of West Pakistani refugees. Being citizens of India they are not stateless persons, but being non-permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir, they cannot enjoy the basic rights and privileges</li> </ul>
<p><b>Counterview</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various Articles in the Constitution have similarly provide special rights to other Indian states like Nagaland (Article 371A) and Mizoram (Article 371G) and notes that there are various provisions in the Indian Constitution which confer "special status" to several other states also, in varying degrees based on historical reasons</li> <li>• A Supreme Court judgment from March 1961 observes that the President may modify an existing provision in the Constitution under Article 370, however, it remains silent as to whether the President can, without even informing the Parliament, introduce a completely new Article.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is Article 370?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 370 of the Indian Constitution is a 'temporary provision' which grants special autonomous status to Jammu &amp; Kashmir.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Under Part XXI of the Constitution of India, which deals with “Temporary, Transitional and Special provisions”, the state of Jammu &amp; Kashmir has been accorded special status under Article 370.</li><li>• All the provisions of the Constitution which are applicable to other states are not applicable to J&amp;K.</li></ul>
<b>Important provisions under the article:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• According to this article, except for defence, foreign affairs, finance and communications, Parliament needs the state government’s concurrence for applying all other laws. Thus the state’s residents live under a separate set of laws, including those related to citizenship, ownership of property, and fundamental rights, as compared to other Indians.</li><li>• Indian citizens from other states cannot purchase land or property in Jammu &amp; Kashmir.</li><li>• Under Article 370, the Centre has no power to declare financial emergency under Article 360 in the state. It can declare emergency in the state only in case of war or external aggression.</li><li>• The Union government can therefore not declare emergency on grounds of internal disturbance or imminent danger unless it is made at the request or with the concurrence of the state government.</li><li>• Under Article 370 the Indian Parliament cannot increase or reduce the borders of the state.</li></ul>



## 5

## Ayushman Bharat

<b>Why in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister officially launched his flagship project, <b>Ayushman Bharat</b> Scheme on Independence Day.</li> <li>• The project will be launched on September 25, on the birth anniversary of <b>DeenDayal Upadhyay</b>.</li> <li>• The policy was initially announced by the finance minister in February this year during the presentation of budget .</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>inappropriate mix of inputs (infrastructure, human resources and supplies)</b> results in a <b>failure to deliver the desired health services and public health system is grossly underutilized by people</b>.</li> <li>• The elaborate government primary healthcare system in rural India with nearly 185,000 facilities delivers only 8-10% of total health services, availed by people.</li> <li>• People are either compelled to, or prefer to, <b>seek care from private providers</b>, often at a cost beyond their paying capacity.</li> <li>• Health expenditure is estimated to contribute to 3.6% and 2.9% of rural and urban poverty, respectively.</li> <li>• Annually, an estimated <b>60 to 80 million people in India either falls into poverty or get deeper into poverty</b> (if already below poverty line) due to health-related expenditures.</li> <li>• India was ranked at <b>154 of 195 countries on health service delivery index</b> published in mid-2017 in Lancet journal.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Ayushman Bharat scheme?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ayushman Bharat Program has two initiatives/components – <b>1. Health and Wellness Centers, and</b> <b>2. National Health Protection Scheme(NHPS)</b> – aiming for increased accessibility, availability and affordability of health services in India.</li> <li>• The ambitious Ayushman Bharat Scheme aims to cover over <b>10 crore vulnerable families</b> (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries).</li> <li>• It aims to provide <b>health cover up to Rs 5 lakh</b> per family per year (floater basis).</li> <li>• The beneficiaries will be identified based on <b>SECC (Socio-Economic Caste Census) database</b>.</li> <li>• The programme is being touted as the <b>world's largest health protection scheme</b>.</li> <li>• Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission will <b>subsume</b> the on-going centrally sponsored schemes - <b>RashtriyaSwasthyaBima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS)</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Salient features of Ayushman Bharat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An <b>entitlement based scheme</b> with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.</li> <li>• The scheme aims to <b>increased accessibility, availability and affordability of health services</b> in India.</li> <li>• The key objective of the programme is <b>to protect individuals from income shocks</b> that entail an unexpected event like an illness requiring lumpy expenditures to be incurred without prior notice</li> <li>• The beneficiaries can avail benefits in both <b>public and empanelled private facilities</b>.</li> <li>• One of the <b>core principles</b> of Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission is <b>co-operative federalism</b> and flexibility to states.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up <b>Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.</b></li> <li>• States would need to have <b>State Health Agency (SHA)</b> to implement the scheme.</li> <li>• In partnership with NITI Aayog, a robust, modular, scalable and interoperable IT platform will be made operational which will entail a paperless, cashless transaction.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be <b>shared between Central and State Governments in a specified ratio.</b></li> <li>• The funding for the scheme will be shared – 60:40 for all states and UTs with their own legislature, 90:10 in Northeast states and the three Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal and Uttarakhand and 100% Central funding for UTs without legislature.</li> <li>• The states are also free to continue with their own health programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission will have major impact on <b>reduction of Out of Pocket (OOP) expenditure</b> on ground of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased <b>benefit cover to nearly 40% of the population</b>, (the poorest &amp; the vulnerable)</li> <li>• Covering almost all secondary and many tertiary hospitalizations. (except a negative list)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This will lead to increased access to <b>quality health and medication.</b></li> <li>• Unmet needs of the population which remained hidden due to lack of financial resources will be catered to.</li> <li>• This will lead to timely treatments, improvements in health outcomes, patient satisfaction, improvement in productivity and efficiency, job creation thus leading to improvement in quality of life.</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges/Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>limited access, insufficient availability, sub-optimal or unknown quality of health services</b>, are amongst the key health challenges in India.</li> <li>• These challenges exist alongside a global discourse to achieve universal health coverage (UHC).</li> <li>• North-eastern states and others such as Bihar have <b>poor hospital infrastructure</b> to begin with.</li> <li>• NHPS scheme, which primarily offers support for clinical services such as hospitalization, is <b>unlikely to help fix the broken public health system</b> in the country.</li> <li>• The most critical issue remains the <b>limited and uneven distribution of human resources</b> at various levels of health services, with up to <b>40 per cent of health worker posts lying vacant in some states.</b></li> <li>• Most primary health care centres suffer from perennial <b>shortage of doctors</b> and even district hospitals are without specialists.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To strengthen a number of ongoing initiatives, <i>i.e.</i>, free medicines and diagnostics schemes, scaling up services in urban areas, expansion of services for non-communicable diseases.</li> <li>• Establish <b>institutional mechanism</b> to bring stakeholders together: Engagement with the community and civil society organization will play a crucial role.</li> <li>• <b>State Government to take lead</b> for advancing UHC and explore the legal framework for PM-RSSM.</li> <li>• Without addressing the <b>human resource situation</b>, public sector health care will remain of poor quality and largely unacceptable, forcing patients to go to the private sector.</li> <li>• For the success of the programme, <b>effective implementation</b> is the key. For this <b>an independent body</b> or unit may be set up to plan, coordinate, and provide technical backstopping to states.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The body could also work towards <b>capacity building</b> and development of standards and guidelines for the programme. Such a unit will ensure <b>uniform and systematic approach</b> to programme implementation across the country.</li><li>• The implementation of Ayushman Bharat needs to be <b>synchronised with a reform agenda</b> that must include <b>improved governance</b> and an enforcement of regulations.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• India has committed to achieve <b>Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a signatory to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals as well as through the NHP 2017.</b></li><li>• There no 'one size fit all' solution, and the strategies have to be locally developed and implemented.</li><li>• Every strategy/program would have to build upon strengths and attempt to minimize limitations.</li><li>• Ayushman Bharat Program (ABP) appears to be a balanced approach, which combines provision of comprehensive primary healthcare (through HWCs) and secondary and tertiary care hospitalization (through PM-RSSM).</li><li>• While ABP would help India make progress towards UHC, this program alone would not be enough and needs to be supplemented by rapid scale-up and convergence of ongoing schemes and programs, and taking a few additional measures.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, India.gov.in



## 6

## Delhi High Court on Begging Act

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Delhi High Court</b> on 8th August 2018, <b>decriminalised begging</b> in the national capital, striking down several provisions of the <b>Bombay Prevention of Begging Act 1959</b> as <b>unconstitutional</b>.</li> <li>The government had earlier told the court that begging should not be a crime if it was done due to poverty.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Begging Act</b> was passed in 1959 by the then State of Bombay, and has continued to exist in as many as 20 States and two Union Territories.</li> <li><b>Objective - keeping the streets of Bombay clear of the destitute, leprosy patients or the mentally ill so they could be sent into institutions.</b></li> <li>The Act <b>criminalises begging</b>.</li> <li>It gives the police the <b>power to arrest</b> individuals <b>without a warrant</b>.</li> <li>It gives magistrates the power to <b>commit them to a “certified institution” for up to three years on the commission of the first “offence”, and up to 10 years upon the second “offence”</b>.</li> <li>The Act also authorises the <b>detention of people “dependant” upon the “beggar” (family), and the separation of children</b> over the age of five.</li> <li>Certified institutions have absolute <b>power over detainees, including the power of punishment, and the power to exact “manual work”</b>.</li> <li>Disobeying the rules of the institution can land an individual in jail.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In most of its provisions, the Begging Act <b>reflects a vicious logic</b>.</li> <li>First, there is the <b>definition of “begging”</b>.</li> <li>The Act defines it to include “soliciting or receiving alms, in a public place whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune telling, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist soliciting or receiving alms.”</li> <li>The provisions are <b>vague and give uninhibited power</b> to the police to harass the citizen.</li> <li>It can be argued that it reflects a <b>bias against the weaker sections</b> of the society.</li> <li>The specific reference to “singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing or offering any article for sale” ends up <b>targeting those groups and communities who live on the margins of the society</b>.</li> <li>The reference to “no visible means of subsistence and wandering about” punishes people for the <b>crime of looking poor</b>.</li> <li>It denies such people the <b>access to public spaces</b> as they are perceived to be a nuisance.</li> <li>It denies them their <b>privacy and dignity by compelling them to allow themselves to be fingerprinted</b>.</li> <li>Thus it goes against the constitutional guarantees of <b>equality, pluralism and inclusiveness</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>The petition and High court's stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Act was made <b>applicable to Delhi in 1960</b>.</li> <li>The High Court was hearing two PILs—filed by social activists Harsh Mandar and Karnika Sawhney—challenging the constitutionality and validity of all sections, except <b>Section 11</b>, of the Act.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Section 11</b>, deals with penalty for employing or causing persons to beg.</li> <li>• The PILs have sought basic human and fundamental rights for beggars in the national capital, apart from decriminalising begging.</li> <li>• They had alleged a <b>violation of Articles 14, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the Constitution</b> of India by the impugned provisions.</li> <li>• They have also sought basic amenities such as proper food and medical facilities at all beggars' homes in the city.</li> <li>• And now in its recent(8th August) verdict on the matter, the Delhi High Court struck down several provisions of the <b>Bombay Prevention of Begging Act</b> and observed :<i>"The State simply cannot fail to do its duty to provide a decent life to its citizens and add insult to injury by arresting, detaining and, if necessary, imprisoning such persons, who beg, in search for essentials of bare survival, which is even below sustenance. A person who is compelled to beg cannot be faulted for such actions in these circumstances. Any legislation, penalizing the people therefore, is in the teeth of Article 21 of the Constitution of India."</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Way forward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Constitution is a <b>transformative Constitution, which seeks to undo legacies of injustice and lift up all individuals and communities to the plane of equal citizenship.</b></li> <li>• Other High Courts should follow the suit and the <b>constitutionality of other vagrancy laws should also be called into question.</b></li> <li>• Nonetheless, it is important to remember one thing: a court can strike down an unconstitutional law, but it cannot reform society.</li> <li>• Poverty, is a <b>systemic and structural problem.</b></li> <li>• Government needs to provide <b>basic livelihood, eradicate poverty and make special policies to address the problem.</b></li> <li>• Legislative Assembly and the government must replace the punitive structure of the (now defunct) Begging Act with a new set of measures that genuinely focusses on the rehabilitation and integration of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our society.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, Indian Express, LiveLaw, Economic Times.</p>



## 7

## Prison Reforms

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>SC is hearing a matter relating to inhuman conditions prevailing in 1,382 prisons across the country</b>- said it would constitute a committee under the chairmanship of its retired judge to look into problems in jails, including overcrowding, and suggest measures to deal with it.</li> <li>• <b>Recent cases of violation of the rights of prisoners</b> such as the murder of a lady inmate in one of Mumbai's prison and another incident of targeting from Pune's jail have kept the issue of Prison Reforms on the boil.</li> </ul>
<b>Need for Prison Reforms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prison reform is necessary to ensure that human rights of prisoners are protected and their prospects for social reintegration are increased.</b></li> <li>• Prisons are not isolated from the society and prison health is public health. It is important to provide adequate health facilities.</li> <li>• For protecting the rights of inmates with <b>mental health-care needs.</b></li> <li>• Over <b>67 percent of the prisoners are under-trials</b> and may continue to be held in overcrowded prisons for years. This makes them one of the <b>weakest sections of society.</b></li> </ul>
<b>What SC says?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The apex court stated that besides a retired SC judge as its Chairperson, the committee for prison reforms will comprise two or three officials from the Union Government.</li> <li>• The <b>committee's duties</b> will include looking into the problems of jails across the country including overcrowding and women prisoners languishing in cells for years.</li> <li>• After studying the problems, the committee would be required to suggest measures to deal with them.</li> <li>• <b>SC expressed its displeasure that the government has collected a huge amount under the orders of the apex court but the funds are not being utilised properly.</b></li> <li>• <b>The court had earlier taken strong exception to overcrowded jails across the country and said prisoners also have human rights and cannot be kept in jail like "animals".</b></li> <li>• It had <b>earlier passed a slew of directions over unnatural deaths in jails and on prison reforms across India.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Judicial Activism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supreme Court says jails are <b>overcrowded by 150%</b>, laments plights of inmates. Court says "Fundamental rights and human rights of people, however they may be placed, cannot be ignored only because of their adverse circumstances"</li> <li>• The court also noted that it was unfortunate that in spite of directions by the court, the prison authorities have not been able to take any effective steps for reducing overcrowding in jails.</li> </ul>
<b>Bombay High Court Directive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bombay High Court in March 2017 has directed the Maharashtra government to undertake a comprehensive review of the conditions in three major prisons in the State.</li> <li>• An empowered committee was to be constituted to look into all aspects of the jails.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>This must be done in the light of Supreme Court decisions, the Model Prison Manual of 2016 and relevant UN resolutions.</b></li> <li>• The panel was also suggested to take measures to create modern jails and modernise amenities.</li> <li>• The issues that appeared in court orders range from prisoners' rights, health, hygiene and access to legal aid, to the condition of women inmates and their children.</li> </ul>
<b>Model Jail Manual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was released by the <b>Home Ministry</b></li> <li>• <b>It makes it obligatory on part of the state to protect the residuary rights of prisoners</b> after they surrender their liberty to a legal process.</li> <li>• Prison reforms are not only about amenities and conditions; they must also address the prisoner's right to life.</li> <li>• <b>It aims at bringing in basic uniformity in laws, rules and regulations governing the administration of prisons</b> and the management of prisoners all over the country. It includes -             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access to free legal services</b> – Based on Article 39A of the Constitution.</li> <li>• <b>Additional provisions for women prisoners</b> – This is drawn from the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders adopted by the UN General Assembly (UN Bangkok Rules).</li> <li>• <b>Rights of prisoners sentenced to death</b> – thereby recognising the necessity of ensuring the human rights of such prisoners.</li> <li>• <b>Modernisation &amp; Prison computerisation</b> – to encourage use of technology/software systems where possible.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on after-care services</b> – to devise and develop mechanisms for rehabilitation of released convicts.</li> <li>• <b>Provisions for children of women prisoners</b> – to ensure holistic development of children of women prisoners.</li> <li>• Organisational uniformity and increased focus on prison correctional staff</li> <li>• <b>Inspection of Prisons</b> – to help identify existing issues and deficiencies in this could then be remedied through appropriate action.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Status of Overcrowding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Even though Supreme Court has, from time to time, raised the issues of prison reforms in general, and that of overcrowding in particular, measures to decongest jails have been sporadic and half-hearted.</li> <li>• There are <b>1382 prisons</b> across the country. The <b>average occupancy in all jails in the country was 117.4%</b>, as of Dec 31, 2014.</li> <li>• Further there is little change even though the court has passed a series of interim orders to the states on measures to decongest prisons.</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences of overcrowding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Against the prison's right to good health and dignity.</b></li> <li>• <b>An excessive prison population creates problems of hygiene, sanitation, management and discipline.</b></li> <li>• Available <b>staff strength and the level of training</b> they receive also needs to be updated.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Constructing New Prisons-</b> This can be a permanent solution to the problem, but the high cost as well as lack of availability of land would compel buying land outside city limits. This would make the logistics of presenting the inmates for trial difficult.</li> <li>• <b>Filling the vacancies of Jail Staff-</b> This can enable better utilization of open spaces within the prison and maintenance of security</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bail for undertrials and proper legal aid to them.</b></li> <li>• The SC has issued directions to ensure that under trials, who form a significant proportion of the prison population, are released, if they are eligible to be released under the provisions of Section 437 of the CrPC.</li> <li>• It has been observed that most of the <b>under trials are from the weaker section of the society who don't have enough means to get bail.</b> Legal aid can help them in getting bail and reduce the burden on jails</li> <li>• <b>Filling of vacancies in Judiciary</b></li> <li>• <b>Vacancies in the judiciary and consequent pendency</b> make bail extremely difficult for the under trials, thus compounding the issue of prison reforms.</li> <li>• <b>Innovative steps like Open Prisons of Rajasthan</b></li> <li>• A prisoner, who has completed one-third of his sentence inside the prison, has successfully completed three paroles and has maintained good conduct during his stay in prison is eligible for a permanent parole (Rajasthan Prisoner Release on Parole Rules, 1958), whereby he is put under certain conditions for the remaining part of his sentence.</li> <li>• Where the prison terms are longer than a year and the prisoner is not a danger to the society, there should be a <b>provision for periodic remissions</b> so that he can meet his family and after completion of his term can be easily integrated into the society.</li> <li>• <b>Women prisoners must be treated more sympathetically and allowed to meet their families frequently</b> so that they can remain emotionally stable and respond to the corrective measures at the prison</li> <li>• <b>Privacy during the interaction of the prisoners and their families</b> should be maintained</li> <li>• <b>Emphasis must be on vocational training as per latest industry requirements</b></li> <li>• <b>'After Care' facilities</b> for socio-economic rehabilitation must also be considered.</li> <li>• <b>Prison Act of 1894 needs to be overhauled</b> for to reflect the current socio-politico-economic requirements</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, Deccan Chronicals, RSTV



## 8

## Oxytocin issue

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Union government has banned imports of the <b>hormone oxytocin</b> to stop its misuse in the livestock industry</li> <li>• The government has decided to <b>rely on domestic production</b> to satisfy requirements of the hormone</li> <li>• The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has <b>restricted</b> the manufacture of Oxytocin formulations for domestic use <b>to public sector only</b>.</li> </ul>
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India had <b>halted retail sales of oxytocin as prescription-only drug in 2014</b>, but failed to curb illegal sales and the volume of imports was unclear.</li> <li>• <b>Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)</b> in February 2018 had recommended import ban of oxytocin.</li> <li>• It also had recommended that <b>sale be limited to registered government hospitals and clinics</b> and bar code system should be used on all forms of drug to ensure tracking and prevent abuse.</li> <li>• For adopting its recommendations, DTAB proposal had proposed amendments to <b>section 10 of Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and rule 96 of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945</b>.</li> </ul>
What is oxytocin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oxytocin in a <b>hormone</b> secreted by the pituitary gland.</li> <li>• It plays a <b>role in social bonding, sexual reproduction in both sexes, and during and after childbirth</b>.</li> <li>• Oxytocin is used both for human and animals to accelerate normal labour</li> <li>• <b>It is supposed to act directly on the uterus to induce rhythmic contractions.</b></li> <li>• <b>In certain animals especially farm animals, it is used to achieve 'milk let down'.</b></li> <li>• It is <b>believed to stimulate mammary gland</b> and induce milk production in farm animals, provided udder is prepared to do so.</li> <li>• Oxytocin, often called <b>love hormone</b>, is released naturally in human bonding activities such as sex, childbirth and breastfeeding.</li> <li>• Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain, in the <b>hypothalamus</b>.</li> <li>• <b>It acts both as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter.</b></li> <li>• It is also <b>used to help abort fetus</b> in cases of incomplete abortion or miscarriage, and control bleeding after childbirth.</li> <li>• It may be <b>used for breast engorgement</b>.</li> </ul>
What Centre says?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Karnataka Antibiotics &amp; Pharmaceuticals Ltd. to be the sole manufacturer and supplier of oxytocin</b> in the country</li> <li>• KAPL will supply drugs directly to registered public and private sector hospitals only.</li> <li>• Oxytocin or its formulations not to be available with any retail/ wholesale chemist</li> <li>• No import of oxytocin allowed</li> </ul>
Why a ban on oxytocin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The drug is <b>misused in the dairy industry</b> where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers was causing irreversible hormone damage.</li> <li>• Oxytocin is also <b>used to increase the size of vegetables</b> such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.</li> <li>• Use of Oxytocin without proper guidance is leading to early <b>sterility in milch animals</b> at an unprecedented rate.</li> <li>• One major reason for such excessive misuse of this drug is the absence of robust veterinary services in India.</li> <li>• The cost of procuring the Oxytocin injections was reported high, in spite of subsidized rates.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite Oxytocin being a <b>Schedule H drug</b>, it is impossible to prevent its manufacturing at registered private factories.</li> <li>• But it would be in the interest of the dairy industry and consumers to restrict manufacture and import of Oxytocin.</li> <li>• Stopping licensed private companies from making the product could create supply shortages.</li> <li>• Government's Oxytocin move has paved the way for a <b>PSU monopoly</b>, which has never made this drug in the past.</li> <li>• Though KAPL claims to have the capacity to supply the country's requirement, there is little transparency over the drug's pricing in comparison to that of private producers, some of whom have stopped making the drug.</li> <li>• Banning legitimate competition on a critical drug can end up setting an unhealthy precedent.</li> <li>• Without oxytocin doctors unable to create uterine contractions could increase the chances of C-section deliveries.</li> <li>• Cost-benefit ratio against outright bans is very less.</li> <li>• Monopolising production will remove the low-price options from the market.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No clear scientific justification</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk consumers worry about exposure to it through dairy products.</li> <li>• The science behind some of these claims is unclear.</li> <li>• In a Lok Sabha answer in 2015, the <b>National Dairy Research Institute</b> was quoted as saying there was no evidence that oxytocin led to infertility.</li> <li>• <b>A 2014 study by researchers at the National Institute of Nutrition</b> concluded that oxytocin content in buffalo milk did not alter with injections.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Way ahead</b></p>	<p><u>Using alternative-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carbetocin: The World Health Organization (WHO)</b> has come up with a safe and effective alternative to the controversial drug oxytocin.</li> <li>• While Oxytocin, must be stored and transported at 2–8 degrees Celsius, and becomes less effective when exposed to heat.</li> <li>• Carbetocin does not require refrigeration and retains its efficacy for at least three years even if it is stored at 30 degrees Celsius, and in 75% relative humidity.</li> <li>• Government should stop those misusing it rather than preventing people from using the medication itself.</li> <li>• Right approach would have been to strengthen regulation, and crack down on illegal production.</li> <li>• High Court sought a <b>study of the feasibility of restricting manufacture to the public sector; it never ordered the restriction to be imposed.</b></li> <li>• Government's order under <b>Section 26A of the said Act</b>, it appears that the <b>government has gone ahead to restrict manufacture without conducting any kind of feasibility study.</b></li> <li>• <b>Government can still set aside such orders</b> if convinced that there is nothing on record to support the final decision</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This standard of review was reiterated most recently in <b>Union of India v. Pfizer (2017), where the Supreme Court concluded:</b> "If the power under Section 26A is exercised on the basis of irrelevant material or on the basis of no material, the satisfaction itself that is contemplated by Section 26A would not be there and the exercise of the power would be struck down on this ground."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sources</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, thehindubusinessline.com, hindustantimes.com</p>

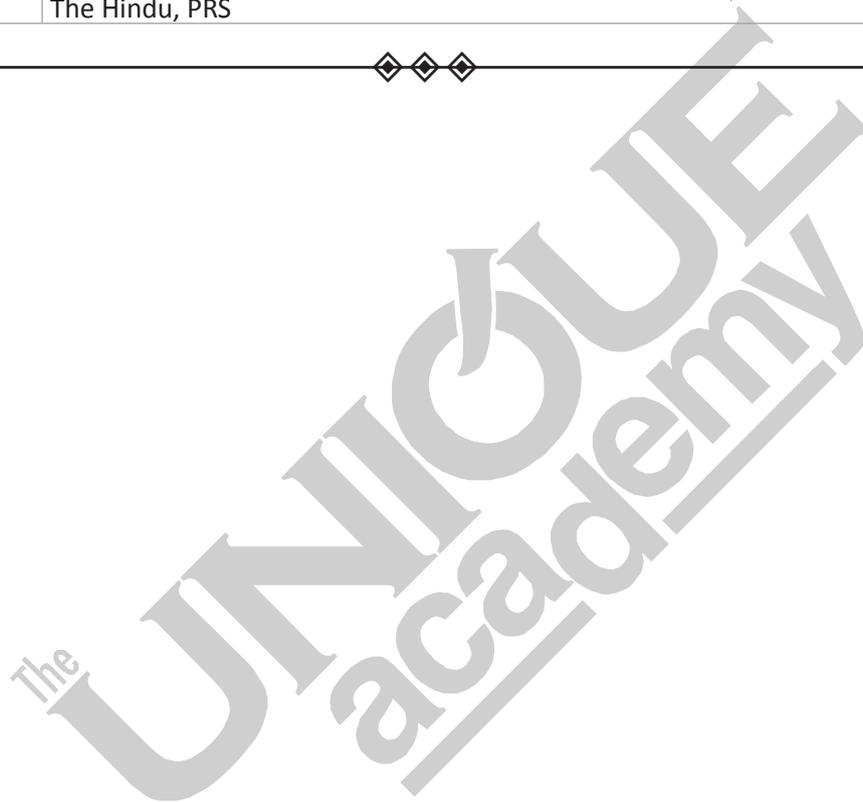


## 9

# The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha .</li> <li>The Bill makes declaration of Triple Talaq to be void and illegal, and makes provisions for maintenance and custody of children.</li> <li>The Bill is currently pending in Rajya Sabha.</li> <li><b>Certain amendments to the 2017 Bill were circulated in Rajya Sabha on August 9, 2018.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Effect of Declaration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2017 (2017 Bill)</b> - The Bill states that Triple Talaq (including talaq e biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce), including in spoken, written or electronic form, is void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal.</li> <li><b>2018 Bill</b> - No Change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Offence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2017 Bill</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bill makes declaration of Triple Talaq <b>cognizable and non-bailable offence.</b> (A cognizable offence is one where a police officer may arrest a person without a warrant.)</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>2018 Bill</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The offence will be <b>cognizable only</b> if information relating to the offence is given by: (i) <b>the married woman</b> (against whom Triple Talaq has been declared), or (ii) <b>any person related to her by blood or marriage.</b></li> <li>The Magistrate may grant bail to the accused after hearing the woman (against whom Triple Talaq has been pronounced), and if he is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.</li> <li>The <b>offence may be compounded</b> by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom Triple Talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding will be as determined by the Magistrate.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Punishment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2017 Bill</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A husband declaring Triple Talaq can be imprisoned for up to three years along with a fine.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>2018 Bill</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Maintenance and Custody</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2017 Bill</b> A Muslim woman against whom Triple Talaq has been declared, can seek: (i) subsistence allowance for herself and her dependent children; and (ii) custody of her minor children, from her husband. The amount of allowance and terms of custody will be decided by a Magistrate.</li> <li><b>2018 Bill</b> No change</li> </ul>
<b>What was need for amendments?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government has <b>watered down the triple talaq bill</b> as compared to the one passed by the Lok Sabha in December last year.</li> <li>As per the new amendment, <b>a crime of triple talaq (FIR) will be cognizable only if the victim or her blood relatives or someone associated with the marriage files the complaint.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A complaint filed by an agency or outside entity will not be cognizable.</li><li>• <b>In the earlier version, any person could have initiated criminal proceedings against a Muslim man, who pronounces instant triple talaq on his wife.</b></li><li>• As per the second amendment, <b>the crime remains non-bailable but a magistrate can grant bail after hearing the victim.</b></li><li>• Provision of bail was one of the demands of the opposition parties.</li><li>• The third amendment makes the <b>crime compoundable.</b></li><li>• If friends seek reconciliation, the magistrate can compound offence.</li><li>• A woman can also seek the custody of her minor children and seek subsistence allowance from the magistrate who will take a final call on the issue.</li><li>• The triple talaq bill passed by Lok Sabha in Decemeber made the practice a criminal offence for which a police officer was empowered to arrest an accused without warrant.</li><li>• <b>The proposed law would only be applicable on instant triple talaq or 'talaq-e-biddat', attracting a jail term of three years for the guilty.</b></li></ul>
Source	The Hindu, PRS



10

## Higher Education Commission of India

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>Higher Education Commission of India Bill 2018</b>, which seeks to repeal UGC Act and provides for setting up of <b>Higher Education Commission of India</b> has been prepared by the Ministry of HRD and placed in public domain for comments and suggestions.</li> <li>• The focus of Higher Education Commission of India will be on <b>improving academic standards and the quality of Higher Education.</b></li> </ul>
<b>HECI principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Less Government and more Governance:</b> Downsizing the scope of the Regulator. No more interference in the management issues of the educational institutions.</li> <li>• <b>Separation of grant functions:</b> The grant functions would be carried out by the HRD Ministry, and the HECI would focus only on academic matters.</li> <li>• <b>End of Inspection Raj:</b> Regulation is done through transparent public disclosures, merit-based decision making on matters regarding standards and quality in higher education.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on academic quality:</b> HECI is tasked with the mandate of improving academic standards with specific focus on learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Highlights of HECI Bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus will be on improving <b>academic standards and quality of higher education, specifying norms for learning outcomes, lay down standards of teaching/ research etc.</b></li> <li>• It will provide a <b>roadmap for mentoring of institutions found failing in maintaining the required academic standards.</b></li> <li>• It shall have the power to <b>enforce its decisions</b> through legal provisions in the Act.</li> <li>• The Commission shall have the power to <b>grant authorization for starting of academic operations</b> on the basis of their compliance with norms of academic quality.</li> <li>• It will also have the power to <b>recommend closure of institutions</b> which fail to adhere to minimum standards without affecting students' interest.</li> <li>• The Commission will <b>encourage higher education institutions to formulate a Code of Good Practices</b> covering promotion of research, teaching and learning.</li> <li>• The Chairpersons/Vice-Chairpersons and members will be <b>scholars of eminence and standing</b> in the field of academics and research, possessing leadership qualities, proven capacities for institution building and deep understanding of issues of higher education policy and practice.</li> <li>• There will be an <b>Advisory Council to render advice</b> to the Commission on matters concerning coordination and determination of standards in the country.</li> <li>• The Commission will also <b>specify norms and processes for fixing of fee</b> chargeable by higher education institutions.</li> <li>• It will also advise the Central Government or the State Governments, as the case may be, regarding steps to be taken for making education affordable to all.</li> <li>• The Commission will <b>monitor, through a national data base, all matters covering the development of emerging fields of knowledge</b> and balanced growth of higher education institutions in all spheres and specially in promotion of academic quality in higher education.</li> </ul>

<b>Need of HECI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context of <b>multiple bodies set up</b> over the years trying to cope with the ever increasing <b>complexity of the sector</b>.</li> <li>• Problem of plenty the regime of multiple regulators started in the mid1980s and various professional bodies also started asserting themselves as regulators from around the early 1990s when the country embraced the new challenges of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation.</li> <li>• The heavy hands of multiple regulators together with the empowerment of professional bodies have not yielded the desired dividends.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HECI will <b>replace the main regulatory authority, the University Grants Commission (UGC), to “provide for more autonomy and facilitate holistic growth” of this sector.</b></li> <li>• It offer greater opportunities to Indian students at <b>more affordable cost.</b></li> <li>• The new commission will <b>cover all fields of education except medical and , presumably, agriculture.</b></li> <li>• It is tasked with <b>evaluation of academic performance</b> by institutions, <b>mentoring</b> of institutions, <b>training</b> of teachers, promote use of educational <b>technology</b> etc.</li> <li>• It will develop <b>norms for setting standards for opening and closure</b> of institutions, provide for greater <b>flexibility and autonomy to institutions.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweeping powers render the HECI very authoritative.</li> <li>• They trivialise the concept of autonomy, because noncompliance (of directions of the HECI) could result in fines or jail sentence.</li> <li>• Instead of allowing institutions to evolve over time based on their specific needs, focussing on homogeneous, one size fits all administrative models will go against the ethos of academic freedom, diversity, and knowledge production.</li> <li>• The move to replace the UGC with the HECI would restrict the role of the States in matters relating to education.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It should providing graded autonomy to other institutions to free them from the clutches of regulations to enable them to develop into institutions of excellence.</li> <li>• The autonomy of the Universities should be preserved.</li> <li>• Government have accepted a democratic Constitution and if we are to achieve those democratic Purposes, it can only be by practising democracy in our educational institutions.</li> <li>• Universities are and can be the greatest bulwark of democracy</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hindu, Indian Express, The Wire, The Diplomat</li> </ul>



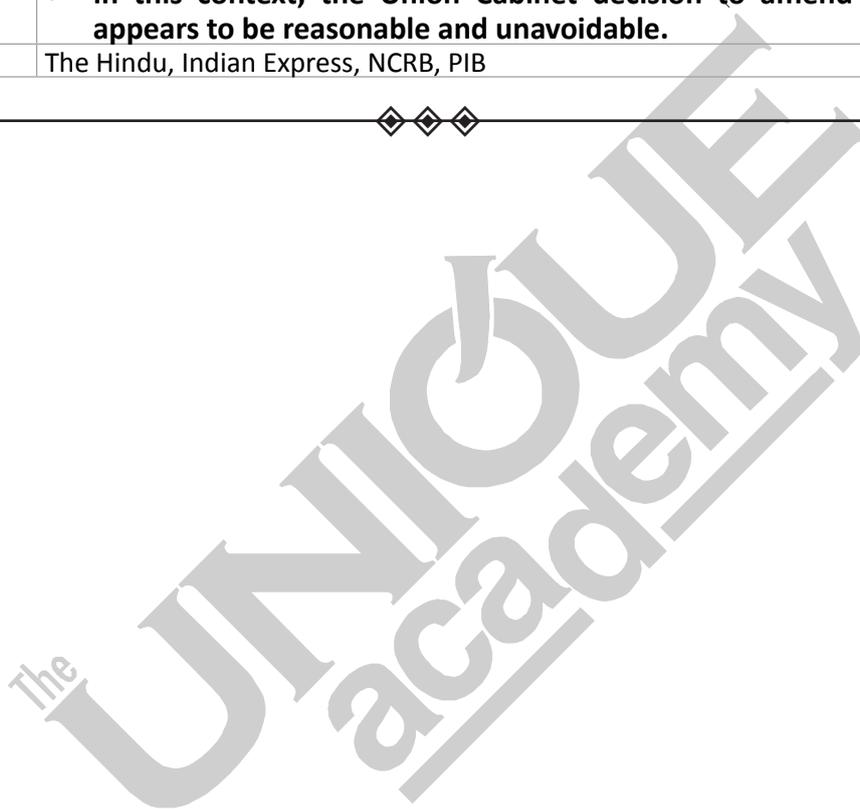
11

# Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Lok Sabha unanimously passed a Bill to reverse the effects of a Supreme Court order concerning certain safeguards against arrests under the SC/ST law.</li> </ul>
<p><b>About Bill</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notwithstanding any court ruling the renewed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 rules out any provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of atrocities against people from SC or ST communities.</li> <li>No preliminary enquiry will be required to register a criminal case</li> <li>Also an arrest under this proposed law would not be subject to any approval.</li> <li>An FIR will be filed based on complaints of crimes against people from Dalit and tribal communities without any questions it entails.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Back to the basics</b> A synopsis of the SC/ST Act's fate in the Supreme Court</p>  <p>File photo of a protest against the Act's dilution in April 2018.</p> <p><b>MARCH 20, 2018:</b> Justices A.K.Goel and U.U. Lalit of the Supreme Court hold that the SC/ST Act has become an instrument for "blackmail" of citizens and public servants. The SC reads down Section 18, which bars anticipatory bail to suspects</p> <p><b>APRIL 3:</b> The Centre files a review petition. The same Bench hears the review and observes that its March 20 judgment is to protect innocents from arbitrary arrest, and not an affront to Dalit rights</p> <p><b>MAY 3:</b> SC clarifies that the police need to conduct an enquiry before arrest in cases where they feel a complaint filed about an atrocity committed on Dalits is outright "absurd" or "absolutely" frivolous</p> <p><b>JULY 6:</b> Justice A.K. Goel, in his retirement speech, justifies the March 20 judgment</p> <p><b>AUGUST 1:</b> Union Cabinet gives its nod to a bill to restore the original provisions of the SC/ST Act</p> </div>
<p><b>What was Supreme court Ruling on SC/ST act</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On March 20, the Supreme Court expressed concern over misuse of the Act and ruled against automatic arrest of the booking of accused under the law.</li> <li>It also introduced the provision of anticipatory bail. (Section 18, bars grant of anticipatory bail to anyone accused of violating its provisions.)</li> <li>The bench prohibited the arrest of anyone, merely because of a complaint, that they had committed an atrocity against a Dalit or a tribal person. There should be a preliminary inquiry into the complaint.</li> <li>In respect of public servants, no arrest should be made without the written permission of the official's appointing authority and for private citizens, the Senior Superintendent of Police in the district should approve the arrest.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Anticipatory Bail</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under <b>Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code</b> there is a provision for a person to seek <b>'Anticipatory Bail'</b>.</li> <li>• This means that an individual can seek or request to get bail in anticipation or in expectation of being named or accused of having committed a non-bailable offence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The data on conviction rates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While the Supreme Court expressed fear that automatic arrests under the Atrocities Act could lead to innocents being framed, crime data indicates that <b>police investigations find such cases to be false only 9% or 10% of the time.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conviction rates</b> under the Atrocities Act were significantly lower than the national conviction rate for all crimes in general.</li> <li>• The Bureau's data for the 10-year period from 2007 to 2016 shows an average conviction rate of 28.8 in crimes against Scheduled castes and 25.2 in crimes against Scheduled tribes.</li> <li>• The average conviction rate for all crimes under the Indian Penal Code is much higher at 42.5.</li> <li>• The vast majority of atrocities cases investigated by the police result in chargesheets being filed.</li> <li>• In addition, the police investigated cases pending from previous years and filed chargesheets in 78% of cases of atrocities against Scheduled castes and 81% of cases relating to Scheduled tribes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989,</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, or the SC/ST Act protects the marginalised communities against discrimination and atrocities.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is popularly known as POA, the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act. The SC/ST Act was enacted on September 9, 1989.</li> <li>2. The SC/ST Act lists <b>22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviours inflicting criminal offences and breaking the self-respect and esteem of the scheduled castes and tribes community.</b> This includes <b>denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process.</b></li> <li>3. According to the SC/ST Act, the protection is provided from social disabilities such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food sexual exploitation, injury etc, atrocities affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.</li> <li>4. For speedy trial, <b>Section 14 of the SC/ST Act provides for a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district.</b></li> <li>5. The prime objective of the SC/ST Act is to deliver justice to marginalised through proactive efforts, giving them a life of dignity, self-esteem and a life without fear, violence or suppression from the dominant castes.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed amendments are aimed at undoing three new rules laid down by the court:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. that the bar on anticipatory bail under the Act need not prevent courts from granting advance bail if there is no merit in a complaint;</li> <li>2. that there can be an arrest only if the appointing authority (in the case of public servants) or the district superintendent of police (in the case of others) approves such arrest; and</li> <li>3. that there should be a preliminary inquiry into complaints.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• What they do is state that the bar on anticipatory bail will remain <b>"notwithstanding any judgment or order of any court"</b>, that there will be no need <b>for a preliminary inquiry before an FIR is registered and that no approval is required before someone is arrested under the Act.</b></li> </ul>

<b>Perception SC Judgement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SC judgment has not altered or read down any of the key provisions of the Act.</li><li>• It was only seeking to protect the innocent against arbitrary arrest.</li><li>• The Supreme Court's stiches resulted in the perception, that it was introducing norms to prevent action on complaints.</li><li>• Such perceptions consolidate at a time, when the conviction rate is dismally low and atrocities against Dalits are a disturbing reality.</li><li>• Centre has tried to correct perceptions by bringing this bill.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Though the intention of the court was clearly to protect officers from <b>"arbitrary arrest"</b> and to protect <b>"innocent citizens"</b> from being falsely implicated in cases</li><li>• Data from the <b>National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)</b> and the Ministry of Home Affairs shows that if conviction rates under the Act are low, it may have as much to do with the misuse of the provision as with the manner in which investigations are conducted and cases prosecuted in the courts.</li><li>• SC's data on SC/ST Atrocities Act <b>points weak implementation, not 'misuse'</b></li><li>• <b>In this context, the Union Cabinet decision to amend the provisions appears to be reasonable and unavoidable.</b></li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, NCRB, PIB



## 12

# SC/ST Reservation in Promotion

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Supreme Court allowed Union government <b>to go ahead with reservation in promotion for employees belonging to the SC and ST category in "accordance with law"</b>.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FROM YES TO NO TO MAYBE</b></p> <hr/> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reservation in promotions allowed since 1955 till the SC held it unconstitutional in 1992</li> <li>➤ In 1995, law was amended to allow it</li> <li>➤ The new law was challenged in SC and in 2006, the court said that before framing any law, the state will have to satisfy the test of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Backwardness</li> <li>2. Inadequate representation</li> <li>3. Overall efficiency</li> </ol> </li> </ul> </div> <div style="width: 10%; text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Relying on the 2006 SC judgment, several high courts struck down reservations in promotion</li> <li>➤ UPA government introduced a bill that said all SCs and STs shall be deemed backward. The bill awaits passing by Parliament</li> <li>➤ On Tuesday, the apex court allowed promotions temporarily till it decides on the legality of the law</li> </ul> </div> </div> <hr/>
<p><b>History of reservations in india</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tamil Nadu with its history and context of caste movements, is special, and has had reservation since 1831.</li> <li>The social justice movement against the repression of non-Brahmin castes peaked between 1910 and 1920 and, by 1921, reservation for BCs (backward castes), SCs and STs was initiated.</li> <li>In Kerala too, reservation for Ezhavas, Muslims, Other Backward Hindus, Latin Catholic and Anglo-Indians, and backward Christians were in effect for years before independence.</li> <li>The state of Kolhapur introduced reservations in 1902 — for backward castes in education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Poona Pact</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas about reservation in independent India were shaped significantly by the Poona Pact between B R Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.</li> <li>Gandhiji had opposed as divisive the <b>communal award of August 1932, which separated Dalits (then called the "untouchables") from Hindus</b>, while Ambedkar was for it.</li> <li>Finally a compromise was reached in September 1932, under which a <b>higher number of seats was promised for Dalits under the Hindu umbrella</b>.</li> <li>The Constituent Assembly carried forward the commitment to reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and quotas for SCs and STs is, therefore, the only explicit reservation that was written in.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mandal Commission</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>Mandal Commission</b> or the <b>Second Backward Classes Commission</b>, was established in India on 1 January 1979 by the Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was having a mandate to “<b>identify the socially or educationally backward classes</b>” of India.</li> <li>• Objective: to consider the question of reservations for people to redress caste discrimination, and used <b>eleven social, economic, and educational indicators</b> to determine backwardness.</li> <li>• In 1980, the Commission’s report upheld the affirmative action practice under Indian law by recommending that members of Other Backward Classes (OBC) be granted reservations to <b>27 per cent of jobs under the Central government and public sector undertakings.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Article 16 of Indian constitution</b></p>	<p><b>16. Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State</li> <li>2. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State</li> <li>3. Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office under the Government of, or any local or other authority within, a State or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that State or Union territory prior to such employment or appointment</li> <li>4. <b>Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Mandal Case</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the famous <b>Mandal case (Indra Sawhney v. Union of India 1992)</b>, the <b>scope and extent of Article 16(4)</b>, which provides for reservation of jobs in favour of backward classes, has been examined thoroughly by the <b>Supreme Court.</b></li> <li>• Though the Court has rejected the additional reservation of 10% for poorer sections of higher castes, it upheld the constitutional validity of 27% reservation for the OBCs with certain conditions, viz,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The advanced sections among the OBCs (the creamy layer) should be excluded from the list of beneficiaries of reservation.</li> <li>2. <b>No reservation in promotions; reservation should be confined to initial appointments only. Any existing reservation in promotions can continue for five years only (i.e., upto 1997).</b></li> <li>3. The total reserved quota should not exceed 50% except in some extraordinary situations. This rule should be applied every year.</li> <li>4. The ‘carry forward rule’ in case of unfilled (backlog) vacancies is valid. But it should not violate 50% rule.</li> <li>5. <b>A permanent statutory body should be established to examine complaints of over-inclusion and under-inclusion in the list of OBCs.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Nagraj Case</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The court dealt with a challenge to constitutional amendments aimed at nullifying the impact of judgments including that in the famous Mandal case on reservations in promotions for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe employees.</li> <li>• <b>The petition challenged the constitutional validity of:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Constitution (Seventy-Seventh Amendment) Act, 1995, which inserted Clause 4A in Article 16 (equality of opportunity in matters of public employment);</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The Constitution (Eighty-First Amendment) Act, 2000, which inserted Clause 4B in Article 16;</li> <li>3. The Constitution (Eighty-Second Amendment) Act, 2000, which inserted a proviso to Article 335 (claims of SCs and STs to services and posts); and</li> <li>4. The Constitution (Eighty-Fifth Amendment) Act, 2001, which changed the wording of Article 16(4A).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Articles 16(4A) and 16(4B)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the <b>77th Amendment Act</b> noted that quotas in promotions for SCs and STs had been discontinued after the November 16, 1992 judgment in <i>Indra Sawhney and Others vs Union of India and Others</i> (Mandal case)</li> <li>2. In which the Supreme Court observed that <b>reservation under Article 16(4)</b> — which allows the state to make provisions for “<b>reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens</b>” — <b>did not apply to promotions.</b></li> <li>3. This affected SC and ST employees, and in order to ensure that reservations in promotions continued, <b>Clause 4A</b> was introduced: “<b>Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion... in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.</b>”</li> <li>4. <b>Clause 4B</b> was inserted to ensure that while calculating the quota for a particular year — <b>capped at 50% by Indra Sawhney</b> — the unfilled or ‘carried forward’ quota from the earlier year was not clubbed with the regular quota of that year.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Qualification and seniority</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 82nd Amendment Act noted that the Supreme Court had, in both cases ruled that relaxation of qualifying marks and standards of evaluation for reservation in the promotion were not permissible under Article 16(4) in view of the command contained in Article 335.</li> <li>• To restore the relaxations, the 82nd Amendment added a proviso to Article 335, allowing “relaxation in qualifying marks in any examination or lowering the standards of evaluation, for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of services or posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State”.</li> <li>• The 85th Amendment noted that the SC judgments had affected the interests of SC/ST employees “in the matter of seniority on promotion to the next higher grade”.</li> <li>• The amendment introduced the words “with consequential seniority” after “in matters of promotion” in Article 16(4A).</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Nagaraj judgment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The petitioners argued that the four amendments were aimed at reversing the judgments in <i>Indra Sawhney</i> and other cases, that Parliament had arrogated to itself judicial powers, and had, therefore, violated the basic structure of the Constitution.</li> <li>• The court upheld the constitutional validity of the 77th, 81st, 82nd, and 85th Amendments.</li> <li>• It, however, ruled that if the state wished to exercise their discretion and make a provision for reservation in promotions for SCs/STs, the State has to collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy of representation of that class in public employment in addition to compliance of Article 335</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Also, even if the State has a compelling reason it will have to see that its reservation provision does not breach the ceiling-limit of 50% or obliterate the creamy layer or extend the reservation indefinitely.</li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB, India Canoon



## 13

## E-commerce Draft Policy

<b>Why in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government of India has issued a draft on the e-commerce policy.</li> <li>• The policy makes a strong case for <b>championing 'Indian' online enterprise</b> and may have major implications for foreign-owned ecommerce majors operating in India.</li> </ul>
<b>E-commerce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to WTO, the term '<b>electronic commerce</b>' is understood to mean the <b>production, distribution, marketing, sale or delivery of goods and services by electronic means.</b></li> <li>• E-commerce allows consumers to electronically exchange goods and services with no barriers of time or distance.</li> <li>• Electronic commerce has expanded rapidly over the past five years and is predicted to continue at this rate, or even accelerate.</li> </ul> <p><b>There are two important types of e-commerce model :</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Marketplace based model</b> of e-commerce means providing an information technology platform by an e-commerce entity on a digital &amp; electronic network to act as a facilitator between the buyer and seller. -Currently 100% FDI is allowed under this model.</li> <li>2. <b>Inventory based model</b> of e-commerce means an e-commerce activity where inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly. -Currently India does not allow FDI under this model</li> </ol>
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India's e-commerce industry is estimated to be worth <b>\$25 billion (approximately Rs 1.71 trillion).</b></li> <li>• It is estimated to grow to <b>\$200 billion (Rs 13.7 trillion) by 2020.</b></li> <li>• In the last couple of years, e-commerce transactions have risen substantially in India and abroad.</li> <li>• Cheaper smartphones and data tariffs, and enhanced connectivity contribute to the growth prospects.</li> <li>• The potential the market offers has drawn in giants such as <b>Amazon, Walmart, Alibaba and Uber</b> to invest millions of dollars to become dominant players in this space.</li> <li>• The e-commerce growth has led to <b>job creation, productivity improvement and online presence of consumers.</b></li> <li>• This <b>necessitates better policy response and coordination among various wings of the government.</b></li> <li>• A national e-commerce policy will also enable <b>better negotiations on multilateral issues with the World Trade Organization.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Key recommendations of new e-commerce draft</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All e-commerce companies should store <b>user data exclusively in India</b> in view of security and privacy concerns.</li> <li>• The draft also talks about <b>government having access to data</b> stored in India for national security and public policy objectives.</li> <li>• The draft proposes <b>tax sops to encourage data localization and grant infra status</b> to data centres.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage <b>micro, small and medium enterprises</b>, the draft policy recommends allowing them to follow <b>inventory-based models</b> for selling locally produced goods through an online platform.</li> <li>• The draft policy proposes the creation of a <b>single national regulator to oversee the entire industry</b>.</li> <li>• It was suggested that the government should <b>set up a separate wing</b> in the <b>Directorate of Enforcement</b> to handle complaints related to implementation of guidelines related to foreign direct investment in the e-commerce sector.</li> <li>• FDI may be allowed in <b>inventory based e-commerce</b> companies up to 49%, under the condition that the e-tailer sells 100% Made in India products.</li> <li>• It is also suggested that <b>foreign e-commerce websites be brought on a level playing field with their Indian counterparts</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Sunset clause</b> :The marketplace companies will not be able to offer deep discounts through their in-house companies listed as seller.</li> <li>• To provide a forum for <b>consumers</b>, the task force suggested a <b>Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)</b>.</li> <li>• <b>A fraud intelligence mechanism</b> is also suggested.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The move will help private sector companies comply with the norms laid down by the <b>Srikrishna committee on data localization</b>.</li> <li>• The <b>100% FDI clause will allow e-commerce firms to offer their own brands</b> as long as they are made in India.</li> <li>• The marketplace will not be able to offer deep discounts through their in-house companies listed as seller.</li> <li>• This is to prevent them from directly or indirectly influencing the prices of goods and services.</li> <li>• The <b>Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)</b>, besides helping consumers will also act as the <b>nodal agency for intra-government coordination</b>.</li> <li>• It will thus provide a platform for e-commerce operators regarding complaints of fraudulent activities.</li> <li>• The <b>fraud intelligence mechanism</b> would use artificial intelligence-based authentication systems, for early detection of frauds.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>sunset clause</b> that restricts discounting on e-commerce platforms is likely to badly hit e-commerce firms, which rely on discounts to drive sales and on sellers to boost sales.</li> <li>• To give the <b>government a say on who can offer how much discount</b> and for how long, instead of letting consumers exercise informed choices, would be a regressive step.</li> <li>• Due to the proposed regulator, seeking the Competition Commission of India to look into mergers in the sector below the threshold limit and asking e-commerce companies to phase out discounts within two years, some have feared the return of the <b>Licence Raj</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a regulator, e-consumer courts may better address complaints about online financial frauds</li> <li>• Instead of government to decide on who can offer how much discount and for how long, letting consumers exercise informed choices would be a progressive step.</li> <li>• While some of the provisions of the draft bill is a welcome step in regulating data and unfair competition, others will make it ambiguous.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, LiveMint, Business Standard, DNA



## 14

# DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018 has been introduced in India's <b>Parliament</b> on August 9, 2018</li> <li>• Aim: to create a <b>national DNA database for use by the police in solving crimes and identifying missing persons.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Originally proposed in 2007, the drafting of the bill began in 2012 by the <b>Department of Biotechnology of the Ministry of Science and Technology.</b></li> <li>• Law Commission of India had prepared the draft bill "<b>The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017</b>", stressing on its usage for disaster victim identification, criminal investigation, and identification of missing persons.</li> <li>• In April this year, the <b>Supreme Court</b> had asked the government to create a DNA data bank while hearing a PIL for creation of such the data bank to identify the missing persons and unidentified dead bodies.</li> </ul>
<b>Need for regulation of DNA profiling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In view of the <b>scope of the use and misuse of human DNA profiling</b>, it has been felt that it is <b>required to be regulated by a special law</b> with well delineated standards, quality controls and quality assurance systems to ensure the credibility of the DNA testing, restricting it to the purposes laid down in the Act.</li> </ul>
<b>Key features of the bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily, the Bill provides for the setting up of a <b>statutory DNA Profiling Board</b> to spell out procedures and standards to <b>establish DNA laboratories.</b></li> <li>• <b>The Commission's draft Bill restricts DNA profiling to the specific purpose of identification of a person and not for extracting other information.</b></li> <li>• It provides for the <b>creation of DNA data banks, at national and regional levels</b>, which would be responsible for <b>storing DNA profiles</b> received from the accredited laboratories.</li> <li>• <b>These DNA data banks will also be responsible for maintaining certain indices, like crime scene index, suspects' index, offenders' index, missing persons' index and unknown deceased persons' index.</b></li> <li>• <b>DNA experts would be notified as government scientific experts.</b></li> <li>• With a view to assist the kith and kin of missing persons, provisions have been made for <b>proper identification of missing persons on the basis of their bodily samples/substances.</b></li> <li>• <b>Maintenance of strict confidentiality</b> with regard to keeping of records of DNA profiles and their use.</li> <li>• Any <b>violation would lead to imprisonment</b>, which may extend up to three years, and a fine which may extend up to Rs. 2 lakh.</li> <li>• The Bill gives the <b>right to an undertrial to request for another DNA test in case of doubts</b> that his earlier samples may have been contaminated.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance/ Applications of Bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bill will ensure that with proposed <b>expanded use of DNA profiling technology in the country</b>, there will be also assurance that DNA test results are reliable and data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.</li> <li>• <b>It will also ensure speedier justice delivery and increased conviction rate.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will also enable cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on other.</li> <li>• For establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.</li> <li>• It will set in place, an institutional mechanism to collect and deploy DNA technologies to <b>identify persons based on samples collected from crime scenes or for identifying missing persons.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Constitutional and Legal Aspects of DNA Profiling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Constitution under <b>Article 51A( h) and (j)</b> casts a duty on every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform and to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity.</li> <li>• Parliament is competent to undertake legislations which encourage various technological and scientific methods to detect crimes speed up investigation and determine standards in institutions for higher education and development in technical institutions (<b>Entry 65 &amp; 66 of the Union List</b>).</li> <li>• The other relevant provisions of the Constitution are,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>Article 20(3)</b> which guarantees a right against the self-incrimination; and</li> <li>ii. <b>Article 21 which guarantees protection of life and liberty of every person.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>DNA Profiling (DNA fingerprinting, DNA testing, or DNA typing)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DNA profiling is the process where a specific DNA pattern, called a profile, is obtained from a person or sample of bodily tissue.</li> <li>• Even though we are all unique, most of our DNA is actually identical to other people's DNA.</li> <li>• However, specific regions vary highly between people. These regions are called <b>polymorphic</b>.</li> <li>• Differences in these variable regions between people are known as <b>polymorphisms</b>.</li> <li>• Each of us inherits a unique combination of polymorphisms from our parents.</li> <li>• DNA polymorphisms can be analysed to give a DNA profile.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance of DNA Profiling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.</b></li> <li>• <b>Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body</b> (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those against property (including theft, burglary, and dacoity).</li> <li>• It is <b>extremely useful and accurate technology in ascertaining the identity of a person from his/her DNA sample</b>, or establishing biological relationships between individuals.</li> <li>• As a result, DNA technology is being increasingly relied upon in investigations of crime, identification of unidentified bodies, or in determining parentage.</li> <li>• The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the <b>National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016</b>, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year.</li> <li>• Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present.</li> <li>• The expanded use of DNA profiling technology in these criminal cases will result in <b>speedier justice delivery and also in increased conviction rates</b>, which at present is only around 30%.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues with DNA Profiling/Criticism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Privacy-related objections</b>-main concerns are who's DNA can be collected and under what circumstances, who can access the database etc.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information like <b>ancestry or susceptibility to a disease, or other genetic traits</b>, is liable to be misused.</li> <li>• Data <b>storage issues</b> are also involved.</li> <li>• <b>DNA technology is very expensive.</b></li> <li>• <b>Violation of Privacy:</b> Various objections were made that the DNA information collected is a violation of privacy. Though the officials said that several clauses of the Bill were tightened to make it stronger and immune to data abuse.</li> <li>• <b>Limited Data Base:</b> The DNA information collected by forensic laboratories can only store information related to criminal investigations and the DNA details of the suspects will be deleted. All the data of the suspects along with criminal records is <b>difficult to maintain.</b></li> <li>• There are <b>chances that a wrong match is generated.</b></li> <li>• If the DNA result is taken as the ultimate evidence, <b>no recourse</b> will be available to an individual who has been wrongly matched.</li> <li>• DNA tests have <b>not led to an improvement in conviction rates</b> in countries where it is already being followed.</li> </ul>
Various reports related to DNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>The A. P. Shah Committee Report:</u></b></li> <li>• The report suggested <b>safeguards to prevent illegal collection and use of DNA data.</b></li> <li>• <b>Also provides safeguards to prevent the proposed body from misusing the same.</b></li> <li>• <b><u>Law commission report:</u></b></li> <li>• The Law Commission of India, in its 271st report, prepared the draft Bill named The DNA Based Technology (Use and Regulation) Bill, 2017 <b>after examining various judicial pronouncements and constitutional provisions.</b></li> <li>• It however had also flagged that <b>privacy concerns and the ethics involved in this scientific collection of data</b> were very high.</li> <li>• The Commission <b>highlighted that the procedure for DNA profiling</b>, if given statutory recognition, should be done legitimately as per constitutional provisions.</li> <li>• <b><u>Malimath Committee Report:</u></b></li> <li>• It <b>recommended amendment of Cr.P.C</b> conferring all criminal courts at all levels with the inherent power to pass appropriate orders.</li> <li>• <b>Maintenance of strict confidentiality</b> with regard to keeping of records of DNA profiles and their use.</li> <li>• The <b>violators of the provisions would be liable for punishment of imprisonment</b>, which may extend up to three years and also fine which may extend up to Rs.2 lakhs.</li> </ul>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DNA analysis offers substantial information which if misused or used improperly may cause serious harm to individuals and the society as a whole.</li> <li>• <b>Thus, a need has long been felt to have a special legislation to regulate human DNA profiling.</b></li> <li>• <b>Safeguard to prevent illegal collection and use of DNA data as stated by A. P. Shah Committee.</b></li> <li>• <b>Need for robust process and structure for collection of DNA samples from crime scene to the laboratory for analysis, to the DNA Bank for storage and comparison.</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, PRSIndia, the Wire, PIB.



## 15

## Sunil Mehta Committee

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union <b>Finance Minister in July approved the Sunil Mehta Committee's suggestions</b> of a 5-pronged strategy to tackle the Non-Performing Assets (NPA).</li> <li>• The committee led by Punjab National Bank Chairman Sunil Mehta has submitted its draft report titled '<b>Sashakt</b>' to the Finance Ministry with a strategy to tackle stress in the banking sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assets of the banking system comprises of loans given and investment (in bonds) made by banks.</li> <li>• The most important scale of asset quality is <b>Non Performing Assets (NPA)</b>.</li> <li>• A loan whose interest and/or installment of principal have remained overdue (not paid) for a period of 90 days is considered as <b>NPA</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Restructured asset</b> or loan are that assets which got an extended repayment period, reduced interest rate, converting a part of the loan into equity, providing additional financing, or some combination of these measures.</li> <li>• <b>Written off assets</b> are those the bank or lender doesn't count the money borrower owes to it.</li> <li>• The financial statement of the bank will indicate that the written off loans are compensated through some other way.</li> <li>• There is no meaning that the borrower is pardoned or got exempted from payment.</li> <li>• <b>Stressed assets = NPAs + Restructured loans + Written off assets.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the last three years, Indian banks have been saddled with increasing levels of stressed assets.</li> <li>• The recent <b>Financial Stability Report of the Reserve Bank had said gross NPAs may rise to 12.2 percent by March 2019</b> from 11.6 percent in March 2018.</li> <li>• RBI has asked as many as <b>11 of public sector lenders</b> to not to engage in large lending activities under what it calls the <b>prompt corrective action framework</b>.</li> <li>• As on March 31, 2018, bad loans across listed banks stood at over Rs 10 lakh crore.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations of Sunil Mehta Committee</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The '<b>Sashakt</b>' Report highlights <b>nine guiding principles</b> aimed at the operational turnaround of the banking sector in a manner that will create jobs and enhance the value of public sector banks.</li> <li>• Banks will be required to create a '<b>Focused Vertical</b>' for bad assets below <b>Rs 50 crore and set up a Steering Committee for resolution of such bad assets within 90 days.</b></li> <li>• It suggested the <b>Bank Led Resolution Approach (BLRA)</b> for loans between <b>Rs 50 and Rs 500 crore.</b></li> <li>• It suggested constitution of an <b>Independent Screening Committee</b> to examine resolution of such loans within <b>180 days</b> and if there is no resolution in 180 days, then these bad assets will be moved to the <b>National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The loans <b>above Rs 500 crore will be dealt via AMC/AIF-led resolution process.</b></li> <li>• The panel proposed <b>creation of a national Asset Management Company (AMC)</b> to take over such Non-Performing Assets from banks.</li> <li>• Recommendations included creating platforms where banks can trade in bunched loan assets.</li> <li>• The committee also said an alternative investment fund (AIF) would raise funds from institutional investors.</li> </ul>
<b>Asset Management Company (AMC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee suggested setting up of an AMC with an equity contribution from banks, foreign funds and infrastructure funds such as the <b>National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF).</b></li> <li>• The AMC could be set up under an existing <b>Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC)</b> like Arcil Ltd which is already promoted by banks.</li> <li>• The National AMC will determine the price of individual accounts after due diligence and once the asset is sold, turnaround specialists would be appointed.</li> <li>• The asset would be sold down to strategic buyers over a period of time.</li> <li>• The plan to set up a national ARC or AMC over and above existing private ARCs come amid the mounting bad loans in the system leading to bleeding balance sheets of banks.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Sashakt (recommendations) will help retain the value of the asset through operational turnaround.</li> <li>• Sashakt aims to strengthen the credit capacity, credit culture and credit portfolio of public sector banks.</li> <li>• However, Sashakt does not require any regulatory forbearance.</li> <li>• The bankers' panel has suggested the need to take the function of NPA management out of the banks, thus, suggesting the banks to focus on core banking activities of lending and growing their balance sheets.</li> <li>• The resolution process suggested by the committee will help bring in credible long-term external capital to limit the burden on the domestic banking sector while ensuring robust governance and credit architecture to prevent a similar build-up of non-performing loans in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Problems</b>	<p><b>Challenges to ARCs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Capital inadequacy:</b> The first challenge for ARCs is the inability to fund the working capital needs of stressed loans.</li> <li>• <b>Valuation mismatch between ARCs and seller institutions :</b>ARCs have been seeking higher discounts to buy NPAs. However, banks are unwilling to reduce price, resulting in an expectation mismatch.</li> <li>• <b>Lack of professional expertise for turnaround</b></li> <li>• <b>Lengthy resolution :</b>NPA resolution in India is complex, tedious and time consuming. The World Bank's Doing Business 2018 report reveals that in terms of insolvency resolution, India holds a dismal 174th rank out of 212 countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key challenges to the banking system in India include <b>low financial depth, a high share of NPAs and high concentration of Public Sector Banks.</b></li> <li>• Looking ahead, we need to focus on three areas to stimulate the banking sector :<b>Improving governance of banks, enhancing competition in the sector and developing corporate bond markets</b> to relieve pressure from banks as lending sources.</li> <li>• Reform of credit functioning, culture, treatment of delinquencies and even ownership structure in banking is must.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Going forward, banks need to do <b>forensic audit</b> for ascertaining the end use of funds.</li><li>• They should use the Big Data Analytics and other <b>IT based solutions</b> for doing proper due diligence about the borrower and his businesses like fintech companies are doing.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian Economy, PWC, Firstpost, Arthapedia



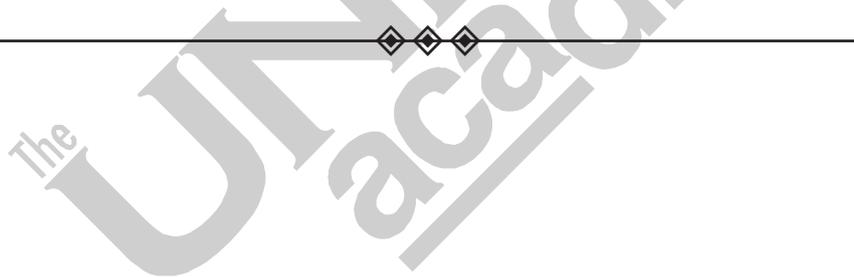
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## 16

## Kerala Floods

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerala is facing the worst flood since 1924</li> <li>• It has left over 400 dead and rendered thousands of people homeless.</li> <li>• The unprecedented deluge in Kerala unleashed by heavy rain, overflowing rivers, brimming dams and massive landslips.</li> </ul>
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe rains beyond the predicted range caught the administration off guard.</li> <li>• Worsened by ad hock urbanization that has colonized river flood plains.</li> <li>• In recent years there has been a <b>severe damage inflicted to Kerala's wetlands</b> due to pressure put on Western Ghats.</li> <li>• The state resorted to <b>urbanisation</b> in areas like Idukki, Trivandrum, Alappuzha, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Wayanad which was done <b>without proper drainage system</b>.</li> <li>• The problem was compounded by <b>underestimating the rains</b>.</li> <li>• Even the <b>Kochi airport has been built on a canal</b> which connected the land and a water body.</li> <li>• The airport is now obstructing the outlet of water and ultimately, during floods, broke the wall and inundated the airport.</li> <li>• The <b>paddy fields</b>, which had the threshold to absorb water, has been converted into urban infrastructure which is impervious to absorbing water.</li> <li>• Also, <b>no outlet has been provided</b> that is adequate for water to leave Kerala.</li> </ul>
<b>Gadgil committee report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmentalist Madhav Gadgil opines that irresponsible environmental policy is to be blamed for the recent floods and landslides in Kerala.</li> <li>• He also called it a "<b>man-made calamity</b>".</li> <li>• The Madhav Gadgil committee report had made recommendations to preserve India's Western Ghats in August 2011.</li> <li>• The Ghat is one amongst the <b>world's eight biodiversity hotspots</b>.</li> <li>• The committee noted that, by and large, the Western Ghats have been subjected to a <b>rapid erosion of natural capital with the building up of man-made capital</b>.</li> <li>• The Gadgil committee report, which divided areas of Western Ghats into <b>three ecologically sensitive zones, recommended 57 restrictions to preserve it</b>, which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ban on construction of buildings</li> <li>• Use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides</li> <li>• Disruption of hydroelectric projects</li> <li>• Ban on construction of roads.</li> <li>• No new dams based on large scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Kerala government had rejected the report and extensive quarrying, forest land acquisitions are major causes.</li> <li>• The regions worst impacted were classified as ecologically sensitive zones by the Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>Problems associated with floods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India is <b>one of the world's most flood-prone</b> countries, with <b>113 million people</b> exposed to floods.</li> <li>• According to a United Nations report, <b>India's average annual economic losses</b> due to disasters are estimated at <b>US\$9.8 billion (\$\$13.1 billion)</b>, of which over <b>US\$7 billion</b> can be attributed to floods. The figure is expected to rise 10-fold to US\$154 billion by 2030.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most important consequence of floods is the loss of life.</li> <li>• Besides the toll on humans, the recent floods caused considerable damage to animal life, infrastructure and the environment.</li> <li>• Recurrent floods impact the agriculture sector adversely. Due to recurrent floods, fields get submerged and lead to the loss of harvest increasing the vulnerability of farmers to indebtedness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What could be done ?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The state government was bound by its duty to protect Kerala's blanket – the <b>Western Ghats</b> – and to further disallow proposals for quarrying, construction work and deforestation.</li> <li>• Rivers and rains alone cannot be blamed for Kerala's flooding.</li> <li>• Flood-related destruction can only be minimized if <b>flood forecasting and mapping is accurate.</b></li> <li>• <b>Early prediction</b> open up possibilities for authorities to evacuate vulnerable sections early, residents to stock up on essential supplies and disaster management authorities to review options.</li> <li>• Indian <b>cities are poorly planned and managed</b>, exposing them to cyclical weather havoc.</li> <li>• It is imperative that <b>civic bodies produce flood risk maps</b> and restrict development in the areas.</li> <li>• Given that monsoon flooding is inescapable, <b>citizens and communities need to prepare.</b></li> <li>• Introduction of <b>insurance cover for householder</b> losses will provide financial protection.</li> <li>• Integrated flood management - land use planning , waste resource management and risk management</li> <li>• Watershed management - by developing vegetative and soil cover and structural works - check dams , detention basin</li> <li>• Flood Plain Zoning and Flood Proofing</li> <li>• Capacity building of NDRF and SDRF to tackle diverse situations.</li> <li>• State should focus more on <b>long term administrative and structural solution</b> rather than short term measures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, IndianExpress, The Quint, Firstpost, StraitsTimes</p>



## 17

## Mullaperiyar Dam Dispute

<b>Why in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mullaperiyar Dam again became an issue between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, with flood-battered Kerala complaining the neighbouring state was refusing to accept more water from the brimming dam.</li> <li>• Supreme Court recently directed the Union government to set up a special committee to exclusively prepare disaster management plans.</li> <li>• The Apex court also directed Tamil Nadu, which owns the dam, and Kerala, where it is situated, to set up similar committees. It said the three committees would work in harmony.</li> </ul>
<b>About Mullaperiyar Dam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Mullaperiyar Dam</b> is a masonry gravity dam on the Periyar River in the state of Kerala.</li> <li>• Periyar river originates from Ananamalai Hills and Joins sea near Ernakulam</li> <li>• The dam is located , on the Cardamom Hills of the Western Ghats in Thekkady, Idukki District of Kerala.</li> </ul>
<b>Background and the Issue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dam was built in the late <b>1800s in the princely state of Travancore</b> (present-day Kerala) and <b>given to British-ruled Madras Presidency on a 999-year lease in 1886.</b></li> <li>• The agreement granted full rights to the secretary of state of Tamil Nadu, a British official, to construct irrigation projects on the land.</li> <li>• The dam was built to <b>divert eastwards a part of the west-flowing Periyar river</b>, to feed the <b>arid areas of Tamil Nadu.</b></li> <li>• The agreement was <b>renewed by the two state governments in independent India in the 1970s.</b></li> <li>• Tamil Nadu was given <b>rights to the land and the water from the dam as well as the authority to develop hydro-power projects</b> at the site, and <b>Kerala would receive rent</b> in return.</li> <li>• Since Tamil Nadu is dependant on the water of Periyar River in fulfilling its needs in agriculture and basic needs, they are <b>asking to raise the water level of the dam.</b></li> <li>• Kerala opposed this demand saying there is a <b>threat to 119 years old dam by raising the water level to higher extent.</b></li> <li>• The dam is also declared as <b>endangered construction</b> and any further addition into the water pressure may result in collapse of the dam which may take life of many people from the state of Kerala as well as Tamil Nadu.</li> <li>• Kerala passed a law the Kerala Irrigation and Water Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2006, to prevent the neighboring State (TN) from raising the water level beyond 136 feet.</li> <li>• Tamilnadu challenged Kerala's dam height law in Supreme court.</li> </ul>
<b>Tamil Nadu's stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tamil Nadu claims that though it has undertaken periodic repairs on the dam, the Kerala government has not allowed it to raise the water level.</li> <li>• It says it has suffered huge losses from not being able to use the dam to its full capacity.</li> <li>• It further said, without raising water level in this dam, we cannot sustain our agriculture and drinking water requirement.</li> </ul>
<b>Kerala's stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kerala, on the other hand, contends it is <b>not safe to raise the water level as Idukki district, where the dam is located, is earthquake-prone and has experienced multiple low-intensity quakes.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientists, too, have said the <b>dam cannot withstand an earthquake measuring over six on the Richter scale</b> and that if such a calamity were to happen, the lives of more than <b>three million people</b> would be imperilled.</li> <li>• The broken Mullaperiyar dam can also damage <b>Periyar National park and Periyar tiger reserve.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Dam safety and Central Water Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The safety concerns surfaced in 1979 after reports in the Kerala press claimed a minor earthquake had caused cracks in the dam.</li> <li>• The <b>Central Water Commission</b> was asked to examine the structure and suggest ways to strengthen it.</li> <li>• As an emergency measure, the commission recommended that the level of water stored in the reservoir be <b>lowered to 136 feet from about 142 feet.</b></li> <li>• It held that the water level <b>could be raised to the dam's full capacity of 152 feet after the structure was strengthened.</b></li> </ul>
<b>The Dispute in Courts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2006, the Supreme Court allowed the Tamil Nadu government to raise the water level to 142 feet, contending that the apprehensions raised by Kerala were baseless.</li> <li>• While the Tamil Nadu has welcomed the Supreme Court verdict, Kerala government said that it was an unfortunate that the apex court did not consider safety of the people.</li> <li>• The Supreme Court on May 7, 2014 upheld its earlier decision and allowed Tamil Nadu to raise the water level to 142 feet (43.28 m).</li> <li>• The court <b>quashed the Kerala Irrigation Water Conservation Act 2006</b> that restricted raising the water level in the dam above 136 feet (41.45 m) on safety grounds.</li> <li>• To allay Kerala's concerns, it directed that <b>a three-member committee be set up to oversee the process of raising the water level, inspect the dam routinely and look into the safety concerns.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Committees appointed to look into the issue</b>	<p><b><u>Supervisory Committee :</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A three-member supervisory committee was appointed by the centre and the Supreme Court in 2006 which was headed by senior Central Water Commission (CWC) officer.</li> <li>• The commission consisted of one representative each from both the states.</li> <li>• It was constituted to make periodic visit to inspect the dam before and after the monsoon and to supervise the safety of the dam.</li> <li>• It was also free to issue necessary directions to the Kerala and Tamil Nadu required for the safety of 119 yrs old Mullaperiyar Dam.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>A.S. Anand Committee :</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A.S. Anand committee was set up by the Supreme Court in February 2010 during the course of argument in Tamil Nadu's suit questioning the law enacted by the Kerala to restrict the water level of the dam to 136ft.</li> <li>• The committee was constituted to look into the dispute and prepare a report.</li> <li>• According to the reports of the committee the dam is structurally and hydrologically safe and Tamil Nadu can raise the water level from 136ft to 142ft after carrying out certain repairs.</li> <li>• The report also says that the dam is seismically safe.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Scroll, Hindustan Times.



## 18

## RTI Amendment Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bill seeks to change the rules regarding the <b>tenure and salaries of the Information Commissioners and Chief Information Commissioners, both at the Union and state level.</b></li> <li>The <b>Justice Srikrishna panel on data protection</b> has called for <b>amending the Right to Information Act to restrict non-disclosure of information only in cases where harm to an individual outweighs the common good of transparency and accountability in the functioning of public authorities.</b></li> </ul>
About amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2018, <b>proposes to give the Centre the power to set the tenure and salaries of State and Central Information Commissioners.</b></li> <li>The current law gives Information Commissioners a <b>tenure of five years and salaries which match those of Election Commissioners.</b></li> <li>The Centre will also fix the terms for <b>State Information Commissioners.</b></li> </ul>
Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bill is being opposed by several Opposition political parties and RTI activists, who warn that the <b>amendments will dilute the RTI law and compromise the independence of the Information Commissions.</b></li> <li>This is simply a way of giving the <b>Central government a greater grip on Information Commissioners,</b> who have been giving orders which the government finds inconvenient.</li> <li>The Centre usurping the power to decide the tenure and salaries of State Information Commissioners <b>raises key issues of federalism.</b></li> <li>The <b>secrecy around the amendments</b> has prevented any meaningful debate or public engagement with the proposed changes. There has been no debate around the Bill</li> </ul>
Centre's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Centre maintained that unlike EC, Information Commissions are not constitutional bodies. They are merely statutory creations under the law.</li> </ul>
Counter argument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centre's view is narrow.</li> <li>It is to tighten the hold of the administration on the Commissions.</li> <li>At present also, it gets little official support to fill vacancies and improve efficiency.</li> <li>Supreme Court also held that right to information is integral to the right to free expression under Article 19(1)(a).</li> <li>It weakens transparency and accountability.</li> </ul>
Challenges of RTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are many areas which are <b>out of limits of RTIact (Even, application of RTI to judiciary and legislature is limited).</b></li> <li>The <b>exclusion of law enforcement agencies</b> is major cause of discontent of RIT supporters.</li> <li><b>Disregard of announcements of Chief Information Commission by political parties indicate the lack of power to enforce the rulings of CIC.</b></li> <li>The recent controversy of <b>non-appointment of CIC for a long-time</b> shows the apathy of government towards the act.</li> <li><b>Official Secrets Act,</b> framed by colonial power still restricts much information out of the purview whether they did not have any relevance to security and integrity of India. For example Correspondence related to Subhash Chandra Bose.</li> <li>All the <b>government organisations were asked to put in public general information but this was not followed by many institutions and there is no deadline to this provision.</b></li> <li>Appointment of IC is partisan</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Information is presented in a technical language by government departments</li><li>• Maintenance of information is not automated and efficient</li><li>• Awareness of act is low among masses</li><li>• Costs is sometimes high</li><li>• Bureaucratic pre-eminence in information commissions results in promotion of traditional bureaucratic ethos of secrecy and lack of accountability.</li><li>• Performance wise other than the implementation failure RTI is effectively been used by activists even at the cost of their life. Various Public Interest Litigations are filed in courts to change the course of executive. The base of recent check on public advertisement was based on the findings of RTI.</li><li>• RIT is a strong tool to use the democratic space provided in India. Some problems still remain in implementation and provisions but overall RTI is effectively use by many activists and can provide a check on excessive and unnecessary power of executive and other governmental bodies.</li><li>• Central Information Commission has over 23,500 pending appeals and complaints.</li><li>• In many States, the Commissions are working at low capacity. Because of several vacancies, cases were piled-up.</li><li>• Many State Governments ignore the requirement under Section 4 of the Act to publish information suomotu.</li><li>• The law envisaged that voluntary disclosure would reduce the need to file an application.</li><li>• Since fines as specified in the law are rarely imposed, officers give incomplete, vague or unconnected information to the applicants.</li><li>• RTI Act allowed us to uncover frauds, but it was difficult to ensure that the information could be used to hold a bureaucrat or elected representative accountable.</li><li>• The Lokpal debate highlighted grand corruption. Lokpal Act is in cold storage, in spite of repeated prodding by the Supreme Court.</li><li>• Accountability to the people should have been institutionalized through a strong Social Accountability and Grievance Redress Act.</li><li>• The Government has tried to protect bureaucrats by amending the Lokpal Act in such a way that assets of family members of public servants do not have to be disclosed in the public domain.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Wire, The Hindu, PIB



## 19

## Section 377

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A five-judge constitutional bench began hearing a number of petitions challenging Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code which criminalizes homosexuality.</li> </ul>
<b>SC judgment on privacy and Sec 377</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Supreme Court, in its order on right to privacy, ruled that “sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy”</li> <li>• Right to privacy and the protection of sexual orientation lie at the core of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution</li> <li>• This ruling is expected to have an implication on the curative petition on Section 377, pending before a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Sec 377</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 377, IPC reads as: “377. Unnatural offences.—Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.</li> <li>• Unnatural offences or 'intercourse against the order of nature' is a criminal act in India</li> <li>• Due to lack of proper definition of the same, it has been given a wide amplitude of interpretation</li> <li>• Consequently it bans not only homosexuality but also all those acts between consenting heterosexual couple which are considered as unnatural</li> <li>• This section was criticized by activists for denying the individuals' right over their sexuality as well as giving the State the power to intrude people's bedrooms</li> <li>• It gave law enforcement agencies scope for abusing the provision against</li> </ul>
<b>Court's observations on the Koushal case</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court expressed its disagreement with the reasoning of a two-judge Bench of the SC in the Suresh Kumar Koushal vs Naz Foundation case of December 2013, and the way it had dealt with the privacy-dignity based claims of LGBT persons.</li> <li>• It, however, held that since the curative petition is pending before the Supreme Court, the “constitutional validity would be decided in an appropriate proceeding”</li> <li>• Disagreeing with the two-judge Bench’s use of the term “so-called rights” with reference to the rights of the LGBT population, the court stressed that these are not illusory, but are real rights founded on sound constitutional doctrine.</li> <li>• It also differed with the two-judge Bench’s observation that only “a miniscule fraction of the country’s population constitutes LGBT and in the last more than 150 years, less than 200 persons have been prosecuted”.</li> <li>• The court held that “the invasion of a fundamental right is not rendered tolerable when a few, as opposed to a large number of persons, are subjected to hostile treatment.’</li> <li>• The court has held that fundamental rights are not subject to minority or majority and also that the rights of the LGBT persons are not illusory.</li> </ul>
<b>Brief Timeline of Sec 377 judicial proceedings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Naz foundation v/s Govt of Delhi case:</b> Delhi High Court upholds that section 377 is in violation of Fundamental Rights of the constitution such as Article 14, 15 or 21 etc. and consensual homosexual sex between adults has become decriminalized in India.</li> <li>• <b>Supreme Court on Delhi High Court Judgement:</b> In 2013, Supreme Court De criminalizes the homosexuality by reversing the judgment of Delhi HC and upholding the constitutional validity of section 377.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further SC says that it is the work of parliament to make or amend the legislation and parliament shall make endeavor to remove such controversial provisions form statue books of India.</li> <li>• Third Gender: In 2014, Supreme Court directed government to declare transgender as 'third gender' and to be given reservation under OBC quota.</li> <li>• The Supreme Court of India, after hearing curative petitions filed to ask the court to revisit the 2013 Judgement overturning the Delhi High Court verdict in the Naz Foundation v National Capital Territory of Delhi held that the petitions raise "significant questions of constitutional law" and referred the petitions to a five-judge bench to determine the said questions.</li> <li>• A curative petition is a process by which the Supreme Court may choose to exercise it's inherent powers to review it's own decision</li> </ul>
<b>Arguments against decriminalizing Sec 377</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homosexuality and other unnatural sexual acts are against the Indian religious and moral ideals</li> <li>• Homosexuality is a defect or disorder which needs curing</li> <li>• It will increase STDs like AIDS</li> <li>• It will increase child sex abuse</li> <li>• It will increase the forceful conversion to third gender</li> <li>• It is required to protect animal rights</li> </ul>
<b>Arguments in favour of decriminalizing Sec 377</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is against the Fundamental Rights of the citizen under the Rights of Equality</li> <li>• It violates the Right to life as enshrined under Article 21</li> <li>• It denies the right to choice of a citizen regarding his her sexuality</li> <li>• After special laws being passed for protection of children against sexual abuse (POSCO 2012)there is no relevance of the argument that Sec 377 is needed for protecting them</li> <li>• What is natural and what is not must not be decided by the state</li> <li>• In the land of Kamasutra (3-4th c AD) and other arts that vividly represent various sexual practices, such restrictions cant be upheld on grounds of culture</li> <li>• It violates the basic premise of a liberal democracy</li> <li>• It is against the international trend that is more accommodative towards the LGBT community</li> </ul>
<b>International Trend</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ireland legalized same-sex marriage. It had decriminalized homosexuality in 1993 and became the first country to allow same sex marriage a national level by popular vote.</li> <li>• In June 2015, the US Supreme Court ruled that same sex marriages were legal.</li> <li>• Nepal legalized homosexuality in 2007 and the new Constitution of the country too gives many rights to the LGBT community.</li> <li>• France, UK, Canada, United States, Australia and Brazil have de-criminalized homosexuality.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the State and society is to provide congenial atmosphere to individuals to make them realise their potential so as to give their best to the society. Obstructing individual freedom and criminalising their intimate moments cannot help to achieve this objective.</li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu , Indian Express , Hindustan Times , BBC



## 20

## India-China Relations

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the relationship has been friendly, there are border disputes and an economic competition between the two countries that have at times led to strained relations.</li> </ul>
<b>Brief Timeline of India-China relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1949 - People's Republic of China proclaimed, with Mao Zedong as the Chairman and Zhou Enlai as the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.</li> <li>1st April 1950 - India became the 1st country to recognise China</li> <li>1954 - Chou en Lai visited India and the Panchasheel doctrine was adopted</li> <li>1959 - The escape of Dalai Lama and asylum in India</li> <li>1960 - Chou En Lai, the Chinese Premier visited India</li> <li>1962 - The border conflict took place</li> <li>1988 - Rajiv Gandhi visited China and a new stage in the relation after the war was heralded. Agreement to set up a Joint Working Group on Boundary question and a Joint Group on Economic Relations, Trade, Science and Technology signed.</li> <li>1991 - Chinese Premier Li Peng visits India after a gap of 31 years, pledges to resolve the boundary question through friendly consultations.</li> <li>1993 - Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visits China, signs agreement on Border Peace and Tranquility</li> <li>1996- Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits India, signs Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the military field along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas.</li> <li>1998 - Defence Minister George Fernandes reported claim that China was India's threat number one offends China.</li> <li>1998 - Pokhran tests condemned by China</li> <li>2000 - Karmapa Lama flees China, reaches Dharamshala and joins the Dalai Lama. India and China sign a bilateral trade agreement in Beijing to facilitate China's early entry into the WTO</li> <li>2003 - Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee makes a landmark visit to China</li> <li>2005 - Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits Bangalore. India and China also sign an agreement aimed at resolving disputes over their Himalayan border.</li> <li>2009: Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits China. Bilateral trade surpasses \$50 billion and China becomes India's largest trading partner in goods.</li> <li>2015: PM Modi visited China and signed deals on wide range of issues</li> </ul>
<b>Line of Actual Control</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the effective border between India and China. The LAC is 4,057-km long and traverses three areas of northern Indian states: western (Ladakh, Kashmir), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh).</li> </ul>
<b>Bilateral relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Security:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a great suspicion between two countries of each other's activities.</li> <li>Chinese projects of Karakoram highway project, South China Sea, Silk Road project, Pearl of string theory and border activities of Chumar have generated huge suspicion in India.</li> <li>The closeness of India to USA, Japan, and Vietnam etc. generates fear among China of India becoming part of its entrapment.</li> <li>The lack of cooperation and confidence building measures are the reason behind it.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Refuge given by Indian Govt to Dalai Lama and Tibetan Govt in exile never goes down well with Chinese Govt and is seen as potential interference in its internal affairs.</li> <li>● <b>Border Dispute:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh region are the main area of dispute between two countries.</li> <li>○ 1962 war in which India lost Aksai Chin region has created great doubts about Chinese intentions on border disputes.</li> <li>○ China claim AP to be part of Tibet. Both countries failed to solve this dispute despite formation of committee comprising special representatives.</li> <li>○ China has also been issuing stapled visas to people of Arunachal Pradesh.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Trade:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Huge trade deficit, market restrictions imposed by China is restricting realisation of trade potential.</li> <li>○ Trade deficit is \$48 bn in china's favour.</li> <li>○ India is exporting only cotton, iron ore etc. while china exports to India high-tech goods.</li> <li>○ Also, India's market in china for IT and pharma is very small.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>People-to-people:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ China wants e-visa facility to be extended to it so that there is increased flow of tourists and businessmen from either country.</li> <li>○ Recent Indian thrust on soft power diplomacy by using Buddhist linkages to build strong bonds is a welcome move</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>International Platform:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Both countries lead Developing, emerging countries on various platform e.g. Climate change, WTO, UN etc. So they have quite common interests which bring them closer.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Long standing issues</b></p>	<p><b>Border issue –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is rooted in the <b>disputed status of the McMahon Line</b>, which defines the border between India and Tibet.</li> <li>● <b>There has not been a remarkable progress in resolving the border dispute between the two sides due to the importance of Aksai Chin to China and Arunachal Pradesh to India.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Dalai Lama –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India hosts the Dalai Lama and his government in exile in Dharmashala in Himachal Pradesh. Close to 100000 Tibetan immigrants live in India. This is seen as a major irritant by China as it is highly sensitive about sovereignty issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>NSG –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China is well-established within the global nuclear order with a veto power for granting memberships in nuclear suppliers group.</li> <li>● India certainly faces an uneven playing field on the issue of NSG membership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Patronizing of Pakistan -</b></p> <p>China has been supporting Pakistan on several issues over India. The building of CPEC despite India's sovereignty concerns, blocking the blacklisting of Masood Azhar, Pitting Pakistan against India in NSG membership case, development of Gwadar port are all cases in point.</p> <p><b>MazoodAzhar –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When India raised its concerns in UNSC, China was the only country among the 15-members to have opposed the ban on Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar</li> </ul> <p><b>BRI –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China considers the CPEC projects planned in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for Gilgit-Baltistan as a part of the Belt and Road initiative due to concerns over “sovereignty” of India.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Doklam –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China attempted to build a road construction by bringing in earthmovers and construction machines in the Doklam area of Bhutan.</li> <li>• The Indian Army had asked the PLA to stop the road construction activity that has resulted in a stand-off.</li> </ul> <p><b>Territorial distress –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent intrusions by PLA of china in Indian borders near J&amp;K, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh is also creating distress in Indian side.</li> </ul> <p><b>Neighbourhood ties –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China is strengthening its trade and defence ties with countries which are strategically important to India, it poses security threats to India.</li> </ul> <p><b>Competition in Africa -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India and Africa are vying for the resources in Africa and courting relations with African countries. The Chinese with their deep pockets are following a economic diplomacy while India is leveraging its skill in human resource development for the same.</li> </ul> <p><b>South China Sea -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China claims that all that is within the so called 9 dash line that is drawn on the map of the sea belongs to China on the grounds of its historical control over it. This stand is disputed by several countries of the ASEAN and has disconcerted India as well. The sea is significant as a conduit of trade and source of marine resources for the countries of the region as well India and other countries. India has been carrying out exploration in the oil blocks in Vietnam's EEZ which is under its lawful jurisdiction. But China has compelled the stopping of this exploration resulting in losses to both Vietnam and India. Hence India along with other like minded countries have been asking for freedom of navigation and overflight in the region.</li> </ul>
<p><b>reasons for the issues</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequent change in the balance of power between India and China in South Asia.</li> <li>• Both promote the notion of a multi-polar world in which they want serve as bigger players alongside the United States.</li> <li>• India's attitude towards cordial relations with China remains mixed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How can these issues be addressed?/ way forward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SAARC</b> - India needs to rekindle the SAARC process in order to secure historical affinity with its neighbours.</li> <li>• <b>Strategic agreements</b> - Instead of starting from the historical issues, both countries can resolve the present issues.</li> <li>• Strategic plans may be devised so that long standing issues will be addressed.</li> <li>• <b>Economical treaties</b> - 'Friendship and cooperation treaty' and a free trade agreement (FTA) to boost bilateral relations.</li> <li>• <b>Competitive coexistence</b> - The promotion of business and people-centred connectivity and mutual confidence-building should be implemented.</li> <li>• India's active participation in Chinese initiatives such as BRI, SCO, etc. across all distress will attract the Chinese attention.</li> <li>• <b>Mutual interest</b> - The two countries have a common interest in curbing religious radicalism and terrorism; strategic dialogues can be pronounced on these mutual interests.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p><b>The Hindu, Indianexpress, The diplomat, MoEA</b></p>



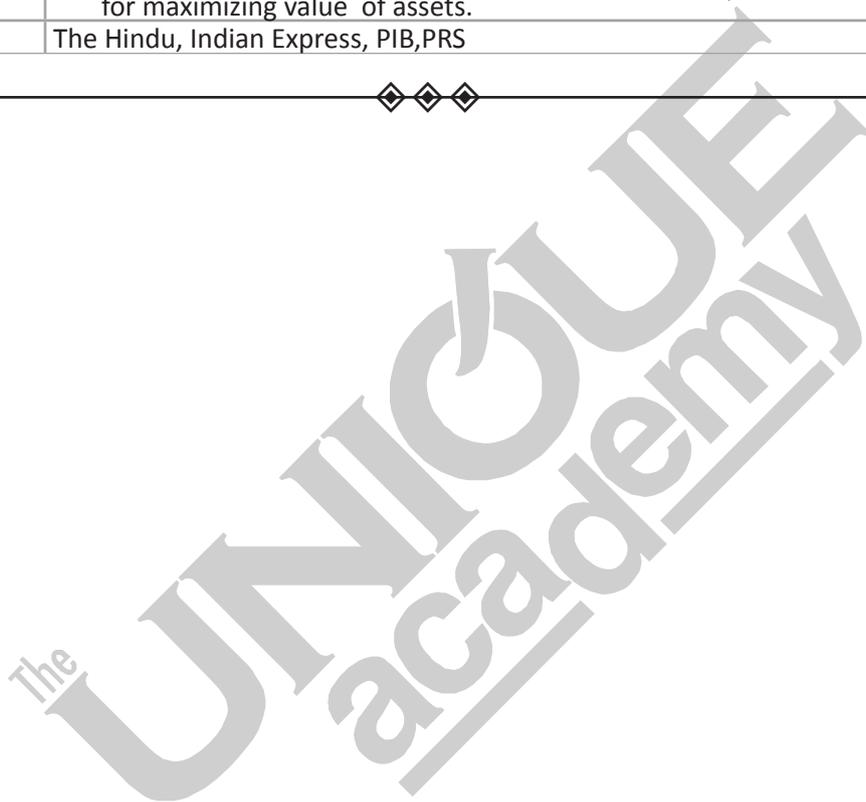
## 21

# Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2018

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliament has passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to bring relief to the home buyers and MSMEs.</li> <li>The Bill replaces ordinance promulgated in this regard and amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016</li> </ul>
<b>What is IBC code?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An Act to consolidate and amend             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the laws relating to reorganisation and insolvency resolution of corporate persons,</li> <li>partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner for maximisation of value of assets of such persons,</li> <li>to promote entrepreneurship,</li> <li>availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders including alteration in the order of priority of payment of Government dues and to establish an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>4 Pillars of IBC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The regulator – The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)</li> <li>Adjudicating Authority (AA):             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) – For Corporate, i.e., Companies and Limited Liability Partnerships</li> <li>National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) will act as Appellate Authority.</li> <li>Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) – For Individuals and Unlimited Partnership Firms</li> </ol> </li> <li>A private industry of Insolvency Professionals (IPs) with oversight by private Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPAs)</li> <li>A private industry of Information Utilities (IUs)</li> </ul>
<b>Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The code seeks to ensure time-bound settlement of insolvency, faster turnaround of businesses and create a unified data base of serial defaulters. Highlights of the Code:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Code creates time-bound processes for resolution of the insolvency of companies and individuals.</li> <li>These processes will be completed within time-bound 180 days. If insolvency is resolved in stipulated time, the assets of the borrowers may be sold to repay creditors.</li> <li>The resolution of the insolvency of processes will be conducted by licensed insolvency professionals (IPs). These IPs will be members of insolvency professional agencies (IPAs).</li> <li>IPAs under insolvency resolution will also furnish performance bonds equal to the assets of a company.</li> <li>The Code facilitates establishment of Information utilities (IUs) to collect, collate and disseminate financial information to facilitate insolvency resolution.</li> <li>The insolvency resolution for companies will be adjudicated by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) will adjudicate insolvency resolution for individuals.</li> <li>The Code also gives statutory backing establishment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India to regulate functioning of IPs, IPAs and IUs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This ordinance makes some fine-tuning mechanisms in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Points of amendment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homebuyers Recognized as Financial Creditors: After this amendment, the IBC law will recognize the homebuyers as financial creditors, giving them due representation in the Committee of Creditors (CoC). Thus, now home buyers will be an integral part of the decision making process. The CoC will also have representation from security holders, deposit holders and all other financial creditors.</li> <li>• Special Provisions for MSME: The promoters of MSMEs are allowed to bid for their companies as long as they are not wilful defaulter and don't attract any other related disqualification. This has corrected the anomaly in the section 29A of the existing act which had barred promoters of defaulting assets from bidding for their assets.</li> <li>• Withdrawal of Insolvency Application: The ordinance permits the withdrawal of the insolvency applications only if it is approved by 90% vote share of the CoC. Further, the CoC voting threshold has been brought down to 66 percent from 75 percent for all major decisions such as approval of resolution plan, extension of insolvency period etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>This is to encourage resolution versus liquidation.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It brings more clarity by laying down mandatory timelines, processes and procedures for corporate insolvency resolution process.</li> <li>• Addresses some issues such as non-entertainment of late bids, no negotiation with the late bidders and a well laid down procedure for maximizing value of assets.</li> <li>• Exempts pure play financial entities from being disqualified on account of NPA and NPA acquired under Insolvency Code shall not disqualify an entity for the next three years.</li> <li>• Successful resolution applicants will get a minimum one-year grace period to fulfill various statutory obligations.</li> <li>• It also addresses the much litigated issue of enforcement of guarantees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 provides time-bound process to resolution of insolvency among companies and individuals.</li> <li>• Insolvency is situation where individual or company is unable to repay their outstanding debt.</li> <li>• Government in November 2017 had set up Insolvency Law Committee to review IBC and identify issues in its implementation and suggest changes.</li> <li>• The Committee had made several recommendations such as             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exempting MSMEs from certain provisions of IBC, treating allottees under real estate project as financial creditors, reducing voting thresholds of committee of creditors (CoC), among others. Subsequently, President had promulgated Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 in June 2018 after approval of Central Government.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits of amendments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Act provides significant <b>relief to home buyers by recognizing their status as financial creditors.</b></li> <li>• This would give them <b>due representation in the Committee of Creditors</b> and make them an integral part of the decision making process.</li> <li>• Recognizing the importance of MSME Sector in terms of employment generation and economic growth, the Act empowers the Government to provide them with a special dispensation under the Code.</li> <li>• The immediate benefit it provides is that, it does not disqualify the promoter to bid for his enterprise undergoing Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) provided he is not a willful defaulter and does not attract other disqualifications not related to default.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empowers the Central Government to allow further exemptions or modifications with respect to the MSME Sector, if required, in public interest.</li><li>• In order to protect the sanctity of the CIRP, the Ordinance lays down a strict procedure if an applicant wants to withdraw a case after its admission under IBC 2016.</li><li>• Henceforth, such withdrawal would be permissible only with the approval of the Committee of Creditors with 90 percent of the voting share.</li><li>• Furthermore, such withdrawal will only be permissible before publication of notice inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI).</li><li>• In other words, there can be no withdrawal once the commercial process of EoIs and bids commences.</li><li>• Regulations will bring in further clarity by laying down mandatory timelines, processes and procedures for corporate insolvency resolution process.</li><li>• Some of the specific issues that would be addressed include non-entertainment of late bids, no negotiation with the late bidders and a well laid down procedure for maximizing value of assets.</li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB, PRS



22

## Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018

### Why it is in news?

- Union government has come up with two bills to tackle the menace of non-regulated deposit schemes.
- The Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was introduced in the Lok Sabha during the second leg of the Budget Session.
- The second Bill is Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018.
- The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of State for Finance
- The Bill provides for a mechanism to ban unregulated deposit schemes and protect the interests of depositors.

### Clean Chit and a Ban

#### UNREGULATED DEPOSITS

**Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 approved**

**Complete prohibition of unregulated deposit taking activity**

**Deterrent punishment** for promoting or operating such a scheme

#### CHIT FUNDS

**Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018** to facilitate orderly growth

**₹100 ceiling** to be removed

**Use of "Fraternity Fund"** for chit business



### Salient feature

#### Deposit

- The Bill defines a **deposit as an amount of money received through an advance, a loan, or in any other form, with a promise to be returned with or without interest.** Currently, nine regulators oversee and regulate various deposit-taking schemes. These include:
  - (i) the Reserve Bank of India (RBI),
  - (ii) the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI),
  - (iii) the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and
  - (iv) state and union territory governments.
 For example, RBI regulates deposits accepted by non-banking financial companies, SEBI regulates mutual funds, state and union territory governments regulate chit funds, among others. All deposit-taking schemes are required to be registered with the relevant regulator.

<b>Unregulated deposit scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A deposit-taking scheme is defined as <b>unregulated if it is not registered with the regulators listed in the Bill.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Deposit taker:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill defines deposit takers as an individual, a group of individuals, or a company who asks for (solicits), or receives deposits.</li> <li>• Banks and entities incorporated under any other law are not included as deposit takers.</li> </ul>
<b>Competent Authority:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill provides for the appointment of one or more government officers, not below the rank of Secretary to the state or central government, as the Competent Authority.</li> <li>• Police officers receiving information about offences committed under the Bill will report it to the Competent Authority.</li> <li>• Further, police officers (not below the rank of an officer-in-charge of a police station) may enter, search and seize any property believed to be connected with an offence under the Bill, with or without a warrant.</li> <li>• <b>The Competent Authority may:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) provisionally attach the property of the deposit taker, as well as all deposits received,</li> <li>(ii) summon and examine any person it considers necessary for the purpose of obtaining evidence, and</li> <li>(iii) order the production of records and evidence. The Competent Authority will have powers similar to those vested in a civil court.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Offences and penalties:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill defines three types of offences, and penalties related to them. These offences are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) running (advertising, promoting, operating or accepting money for) unregulated deposit schemes,</li> <li>(ii) fraudulently defaulting on regulated deposit schemes, and</li> <li>(iii) wrongfully inducing depositors to invest in unregulated deposit schemes by willingly falsifying facts. For example, accepting unregulated deposits will be punishable with imprisonment between two and seven years, along with a fine ranging from three to 10 lakh rupees.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Defaulting in repayment of unregulated deposits will be punishable with imprisonment between three and 10 years, and a fine ranging from five lakh rupees to twice the amount collected from depositors. Repeated offenders under the Bill will be punishable with imprisonment between five to 10 years, along with a fine ranging from 10 lakh to five crore rupees.</li> </ul>
<b>Analysis of Bill</b>	
<b>Important aspects of bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The bill is aimed at tackling the <b>menace of illicit deposit taking activities</b> in the country.</li> <li>• Companies/institutions running such schemes exploit existing regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings.</li> <li>• The proposed Bill aims to provide a comprehensive legislation to tackle illicit deposit schemes <b>by completely prohibiting such activities.</b></li> <li>• Nine regulators <b>including the RBI, SEBI, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and the State governments regulate financial activities.</b></li> <li>• According to the Bill, all deposit-taking schemes are required to be registered with the relevant regulator failing which the “<b>Deposit Takers</b>” will be considered “<b>unregulated</b>” and hence be banned.</li> <li>• According to the Bill, “<b>Deposit Takers</b>” include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation.</li> <li>• “<b>Deposit</b>” is defined in such a manner that deposit takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bill creates three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.</li> <li>• A '<b>Competent Authority</b>' will be appointed which has the powers similar to a <b>civil court</b> including powers to attach properties of the deposit takers.</li> <li>• It also empowers police to search and seize any property believed to be connected with an offence under the Bill, with or without a warrant.</li> <li>• The Bill also approves creating designated courts to tackle such cases.</li> <li>• The Bill enables creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit taking activities in the country.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How it will protect citizens?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018</b> will provide a comprehensive legislation to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes in the country through,             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. complete prohibition of unregulated deposit-taking activity;</li> <li>2. deterrent punishment for promoting or operating an unregulated deposit-taking scheme;</li> <li>3. stringent punishment for fraudulent default in repayment to depositors;</li> <li>4. designation of a Competent Authority by the State Government to ensure repayment of deposits in the event of default by a deposit-taking establishment; powers and functions of the competent authority including the power to attach assets of a defaulting establishment;</li> <li>5. designation of Courts to oversee repayment of depositors and to try offences under the Act; and</li> <li>6. listing of Regulated Deposit Schemes in the Bill, with a clause enabling the Central Government to expand or prune the list.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Benefits for citizens</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will lead to safeguarding of citizen's saving.</li> <li>• It will lead to maintenance of rule of law by penalising fraudsters.</li> <li>• It will create trust for the government among people.</li> <li>• The money collected from these schemes is mostly laundered abroad. This act will thus stop money laundering by cutting off the roots of the process.</li> <li>• This money in savings can be utilised for providing facilities to citizens an helping with nation's growth.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Examples of unregulated Deposit schemes</b></p>	
<p><b>What is a chit fund?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chit fund means transaction in which a person enters into an agreement with a specified number of persons that every one shall subscribe a certain sum of money by way of periodical instalments over a definite period.</li> <li>• Each such subscriber in his turn, as determined by lot or by auction or by tender be entitled to the prize amount.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center;">How do chit funds work</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">A chit scheme generally has a predetermined value and duration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each scheme admits a particular number of members who contribute a sum of money every month to the 'pot'</li> <li>• The bid or discount amount is distributed among other members</li> <li>• In case of delayed payment or default from the members, the chit fund organiser will put the money</li> <li>• The pot is auctioned out every month</li> <li>• The highest bidder (known as prized subscriber) wins the pot for that month</li> </ul>  </div>

<b>Ponzi Scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Ponzi scheme is a fraudulent investing scam promising high rates of return with little risk to investors.</li><li>• The Ponzi scheme generates returns for older investors by acquiring new investors. This is similar to a pyramid scheme in that both are based on using new investors' funds to pay the earlier backers.</li><li>• For both Ponzi schemes and pyramid schemes, eventually there isn't enough money to go around, and the schemes unravel.</li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, PIB, Investopedia



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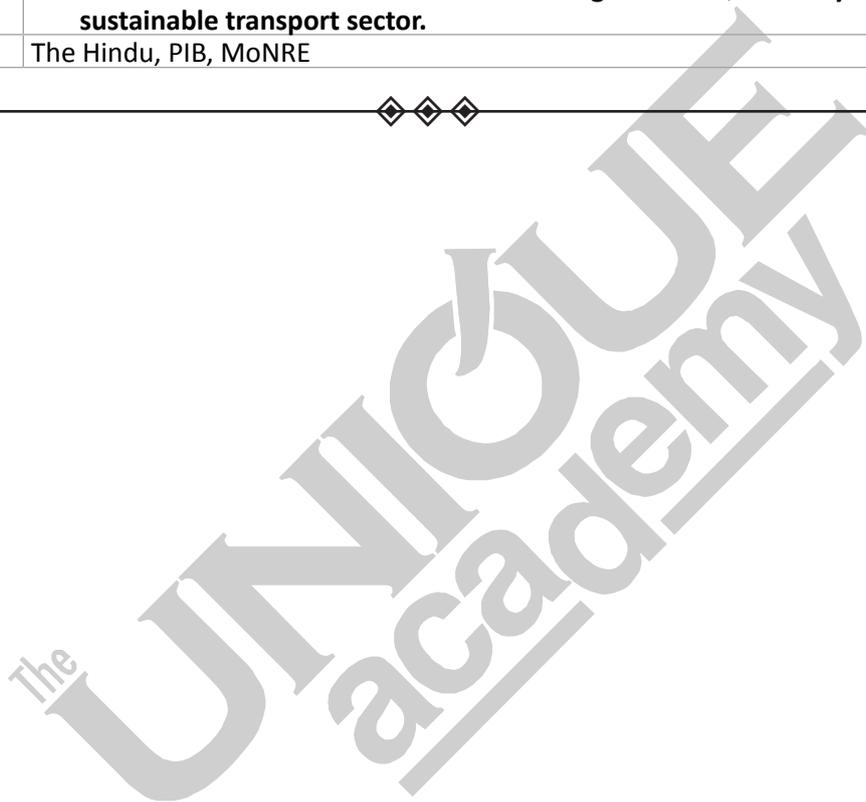
# The National Bio-fuels Policy 2018

<p><b>Why is it in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved National Policy on Biofuels – 2018.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is new in it?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A meeting of the union cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the <b>new policy which categorizes biofuels as a First generation (1G)</b>, which produce bio-ethanol from molasses and bio-diesel from non-edible oilseeds.</li> <li>It allows doping of <b>ethanol produced from damaged foodgrains, rotten potatoes, corn and sugar beet with petrol</b> to cut oil imports by Rs4,000 crore this year alone.</li> <li><b>Till now only ethanol produced from sugarcane was allowed to be mixed in petrol.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Biofuels</b></p>	<div> </div> <p><b>BIOFUELS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biofuels are combustible fuels created from biomass or in other word Biofuels are fuels created from recently living plant matter.</li> <li>Generally, Biofuels are referred to as liquid fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel that are used as replacements for transportation fuels like petroleum, diesel and jet fuels.</li> <li>Moreover, Biofuels can also include solid fuels like wood pellets and biogas or syngas.</li> <li>Biofuels are classified into <b>three categories based on the type of feedstock used to produce them:</b></li> <li><b>First Generation:</b> They are produced from food crops.</li> <li><b>Second Generation:</b> They are produced from cellulosic materials like wood, grasses and inedible parts of plants.</li> <li><b>Third Generation:</b> They are produced using the lipid production from algae.</li> </ul> <p><b>ADVANCED BIOFUELS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The term 'Advanced Biofuels' is used to describe the relatively new technological field of Biofuels production that uses waste such a garbage, animal fats, and spent cooking oil to produce liquid fuels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Background</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In order to promote biofuels in the country, a National Policy on Biofuels was made by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy during the year 2009.</b></li> <li>Globally, biofuels have caught the attention in the last decade and it is imperative to keep up with the pace of developments in the field of biofuels.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biofuels in India is of strategic importance as it augers well with the ongoing initiatives of the Government such as Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill Development and offers great opportunity to integrate with the ambitious targets of doubling of Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation, Waste to Wealth Creation.</b></li> <li>• Biofuels programme in India has been largely impacted due to the sustained and quantum non-availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production which needs to be addressed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Salient Features of the policy</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The Policy categorizes biofuels as :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First Generation (1G)</b> - Basic Biofuels such as Bioethanol &amp; Biodiesel</li> <li>• <b>Second Generation (2G)</b> - Advanced Biofuels, ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels</li> <li>• <b>Third Generation (3G) biofuels</b> - Bio-CNG</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing the use of products that are unfit for human consumption for ethanol production. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sugarcane Juice</b></li> <li>• <b>Sugar-containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum,</b></li> <li>• <b>Starch-containing materials like Corn, Cassava,</b></li> <li>• <b>Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes</b></li> <li>• Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase. Taking this into account, the Policy allows the use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.</li> <li>• With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Biorefineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.</li> <li>• The Policy encourages setting <b>up of supply chain mechanisms</b> for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities of all the concerned Ministries/Departments with respect to biofuels have been captured in the Policy document to synergize efforts.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<p><b>Criticism of policy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While removing the shackles on raw material supply can have definite benefits, it cannot make a significant difference as long as the <b>supply-chain infrastructure</b> that is required to deliver biofuels to the final consumer <b>remains inadequate.</b></li> <li>• <b>Food for fuel</b> has often been a controversial policy matter across the globe as many believe using grains for ethanol raises food inflation risk.</li> <li>• Efforts to scale up technology alternatives needed first to harness benefits of policy decisions.</li> <li>• <b>The National Policy on Biofuels 2018 repeats the pattern of promising the moon and delivering little.</b></li> <li>• There is <b>no defined future road map</b> for India in it.</li> <li>• <b>At a time when the World Health Organisation has already declared 14 Indian cities as among the most polluted in the world, the government is looking at sourcing untested technologies like the production of 2G ethanol.</b></li> <li>• <b>Policy is totally silent on octane,</b> which has direct consequences on air quality and pollution as it assists in proper combustion of fuels , thereby affecting vehicular emissions.</li> <li>• Like the NPB 2009, the NPB 2018 is <b>overly ambitious</b>-The policy states that a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol bio-refineries of Rs. 5,000 crore in 6 years.</li> <li>• This is in light of the fact that the <b>capability of 2G has not been realised till today.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Expected Benefits</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduce Import Dependency:</b> The ethanol supply year 2017-18 is likely to see a supply of around 150 crore litres of ethanol which will result in savings of over Rs.4000 crore of forex.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cleaner Environment:</b> One crore lit of E-10 saves around 20,000 ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. For the ethanol supply year 2017-18, there will be lesser emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> to the tune of 30 lakh ton. By reducing crop burning &amp; conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Health benefits:</b> Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases. Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.</li> <li>• <b>MSW Management:</b> It is estimated that, annually 62 MMT of Municipal Solid Waste gets generated in India. There are technologies available which can convert waste/plastic, MSW to drop in fuels. One ton of such waste has the potential to provide around 20% of drop in fuels.</li> <li>• <b>Infrastructural Investment in Rural Areas:</b> At present Oil Marketing Companies are in the process of setting up twelve 2G bio refineries with an investment of around Rs.10,000 crore. Further addition of 2G bio refineries across the Country will spur infrastructural investment in the rural areas.</li> <li>• <b>Employment Generation:</b> One 100klpd 2G bio refinery can contribute 1200 jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.</li> <li>• <b>Additional Income to Farmers:</b> By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same. Conversion of surplus grains and agricultural biomass can help in price stabilization.</li> </ul>
<b>Factors on which Success of policy will depend on &amp; future prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The production of biofuels from agricultural waste, it is hoped, will also <b>help curb atmospheric pollution</b> by giving farmers an incentive not to burn it, as is happening in large parts of northern India.</li> <li>• <b>Technological and financial feasibility and options should be realistically laid out for farmers.</b></li> <li>• There is also a <b>need for caution in using surplus foodgrain</b> to produce ethanol.</li> <li>• At present, the technology available a <b>large chunk of the biofuels</b> will have to come from the sugar sector for now. Therefore, <b>pricing is the key.</b></li> <li>• To address this issue, the new policy <b>envisages investment</b> to the tune of ₹5,000 crore in <b>building bio-refineries</b> and offering other incentives over the next few years.</li> <li>• The government should also take <b>steps to remove policy barriers</b> that have discouraged private investment in building supply chains.</li> <li>• The policy has also encouraged <b>setting up of supply chain mechanisms</b> for bio-diesel production from non-edible oilseeds, used cooking oil, and short gestation crops.</li> <li>• According to a <b>Bloomberg New Energy Finance study Next-Generation Ethanol: What's in It for India ?</b>, the increase in ethanol production alone has the potential to <b>create over 700,000 jobs</b> when targeting only the base potential.</li> <li>• States with a <b>combination of high agricultural activity and large fuel consumption</b> like Maharashtra, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh would be the best positioned to exploit this opportunity.</li> <li>• <b>Need measures which are available today and at affordable costs.</b></li> <li>• Surely a win-win proposition at a fraction of the cost associated with the <b>subsidy-driven push being planned for E-mobility.</b></li> <li>• When <b>sustainability focused countries</b> like Sweden and a developing country like Brazil have used ethanol in a big way to achieve their environmental and economic objectives, India must make efforts to scale up technology alternatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Other initiatives related to it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recently the Government has increased the price of C-heavy molasses-based ethanol to Rs. 43.70 from Rs. 40.85 to give a boost to EBP Programme.</li> <li>• Price of B-heavy molasses-based ethanol and sugarcane juice-based ethanol has been fixed for the first time at Rs. 47.40.</li> <li>• The Government has reduced GST on ethanol for blending in fuel from 18% to 5%.</li> </ul>

<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The National Biofuels Policy 2018</b> has the potential to attract huge investment in rural areas.</li><li>• <b>It will reduce India's dependency on oil-export, thus enhancing the overall growth of the economy.</b></li><li>• <b>Biofuels programme in India</b> has been largely impacted due to the sustained and quantum non-availability of domestic feedstock for biofuel production which <b>needs to be addressed.</b></li><li>• Sustainability, with its <b>multiple environmental, economic and social objectives</b>, is now prominent in many national and international policies.</li><li>• Using the example of biofuels to demonstrate the way that <b>multiple objectives are developed in energy and environmental policy.</b></li><li>• Biofuels are promoted as replacements for transport fuels, but biofuel policy is also geared <b>towards socio-economic goals</b> such as agricultural subsidy and strategic goals such as security of energy supply.</li><li>• With a <b>holistic approach</b>, which includes the full potential of biofuels for vehicles, we will be able to achieve our dream of <b>creating an environmentally and economically sustainable transport sector.</b></li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, PIB, MoNRE



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## 15th Finance Commission

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Constitution of <b>15th finance commission</b> and issues surrounding it are in debate.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The President shall, within <b>two years from the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President</b> considers necessary, by order constitute a Finance Commission which shall <b>consist of a Chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President</b></li> <li>It shall be the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to</li> <li>the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them under this Chapter and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;</li> <li>the principles which should govern the grants in aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India;</li> <li><b>any other matter referred to the Commission by the President in the interests of sound finance</b></li> <li>The Commission shall determine their procedure and shall have such powers in the performance of their functions as Parliament may by law confer on them</li> </ul>
<b>15th Finance Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is as per <b>Article 280 (1) of the Constitution</b>, read with the provisions of the <b>Finance Commission Act, 1951</b>.</li> <li>This will be with effect from 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2017</li> <li>The Commission will make recommendations for the 5-year period commencing on <b>April 1, 2020</b>.</li> <li>It has got Chairman and 4 other members to be appointed by the President.</li> <li><b>Executives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N. K. Singh, IAS, Chairman</li> <li>Shaktikanta Das, IAS, Member</li> <li>Prof. Anoop Singh, Member</li> <li>Ashok Lahiri, Member (part-time)</li> <li>Prof. Ramesh Chand, Member (part-time)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Why do we need a Finance Commission?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In most federal systems, there are vertical and horizontal fiscal imbalances. Vertical imbalances occur because the central government has the power to levy and/or appropriate more taxes than the states.</li> <li>As a result states do not have sufficient tax revenues to fund their expenditures.</li> <li>This is resolved by allocating some taxes from a common divisible tax pool to states.</li> <li>Horizontal imbalances occur because states have different levels of development, income and expenditure.</li> <li>Some states have high incomes, and can deliver public services such as roads, schools, and hospitals from their own revenues. Others may struggle to even pay salaries of civil servants.</li> <li><b>The aim of the Finance Commission is to ensure that all states have enough resources to fund a minimum level of expenditure each year.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Divisible pool</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The divisible pool is that portion of gross tax revenue that is distributed among central and states government.</li> <li>The divisible pool consists of all taxes, <b>except the surcharge and any kind of cess.</b></li> <li><b>Cess and surcharges do not form part of the divisible pool, and should be used for specific purposes.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the 14th finance commission, the share of taxes to center was 32% which is now recommended to increase to 42%.</li> </ul>																										
<b>Role Of Finance Commission as per Article 280</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>distribution of the net proceeds of taxes</b> to be shared between the Centre and the states.</li> <li>• The <b>principles</b> that govern the grants in aid to the states.</li> <li>• <b>Article 280 (3) (bb) and Article 280 (3) (c) of the Constitution mandate the Commission to recommend measures to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of Panchayats and Municipalities based on the recommendations of the respective State Finance Commissions (SFCs). This also includes augmenting the resources of Panchayat and municipalities.</b></li> </ul>																										
<b>What does the Finance Commission do?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The finance commission makes recommendations on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vertical Devolution:</b> How gross tax revenues should be distributed between the <b>Centre and States</b></li> <li>• <b>Horizontal Devolution:</b> How the states' tax quota should be apportioned <b>between different states</b></li> <li>• <b>The principles on which states should be given grants in aid from the Consolidated fund of India.</b></li> <li>• How to augment the Consolidated Funds of States to add to the resources of Panchayats and Municipalities</li> <li>• Review the state of finances and debt levels of the Union and States and review the fiscal consolidation process.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Of these recommendations, (i) and (ii) usually receive the most media attention since they have an important bearing on the Centre's fiscal position as well as the flow of funds to states.</b></p>																										
<b>What was parameters for horizontal distribution of taxes in 13th and 14th finance Commission?</b>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Variable</th> <th colspan="2">Weights accorded</th> </tr> <tr> <th>13th</th> <th>14th</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Population (1971)</td> <td>25</td> <td>17.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Population (2011)</td> <td>0</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fiscal capacity/Income distance (See box-1)</td> <td>47.5</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Area</td> <td>10</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Forest Cover</td> <td>0</td> <td>7.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fiscal discipline (See box-1)</td> <td>17.5</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>100</td> <td>100</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Variable	Weights accorded		13th	14th	Population (1971)	25	17.5	Population (2011)	0	10	Fiscal capacity/Income distance (See box-1)	47.5	50	Area	10	15	Forest Cover	0	7.5	Fiscal discipline (See box-1)	17.5	0	Total	100	100
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<b>Is it binding on government?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are only advisory, not binding on the Govt.</li> <li>• But, as the <b>Finance Commission is constitutional body</b> and expected to be quasi-judicial, It's recommendations cannot be turned down by the Govt. normally, unless there are compelling reasons.</li> <li>• <b>The Commission submits its report to the President and the President lays it before both the Houses of Parliament.</b></li> <li>• During the times of Planning Commission, there were overlapping jurisdictions between Finance Commission and Planning Commission. But, now this issue has gone.</li> </ul>																										
<b>What are the terms of commission?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance Commission shall use <b>population data from the 2011 census and not the 1971 census</b></li> <li>• It also asked <b>to offer fiscal incentives to States</b> that perform well on <b>parameters like improved sanitation and fewer populist measures.</b></li> <li>• It also asked measurable performance based incentives in areas such as efforts made by the States in expansion and deepening of the tax net under GST.</li> <li>• Efforts made by the States in moving towards <b>replacement rate of the population growth.</b></li> <li>• It will also consider achievements made by <b>States in implementation of flagship central schemes and building disaster resilient infrastructure.</b></li> <li>• Other recommendation is progress made in <b>increasing the capital expenditure.</b></li> </ul>																										

- Improving the quality of such expenditure and promoting labour incentive growth.
- It asked **15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to give premium towards reducing birth rate.**

## Issues Surrounding 15th commission

<p><b>Why is the Census important?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the Constitution, there are four areas in which population is used as a factor - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manner of Election of President (Article 55),</li> <li>• Composition of the House of the People (Article 81),</li> <li>• Composition of the Legislative Assemblies (Article 170) and</li> <li>• Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States (Article 330).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Articles 55 and 170 are especially important as they deal with the delimitation of constituencies for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.</li> <li>• <b>The population figure is also used for the devolution of taxes.</b></li> <li>• This does not, however, mean that the entire amount to be disbursed is based on the population - only a certain percentage of the funds.</li> <li>• In the case of the 14th Finance Commission, that was 25%.</li> <li>• <b>Some of the other factors that the Commission takes into account are per capita income, area, and fiscal discipline.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the significance of the 1971 Census?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976, the calculations behind the number of Lok Sabha seats was based on <b>“population as ascertained at the last preceding Census of which the relevant figures have been published.”</b></li> <li>• But the 1971 Census figures showed a dramatic increase in population, after which the concept of family planning was introduced at the policy level, according to research.</li> <li>• This meant that States that complied with policy would lose out on all the areas where population was taken into account.</li> <li>• Hence, the 42nd Amendment picked the 1971 Census as the base for all calculations and froze it till the 2001 Census.</li> <li>• The 84th Amendment further extended that to the first Census after 2026, which will be the Census of 2031.</li> </ul>
<p><b>So where does the Finance Commission come into all this?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the Constitution, aside from what is written down, the Union government can <b>“refer any other matter to the Finance Commission in the interest of sound finance”</b>,</li> <li>• Using this provision in the Constitution, the Union government has been including in the terms of reference to successive Finance Commissions, provisions that reflect the Union government’s view of the States’ fiscal situation.</li> <li>• The decision to adopt the 1971 Census first appeared in <b>ToR</b> of the Seventh Finance Commission, in 1976.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why are some states opposed to the use of 2011 figures for the devolution of taxes?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The usage of the 2011 Census is being opposed for the same reason the usage of 1971 Census was made mandatory to make sure States that have worked on population control do not lose out on benefits.</li> <li>• <b>This was the population Census of 1971, as against the Census of 2011.</b></li> <li>• While States like <b>Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar</b> have more than doubled their numbers in the intervening years, <b>southern states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala have relatively slower growths.</b></li> <li>• <b>The exception to this is Andhra Pradesh — the State went from around four-and-a-half crore people to more than eight-and-a-half crores.</b></li> <li>• Uttar Pradesh’s population grew at a steady rate of just above 25% in the decades succeeding the 1971 census, whereas the growth rate of that of Kerala dropped from 19.24% in 70s to 14.32% and 9.43% in the next two decades.</li> <li>• UP’s growth rate for the 2000s is 20.09%.</li> <li>• Kerala’s is just 4.86%.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concerns expressed by the States in 1976 which necessitated the freezing of seat allocation on the basis of 1971 population figures would appear to hold good even today and have to be addressed to the satisfaction of all stakeholders</li> <li>• That argument will hold water in the matter of tax distribution as well.</li> </ul>
<b>2011 as reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For providing comparable level of basic services across all the states, the population size of each state is clearly an important determinant.</li> <li>• The relevant population to provide comparable services must be the present population, but not the population 40 years ago.</li> <li>• 1971 population was used for electoral purposes of delimitation as changing that reference year would change the existing balance of constituencies. That is a separate political issue and it should not be mixed up with the Finance Commission, because the Finance Commission is to look at the equity.</li> <li>• Moreover, there is one provision in 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission's ToR 7(ii) with regard to recognition of the States for their success in reducing the population.</li> </ul>
<b>Conditions for approving state borrowing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Union Government has been explicitly empowered to approve or disapprove State's borrowing programme against the conditions imposed by it under Article 293, if there are any outstanding loans or guarantees of the Union Government to a State.</li> <li>• The States no longer borrow from the Union and all such outstanding debt will be paid off from around 2025.</li> <li>• But, external loans are still provided to the states through the Union Government and against sovereign guarantees provided by the Centre.</li> <li>• Hence, the State Governments will have to continue to seek approval of the Union Government, subject to conditions it imposes, for their borrowing programme.</li> <li>• This is a <b>constitutional requirement</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative options are needed to reduce this tension between states that have drastically different population growth rates.</li> <li>• The centre needs to crediting states that have reduced growth rates, and encourage efforts to control population in states where fertility rate is still high.</li> <li>• Inter-state migration has been estimated to be as high as 6 crore people and hence supporting states that have seen greater in-migration is also important.</li> <li>• Such a support would encourage states receiving migrants to provide them with better services, and discourage discrimination against migrants.</li> <li>• Creative handling through the multitude of sensitive issues will help prepare the ground for the bigger battle for political delimitation that awaits in 2026.</li> <li>• Notably, parliamentary constituencies and statewise representations are also currently based on the 1971 census, which might shift bases to the 2011 census.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hindu, arthpedia website, 14th FC report</li> </ul>



25

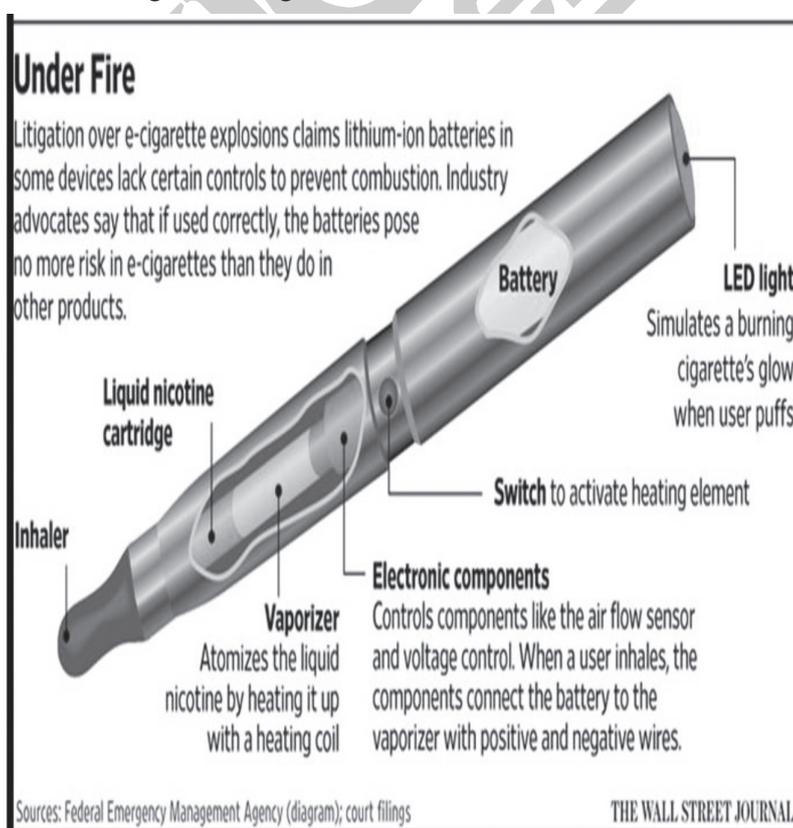
## E-cigarette Issue

### Why it is in news?

- Selling e-cigarettes has attracted a conviction in Punjab, Maharashtra has taken steps towards a ban, and the Centre last month asked experts to assess its dangers.
- Recently, the Delhi government stated in court that it was planning to ban e-cigarettes in its territory due to its likely health implications.

### What are e-cigarettes?

- An e-cigarette or **Electronic Nicotine Delivery System (ENDS)** is a **battery-operated smoking device** that creates an aerosol by heating a mix of liquid nicotine, propylene glycol, water, glycerine and flavour, which, when inhaled, gives the feel of smoking a real cigarette.
- **Nicotine juice (or e-juice) comes in various flavors and nicotine levels.**
- **E-liquid is composed of five ingredients:** vegetable glycerin (a material used in all types of food and personal care products, like toothpaste) and propylene glycol (a solvent most commonly used in fog machines.) propylene glycol is the ingredient that produces thicker clouds of vapor.
- Proponents of e-cigs argue that the practice is healthier than traditional cigarettes because users are only inhaling water vapor and nicotine.
- Smoking an e-cigarette is sometimes referred to as **“vaping”**.
- The **device first appeared in Chinese markets in 2004**, and was sold as a **“healthy alternative to tobacco”**.
- **According to the World Health Organisation**, since 2005, the e-cigarette industry has grown from just one Chinese manufacturer to a global business worth an estimated \$ 3 billion, with 500 brands and 8,000 flavours.
- The cost of an e-cigarette ranges between Rs 500 to Rs 5,000.



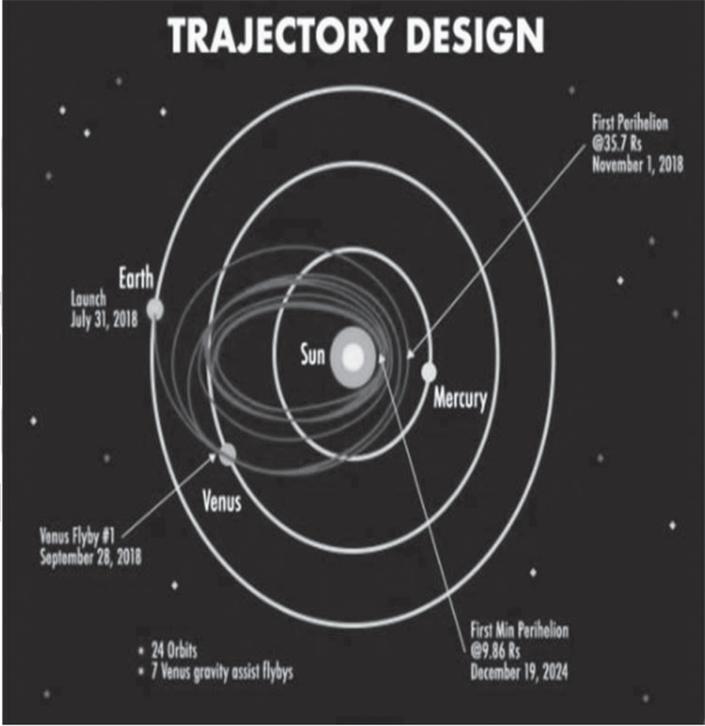
<p><b>Statistics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market research projects the <b>compound annual growth rate of the Indian e-cigarette industry at 63.38% in the period 2013-2018</b> (Research and Markets Report on E-cigarette Market in India 2014-2018).</li> <li>• Between <b>30% and 50% of the Indian e-cigarette market is online</b>, and China is the biggest supplier.</li> <li>• ITC makes EON vaping devices in India.</li> <li>• <b>India does not regulate e-cigarette sales</b>, making it easy for children and adolescents to buy vapes online.</li> <li>• Nicotine gum (2 mg and 4 mg) and lozenges are <b>regulated under Chapter IV of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Rule 122 (E) of the Act states that</b> any change in the form of the same substance will establish it as a new drug.</li> <li>• <b>India is also the second largest consumer of tobacco in the world</b>, second only to China.</li> <li>• <b>The prevalence of tobacco use among adults (15 years and above) is 35%.</b></li> <li>• <b>The prevalence of overall tobacco use among males is 48 percent and that among females is 20 percent.</b></li> <li>• <b>Nearly two in five (38%) adults in rural areas and one in four (25%) adults in urban areas</b> use tobacco in some form.</li> <li>• <b>Over 11 per cent of 6.4 million deaths worldwide</b> was caused by smoking in 2015 and <b>52.2 per cent of them took place in China, India, USA, and Russia</b>, according to the latest estimates in the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What government is doing?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Gol has shown <b>sluggish response</b>.</li> <li>• Only few states like Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Punjab have banned E-cigarettes.</li> <li>• Also <b>lack of uniform approach</b> in dealing with this. Punjab classify nicotine as <b>poison</b> but Maharashtra as an <b>unapproved drug</b>.</li> <li>• <b>The government is examining the legal implications and health effects of e-cigarettes.</b></li> <li>• Last month, the <b>Union Health Ministry</b> had constituted three groups to assess the effect of e-cigarettes on the Indian population, and whether it presents a need for prohibition.</li> <li>• <b>Three groups formed:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group one studied the legal implications of this e-nicotine drug induce system</li> <li>• The second group studied the health effects</li> <li>• The third group studied advocacy</li> <li>• All three sub-groups have given their reports and the Ministry is working on them</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Are e-cigarettes safe?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>World Health Organisation (WHO)</b> has red flagged the growing market for e-cigarettes in India, underlining that the use of the devices is <b>no less harmful than traditional cigarettes</b>.</li> <li>• According to a study led by Professor David Thickett at the University of Birmingham, they may be safer in terms of the cancer risk, but they can damage immunity, disable lung cells and cause inflammation.</li> <li>• E-cigarettes are more harmful than ordinary cigarettes. But we should have a cautious scepticism that they are as safe as we are being led to believe.</li> <li>• They are safer in terms of cancer risk – but if you vape for 20 or 30 years, it can cause chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.</li> <li>• <b>Public Health England</b>, however, <b>considers vaping safer than traditional cigarettes</b>.</li> <li>• It believed that e-cigarettes can help one overcome the habit of smoking and should be allowed on prescription.</li> </ul>
<p><b>specific concerns around e-cigarettes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In India smoking devices are easily available through online shopping portals</li> <li>• With <b>little information out in the public domain</b> about the ill-effects of e-cigarettes there is a misconception that it is less harmful than traditional cigarettes.</li> <li>• <b>A 2016 Elsevier study</b> on 27 individuals surveyed globally for e-cigarettes found three deaths associated with nicotine poisoning.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart marketing and inadequate information on the nicotine content in e-cigarettes has created a false impression that these devices are not as harmful as regular cigarettes.</li> <li>• In the <b>absence of a regulation</b> the use of e-cigarettes has grown; they are easily accessible to even the non smokers.</li> <li>• The report also <b>recorded harmful effects such as respiratory ailments and gastrointestinal problems.</b></li> <li>• It was claimed the device would help people quit smoking. But studies show it has, in fact, encouraged more people to start smoking because it's marketed as a product with no harmful effects.</li> <li>• Some doctors described e-cigarettes as the gateway for adolescents to start smoking.</li> <li>• The minimum lethal dose of nicotine is 30-60 mg; an <b>e-cigarette vial contains about 10 mg of nicotine.</b></li> </ul>
Why are some countries banning e-cigarettes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many states are banning the use of e-cigs indoors.</li> <li>• <b>Since e-cigs are new, there haven't been enough studies conducted on the long-term health effects.</b></li> <li>• Another argument against <b>e-cigs is the candy-like flavors</b>, which experts argue will <b>lure children into smoking.</b></li> <li>• Although they are <b>projected as 'tobacco cessation'</b> products by various sellers, including tobacco giants themselves.</li> <li>• The lack of concrete evidence in support of this claim coupled with the <b>absence of any regulatory approval</b> for their use make them a serious public health threat.</li> </ul>
Why it's hard to regulate them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As e-cigarettes contain nicotine and not tobacco, they <b>do not fall within the ambit of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA)</b>, which mandates stringent health warnings on the packaging and advertisements of tobacco products.</li> </ul>
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the absence of clearer evidence on the effect of e-cigarettes on tobacco cessation, it is imperative that their <b>sale be accompanied by accurate health warnings.</b></li> <li>• Until a law or policy is laid down, drug inspectors will find themselves working in a legal grey zone.</li> <li>• The government should also <b>impose appropriate restrictions on the sale and advertisement, online and otherwise</b>, of e-cigarettes, including proper health warnings, in order to plug the existing regulatory vacuum. This should be done with immediate effect.</li> <li>• The government should also <b>commission independent scientific research on the benefits and risks</b> posed by these products in the Indian context.</li> <li>• Government should <b>ban sales to children under the age of 18</b> as it was banned In <b>Europe</b> and in the <b>US</b>; e-cigarettes are regulated by the USFDA.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, Indianexpress, WHO, Livemint



# 26

## NASA Solar Parker Probe

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NASA launched the Parker Solar Probe – the space agency’s first mission to the sun – that will explore the sun’s atmosphere and its outermost atmosphere, the corona.</li> <li>• The spacecraft is named after 91-year old solar physicist Eugene Parker, 91, who was the first scientist to describe solar wind in 1958.</li> <li>• The probe, about the size of a car, will fly through the Sun’s atmosphere and will come as close as 3.8 million miles to the star’s surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before (Earth’s average distance to the Sun is 93 million miles), according to NASA.</li> <li>• The Parker probe is expected to make 24 loops of the Sun over seven years.</li> <li>• NASA’s historic <b>Parker Solar Probe mission</b> will revolutionize our understanding of the Sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds.</li> <li>• <b>Parker Solar Probe will travel through the Sun’s atmosphere</b>, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trajectory Design</b></p>	 <p>The diagram, titled "TRAJECTORY DESIGN", illustrates the probe's path around the Sun. It shows the Sun at the center with the orbits of Earth, Venus, and Mercury. Key events are marked: "Launch July 31, 2018" from Earth; "Venus Flyby #1 September 28, 2018"; "First Perihelion @35.7 Rs November 1, 2018"; and "First Min Perihelion @9.86 Rs December 19, 2024". A legend at the bottom indicates "• 24 Orbits" and "• 7 Venus gravity assist flybys".</p>
<p><b>Solar Probe to endure 1,370 degrees Celsius temperature</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the journey, the spacecraft will fly by Venus at speeds of 4,30,000 mph, the equivalent of flying from New York to Tokyo in one minute.</li> <li>• In order to reach an orbit around the sun, the Parker Solar Probe will take seven flybys of Venus that will essentially give a gravity assist, shrinking its orbit over the course of nearly seven years.</li> <li>• The specially shielded Parker Solar Probe will have to endure temperatures up to 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,370 degrees Celsius) and solar radiation intensities 475 times higher than we’re used to here on Earth.</li> </ul>

<b>Mission to end in 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mission is scheduled to end in June 2025.</li> <li>• The first data download from the Parker Solar Probe is expected in early December after the probe reaches its first close approach of the sun in November.</li> <li>• Eventually, the spacecraft will run out of propellant.</li> <li>• In 10 to 20 years, a carbon disk will be floating around the sun in orbit, and it will be around until the end of the solar system.</li> </ul>
<b>Journey to the Sun</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to unlock the mysteries of the Sun's atmosphere, Parker Solar Probe will use Venus' gravity during seven flybys over nearly seven years to gradually bring its orbit closer to the Sun.</li> <li>• The spacecraft will fly through the Sun's atmosphere as close as 3.8 million miles to our star's surface, well within the orbit of Mercury and more than seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before. (Earth's average distance to the Sun is 93 million miles.)</li> <li>• Flying into the outermost part of the Sun's atmosphere, known as the corona, for the first time, Parker Solar Probe will employ a combination of in situ measurements and imaging to revolutionize our understanding of the corona and expand our knowledge of the origin and evolution of the solar wind.</li> <li>• It will also make critical contributions to our ability to forecast changes in Earth's space environment that affect life and technology on Earth.</li> </ul>
<b>Why do we study the Sun and the solar wind?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Sun is the only star we <i>can</i> study up close. By studying this star we live with, we <b>learn more about stars throughout the universe.</b></li> <li>• The Sun is a source of light and heat for life on Earth. The more we know about it, the more we can understand how life on Earth developed.</li> <li>• The Sun also affects Earth in less familiar ways. <b>It is the source of the solar wind; a flow of ionized gases from the Sun that streams past Earth at speeds of more than 500 km per second (a million miles per hour).</b></li> <li>• Disturbances in the solar wind shake Earth's magnetic field and pump energy into the radiation belts, part of a set of changes in near-Earth space known as <b>space weather.</b></li> <li>• Space weather can change the orbits of satellites, shorten their lifetimes, or interfere with onboard electronics.</li> <li>• <b>The more we learn about what causes space weather – and how to predict it – the more we can protect the satellites we depend on.</b></li> <li>• The solar wind also fills up much of the solar system, dominating the space environment far past Earth.</li> <li>• As we send spacecraft and astronauts further and further from home, we must understand this space environment just as early seafarers needed to understand the ocean.</li> </ul>
<b>Detailed science objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind.</li> <li>• Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind.</li> <li>• Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.</li> </ul>
<b>Europe's Solar Probe in works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The European Space Agency is also building a similar solar probe. Solar Orbiter, or SoLO as it's sometimes known, is undergoing final assembly and testing in the UK.</li> <li>• It is expected to launch in 2020, arriving at its closest position to the Sun towards the end of Parker's planned seven years of operations.</li> <li>• <b>SoLO will go to within 42 million km of the Sun's surface.</b></li> <li>• That's further away than Parker but it will still need an impressive shield.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, NASA



## 27

# Prevention of Corruption Amendment Bill

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliament passed <b>Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill 2018</b> on <b>July 24</b> to <b>enhance transparency and accountability of the government but some of the provisions of the bill are drawing criticism.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Prevention of Corruption Bill (Amendment) 2013 as a relief for bankers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The criminal misconduct</b> provision is intended to protect public servants from being wrongly prosecuted for official decisions. Under it, bankers cannot be pulled under the corruption law unless they have accumulated assets more than what they could have obtained with their steady income, or have misappropriated assets entrusted to them</li> <li>The amendment comes at a time when the bankers are facing intense scrutiny for their lending decisions which have resulted in NPAs. Bankers have argued for a long time that they should not be prosecuted for lending decisions they made honestly.</li> <li>The amendment also intends to empower the public to refuse to give a <b>bribe</b> with provisions of punishment for those who willingly offer bribe to the government officials</li> <li>Earlier, <b>sanction</b> was required under the Prevention of Corruption Act for serving officers only, but now, sanctions for IPC offences cover both serving and retired officers</li> <li><b>Forfeiture of property</b> is believed to help avoid a fresh procedure to confiscate property obtained through corruption and to enable court conducting trial to do so itself</li> <li>People are not particularly happy about the <b>pre-investigation approval</b> rule. Also, there was no similar provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court.</li> </ul>
<b>Provisions of the anti-corruption bill</b>	<p>The provisions can be divided into 5 categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Bribery (undue advantage defined as gratification other than legal remuneration).</b> Earlier, there were no specific provisions except as abetment but under the amendment giving a bribe is now an offence, punishable by a 7-year prison term except when one is forced to give a bribe. However, it should be reported within 7 days.</li> <li><b>2. Criminal misconduct</b> Earlier, criminal misconduct used to cover offences including taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at a concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest. Under the amendment to the act, criminal misconduct will now include only two offences (already mentioned above): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>misappropriating of property entrusted to the banker</li> <li>amassing assets disproportionate to known sources of income</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Pre-investigation approval</b> Now, a police officer will need prior approval of relevant authority or government to begin investigation. However, the same does not apply when the accused is caught red-handed.</li> <li><b>4. Sanction for prosecution</b> A sanction is needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office. The decision on sanction request is to be made under three months which may be extended by a month. Centre may notify about the guidelines</li> </ol>

**5. Forfeiture of property**

This section was introduced for the Special Court to attach and confiscate property, which was earlier done under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts.

**INSULATING PUBLIC SERVANTS: Lowdown on the significant changes in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, adopted by both Houses of Parliament**

 <p><b>Bribery</b> What is new • Giving a bribe is now an offence, punishable by a 7-year prison term • Except when one is forced to give a bribe. But it should be reported it to within seven days • Bribe is termed 'undue advantage', defined as 'gratification other than legal remuneration' What it was • No specific provision, except as abetment</p> <p><i>It could empower the public to refuse to give a bribe but seven-day limit may not be enough. As to what happens if citizen's report of coercion is not registered by the police is unclear</i></p>	 <p><b>Pre-investigation approval</b> What is new • Police officer cannot begin probe without prior approval of relevant authority or govt (except when caught red-handed) What it was • No such provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court</p> <p><i>Protection formerly available to officials of rank of joint secretary and above (before SC struck it down) is extended to all public servants</i></p>	 <p><b>Sanction for prosecution</b> What is new • Sanction needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office • Centre may notify guidelines for sanction • Decision on request for sanction within 3 months, which may be extended by a month What it was • Sanction was required under PCA for serving officers only</p> <p><i>Sanction for IPC offences covered both serving and retired officers. Guidelines and time-limit may help make sanction process easier</i></p>	 <p><b>Criminal misconduct</b> What is new • Only be two forms of criminal misconduct. • Misappropriation of property entrusted to public servant • Intentionally enriching oneself illicitly What it was • There were five kinds: omitted ones are taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at a concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest</p> <p><i>This is to protect public servants from being wrongly prosecuted for official decisions. Earlier it was a crime to "obtain advantage to a private party without public interest"</i></p>	 <p><b>Forfeiture of property</b> What is new • Section introduced for Special Court under this Act to attach and confiscate property What it was • This was not done under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts</p> <p><i>This helps avoid a fresh procedure to confiscate property obtained through corruption, enables court conducting trial to do so itself</i></p> <p>Compiled by K. Venkaramanian</p>
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**What are Governments views?**

- The passage of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013, corrects two fundamental flaws in the earlier Act
  - **by providing for punishment to both who give and receive bribes and**
  - **requiring the element of dishonest intention of the public official to be proved for an offence**
- Government said the present Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, legislated in the pre liberalisation era had not visualised the changes in the economy.
- **"when higher participation of the private sector would take place" and neither "anticipated the kind of risk that it could put honest decision makers to".**
- The Bill seeks to punish both - the bribe giver and bribe taker.
- It provides protection if the briber assists the investigative agency.
- Even non-monetary gratification has been included within the ambit of the Bill.
- Promoters of companies have been made more accountable. Since the company cannot be sent to jail, the individual in the management responsible for the corruption will be held liable.
- The Minister noted that the wide definition of corruption referred to as **"criminal misconduct"** in the original Act had a potential for including in its ambit also a **"honest decision taken by honest individuals which subsequently turn out to be erroneous"**.
- The period of trial for corruption is now required to be completed within two years.

- On the contrary, Indian Penal Code required a sanction for those who are or have been public servants. **The two Acts have now been brought at par.**
- The Bill provides for imprisonment from three to seven years, besides fine, to those convicted of taking bribes.
- Bribe givers have also been included in the legislation for the first time and they can be punished with imprisonment up to seven years, fine, or both.

**Source**

The Hindu, PIB



**UPSC**

# **Current Affairs August 2018**

**By Jawwad Kazi**

The  
**UNIQUE**  
academy

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## 1

# Legislature Important Bills

## Cabinet clears Bill to restore the provisions of SC/ST Act

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Centre has decided to introduce a Bill to restore the original provisions of the <b>Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989</b> which the Supreme Court had struck down in a March ruling.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union Cabinet had given its nod to the Amendment Bill and the government would try to introduce it in Parliament during the ongoing session.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The decision comes ahead of a planned 'Bharat bandh' by Dalit groups on August 9.</li> </ul>
Amendment Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Amendment Bill seeks to <b>insert three new clauses after Section 18 of the original Act.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, <b>"preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person."</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The second stipulates that the arrest of a person accused of having committed an offence under the Act would not require any approval.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The third says that the provisions of Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure which deals with <b>anticipatory bail</b> shall not apply to a case under this Act, <b>"notwithstanding any judgment or order of any Court."</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## LS passes commercial courts Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Lok Sabha <b>passed the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2018.</b></li> </ul>
Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015 ("the Act") provides for the creation of commercial courts at the district level and a commercial division at state level in the high courts for providing a dispute redressal mechanism to ensure speedy disposal of high value 'commercial disputes' above 1 crore worth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Significance of the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015 for the Indian economy :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased 'Ease of Doing Business' ranking.</li> <li>2. Building Investor confidence</li> <li>3. Will encourage emerging Entrepreneurial class.</li> <li>4. Reduced Mental pressure via speedy disposals increasing focused development.</li> <li>5. Will attract foreign companies with increased business engagement providing FDI &amp; FII sources.</li> <li>6. Fast track resolution would reduce the bank NPAs</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Significance of the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015 for the Indian judiciary:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Will Reduce the burden on Civil Courts .</li> <li>2. Speedy Disposal rate.</li> <li>3. Specialised courts will provide more efficient decision making.</li> <li>4. Reduced Pendency rate</li> <li>5. Fullfilment of vacant seats in Judiciary.(creating employment as well).</li> <li>6. Increased financial resources at court's disposal (via fees, penalties etc.)</li> </ol> </li> <li>□ <b>Challenges in implementation of this Act:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Institutional requirement (as infrastructure will be required)</li> <li>2. Accountability issues.( high profile cases with crores involved can lure the judicial officers)</li> <li>3. Enforceability problems.(present enforcement rate is low which creates a little hope for this)</li> <li>4. Pendency can increase.( if not disposed efficiently in time bound manner further adding to the problems)</li> <li>5. Corruption.( Lobbying in corporate- politics sector is very apparent in the light of recents scams)</li> <li>6. Time bound decisions ( depends on judge's efficiency &amp; sense of judgement)</li> <li>7. Jurisdiction issues.( cases in civil courts at present may shift here )</li> <li>8. No appropriate manpower (judicial posts are aslready vacant in most states for JMICs, ADAs etc.)</li> <li>9. Financial allocation must be pragmatic. (state-centre balance)</li> <li>10. No specific provision of funding to states puts onus on state</li> <li>11. Broad coverage of 20 areas can reduces its efficacy.</li> <li>12. Low threshold limit of 1 crore.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Amendment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ It will designate some courts as commercial courts for speedy disposal of commercial disputes and will reduce the pecuniary jurisdiction of these courts from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 3 lakh.</li> <li>□ Minister of Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad said this was aimed at improving the ease of doing business in India.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Prosecution under Benami Act stuck

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The prosecution of accused persons in almost 100 confirmed cases instituted under <b>the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act</b> has been scuttled as the special courts meant for the purpose have not yet been set up across the country.</li> <li>□ Assets worth more than Rs. 5,000 crore have been attached by the Income-Tax Department under the law.</li> <li>□ <b>The Act provides that the Central government, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the respective High Courts, will establish special courts through notification. Such courts are to be constituted to ensure that the trials are conducted “as expeditiously as possible”.</b></li> <li>□ Every endeavour shall be made by the special court to conclude the trial within six months from the date of filing of the complaint.</li> <li>□ However the required special courts have not been set up yet.</li> <li>□ Therefore, despite the fact that investigations in almost 100 cases have been completed by the I-T Department in different States, including confirmation of attachment of properties by the Adjudicating Authority, the prosecution of accused persons has not started.</li> </ul>
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About Act	
Source	The Hindu

## PM's intervention sought for nod to quota Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Telangana Chief Minister urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to get early assent of the President to a Bill passed by the Telangana legislature in April last year,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It provided for reservations to SCs, STs, BCs and minorities in excess of 50%, the cap fixed by the Constitution.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Governor had reserved the Bill for President's assent as the matter was pending with the Home Ministry ever since it was passed by the legislature.</li> </ul>
Backward classes statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CM highlighted that the Supreme Court had not barred exceeding reservations beyond 50% if States made out a case showing compelling circumstances.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tamil Nadu had provided 69% reservation in this background.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the case of Telangana the proposed quota in the Bill was fixed <b>beyond 50% because the backward communities alone constituted over 50% of the total population.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Then, there were STs, whose population went up from 7.11% in combined AP to 9.08% in separate Telangana.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The population of Muslims also increased from 9.56% to 12.68%.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The State Commission for BCs hiked the reservation for Muslims in BC-E group from 4% to 12%.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CM highlighted that except for fixation of the strength of judges in the ratio of 60:40 between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana there was no progress in the bifurcation of the High Court.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He sought a grant of Rs. 20,000 crore from the Centre for completion of the <b>Kaleswaram irrigation project</b>, being implemented at a cost of Rs. 80,000 crore.</li> </ul>
Unreasonable condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The non-release of fourth instalment of special assistance grant for development of backward areas although the utilisation certificates were submitted by the State government.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This are some issues addressed by CM of telangana.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## 'Anti-lynching law need of the hour'

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CPI (M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury hoped that the government would bring in a law to tackle crimes such as mob lynching in this session.</li> </ul>
What yechury said?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Yechury said that <b>a law alone would not help if there was no political will to implement it.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The law in itself is never enough.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Existing CrPc has enough provisions to tackle this menace.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mob lynching is patronised by the state itself.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It doesn't help that the government and law enforcement agencies turn a blind eye to it</li> </ul>
About law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Home Ministry has started deliberations on bringing in a law.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Last week it held its first meeting with stakeholders to discuss the broad contours of such a law.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court on July 17 passed a slew of directions to provide <b>"preventive, remedial and punitive measures" to deal with offences like mob violence and cow vigilantism.</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Amendment in Lok Sabha to make adoption easier

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government introduced an amendment to the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015, in the Lok Sabha to empower District Magistrates with the authority to grant adoption orders.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It will make the adoption procedure faster for prospective parents, by avoiding delays in courts.</li> </ul>
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018 revises the provisions governing adoptions in the JJ Act by making changes to Section 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64 and 65, where the word “court” has been replaced by “District Magistrate.”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The changes are applicable for both domestic and international applications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union Cabinet had approved amendments proposed by the Women and Child Development Ministry last month.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government has said all adoption cases in various courts should be transferred to the District Magistrates concerned.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The amendment states the objective is to avoid pendency of cases.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## LS passes SC/ST amendment Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Lok Sabha passed the <b>Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018</b> to bypass the recent ruling of the Supreme Court laying down procedures for arrests under the Act.</li> </ul>
About Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill will now go to the Upper House.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill inserts section 18A (1) (a) in the 1989 Act, that says a <b>“preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of an FIR against any person.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill also inserts Section 18A (1) (b), which says <b>“the investigating officer shall not require approval for the arrest, if necessary, of any person against whom an accusation of having committed an offence under this Act has been made and no procedure, other than that provided under this Act or the Code, shall apply.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill’s Statement of Objects and Reasons says that under the CrPC, the decision to arrest a person is taken by the investigating officer and there was no requirement for approval.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill also goes back to the original SC/ST (PoA) Bill, doing away with the provision of anticipatory bail the Supreme Court ruling had permitted.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The provision of section 438 of the Code shall not apply to a case under this Act, notwithstanding any judgment or order or direction of any Court,” says section 18A (2) of the Bill.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Section 438 of the CrPC deals with direction for grant of bail to a person apprehending arrest.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court had on March 20, 2018, introduced protective provisions in the SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989, to permit <b>anticipatory bail</b> despite a section of the Act denying it and laying down a preliminary enquiry by police before any action is taken.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It had also laid down that the permission of the appointing authority would be required to arrest a public servant and that of an SSP for the arrest of a person who is not a public servant.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Rajya Sabha gives nod for NCBC Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Bill extending constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) was cleared unanimously by the Rajya Sabha</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Lok Sabha had passed the proposed law on August 2 with more than a two-thirds majority.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the Upper House, the Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017, was adopted by all the present 156 members incorporating certain amendments made by the Lok Sabha.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several Opposition members, however, recommended that the government should make public the caste census findings, based on which the reservation policy should be formulated.</li> </ul>
Minority representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> During the debate, referring to the demands of some Opposition leaders to ensure representation of minority communities in the Commission BJP's Bhupender Yadav said political parties should rise above vote bank politics and focus on social justice.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>OBC is a religion-neutral term there is a separate Commission for the minorities,</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stating that the Bill was long overdue in several States, even 27% reservation for OBCs had not been implemented.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Member also accused the Congress of scuttling the attempts to strengthen the backward communities in the past, urging the party to support the proposed law.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

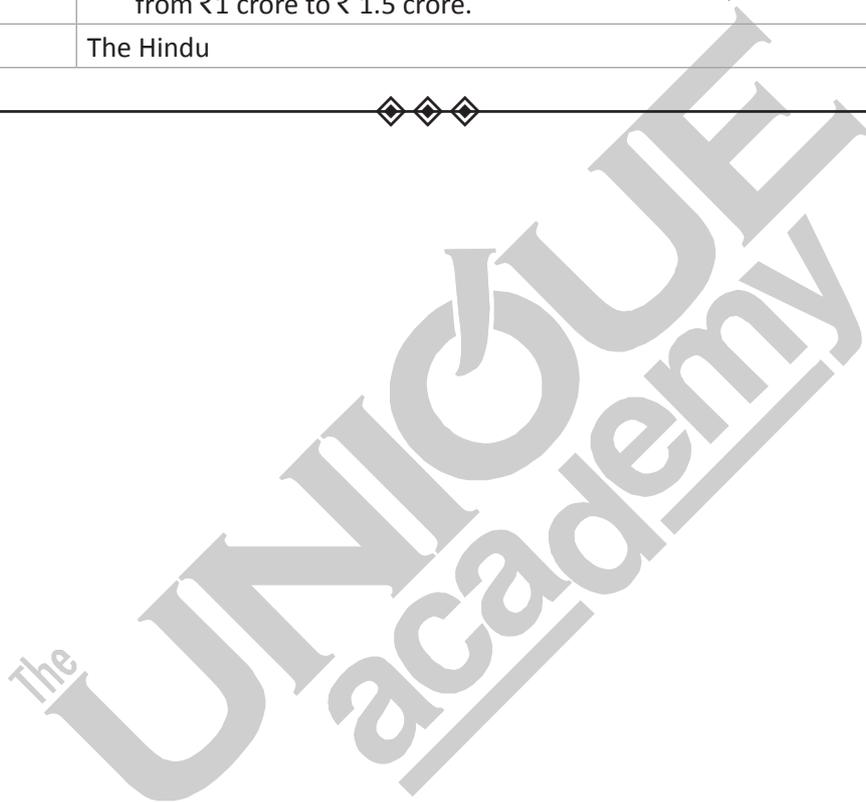
## Access to Andamans eased

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Foreigners no longer need a Restricted Areas Permit to visit 29 inhabited islands in the Andaman and Nicobar chain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union Home Ministry decided to lift restrictions as the government intends to boost tourism.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 11 other uninhabited islands will also be thrown open to foreigners.</li> </ul>
Area permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The 29 inhabited islands have been excluded from the restricted area permit (RAP) notified under the <b>Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, till December 31, 2022, subject to certain conditions.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However, citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in these countries would continue to require RAP to visit the Union Territory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For visiting <b>Mayabunder and Diglipur</b> citizens of Myanmar will continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with the prior approval of the ministry.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To ensure preservation of natural and marine resources including marine parks and environment, of the Union Territory without affecting tourism and business at large, it should be ensured by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration that the guidelines issued by the Environment and Forests Ministry are strictly adhered to</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Separate approvals of the competent authority would be required for visiting reserved forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal reserves.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Government introduces 4 GST amendment Bills

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government introduced four Bills seeking to <b>amend the Goods and Services Tax (GST) laws that will make return forms simpler and raise the turnover threshold for availing composition scheme to ₹1.5 crore.</b></li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ The amendment Bills —<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. the Central GST (Amendment) Bill,</li><li>2. the Integrated GST (Amendment) Bill,</li><li>3. the GST (Compensation to States) Amendment Bill and the Union Territory GST (Amendment) Bill — were primarily aimed at helping the MSME sector and small traders.</li></ol></li></ul>
<b>Oppositions views</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ Opposition however <b>charged the government with bringing these Bills “hurriedly” and said it would hurt the interests of the MSME sector.</b></li><li>□ Opposition alleged that Punjab was suffering on account of GST implementation and the Centre should have consulted stakeholders before amending the GST laws.</li><li>□ Responding to Opposition, FM said the government had held wide consultations with all stakeholders including Punjab and the changes were intended to help small traders.</li><li>□ Government said the threshold for composition scheme was being raised from ₹1 crore to ₹ 1.5 crore.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



## 2

## Executive

## Ban on oxytocin likely to be lifted

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) has recommended to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that the ban on the retail sale of the life-saving drug, oxytocin may be lifted.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The DTAB in its meeting recommended that the Health and Family Welfare Ministry's notification on April 27 banning retail sale of the <b>drug formulation oxytocin</b> may be amended and that its sale and distribution for human use under <b>the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 and Rules 1945</b> be continued.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The ban had been imposed citing the serious misuse of oxytocin in the dairy sector.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While it recommended lifting of the ban <b>the DTAB has not said anything about the Ministry's decision (vide notification dated June 27) that only a single PSU — Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd. — could manufacture and supply the drug across the country.</b></li> </ul>
Welcome move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The DTAB recommendation has brought <b>immense relief to gynaecologists and obstetricians</b> who had said that <b>the ban on retail sale of the drug could affect its availability in hospitals and clinics in rural areas where more women were likely to bleed to death post-partum in labour rooms.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is certainly a welcome decision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> But the fact that a single PSU, KAPL, which has never manufactured oxytocin, continues to hold the monopoly in the manufacture, distribution and sale of an essential drug like this raises important questions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Also, nothing has been said about the pricing of oxytocin by KAPL — at ₹17.78 (including GST) per five IU vial when several private pharma firms were earlier supplying it for as low as ₹4.82.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several concerns remain still.</li> </ul>
Oxytocin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Oxytocin is a naturally-occurring hormone</b> that causes uterine contractions during labour and helps new mothers lactate.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> But its misuse is widespread in the dairy industry where livestock are injected with oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>The hormone is also used to increase the size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, brinjals, gourds and cucumbers.</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## J&amp;K to club panchayat polls

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Jammu and Kashmir is gearing up for simultaneous local body elections to the posts of <i>panch</i> and <i>sarpanch</i>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A <i>panch</i> is an elected member of a village ward and a <i>sarpanch</i> is the head of a cluster of wards or a village.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Earlier the <i>panchs</i> used to elect the <i>sarpanchs</i>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This time, there will be two votes — one for the <i>panch</i> and the other for the <i>sarpanch</i>; <b>it's a direct election.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Voting will be done simultaneously, with a voter will elect the <i>panch</i> as well as the <i>sarpanch</i>.</li> </ul>
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Plea on 35A hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The State government currently under Governor's Rule moved a plea in the Supreme Court <b>to defer the hearing in a clutch of petitions challenging the validity of Article 35A of the Constitution</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It cited the upcoming panchayat and urban local body elections.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Article 35A lets the J&amp;K Legislature decide the <b>"permanent residents" of the State, prohibits a non-J&amp;K resident from buying property in the State and ensures job reservation for its residents.</b></li> </ul>
Polls last held in 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The panchayat elections last held in 2011 could not be conducted for security reasons and because of the tourist season.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elections to the urban local bodies were last held in 2005.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Police said <b>the administration had conducted an internal review on the abductions and killings of policemen in the Valley.</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Backward Classes panel will get more powers

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> People belonging to the <b>Other Backward Classes</b> will soon be able to approach a new National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) with Constitutional status to get their grievances redressed.</li> </ul>
123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The panel that will come into being following the passage of the <b>123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill</b> by the Lok Sabha a few days ago will be able to enforce the safeguards provided to the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) and solve their grievances.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The present NCBC can only recommend inclusion and exclusion of castes from the OBC list and the level of income that cuts off the <b>"creamy layer" among these castes from the benefits of reservation.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Till now it was the <b>National Commission of Scheduled Castes</b> that addressed the grievances of the OBCs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Article 338 of the Constitution, which provides for a "Special Officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards available to them under the Constitution, says categorically that SC/STs "shall be construed as including references to Other Backward Classes", once a Commission decides who they are.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With OBC reservations becoming a reality in the 1990s the mandate of the SC Commission got extended.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These functions will now get transferred to the new panel</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the case of grievances related to non-implementation of reservations, economic grievances, violence, etc., people from the SEBC category will be able to move the Commission.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clause-3 (5) of the Bill gives the proposed Commission the power to inquire into complaints of deprivation of rights and safeguards.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clause 3 (8) gives it the powers of a civil court trying a suit and allows it to summon anyone, require documents to be produced, and receive evidence on affidavit.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Nod for three changes to triple talaq Bill

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union Cabinet approved <b>three crucial amendments to the triple talaq Bill</b>, including a provision for bail to an accused before the start of trial.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These three provisions to the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. which makes instant triple talaq illegal and</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. which makes instant triple talaq illegal and</li> <li>3. imposes a jail term of up to three years,</li> <li>4. provide additional safeguards from the Act being misused.</li> </ol>
<b>Non-bailable</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> While the proposed law will remain “non-bailable” — the police cannot grant bail at the police station — the accused can approach a magistrate for bail even before trial.
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

## Pune tops Ease of Living index; Patna ranked lowest of 111 cities

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Three cities in Maharashtra — <b>Pune, Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai</b> — top the first Ease of Living Index brought out by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The national capital, New Delhi, is ranked 65 among 111 cities, while Chennai is in 14th place.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Kolkata did not participate in the survey.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A city’s ranking reflects its ability to provide data, as well as its actual performance on four different parameters — <b>institutions or governance, social indicators, economic indicators and physical infrastructure.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Data deficient</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For example, New Delhi has a score of “zero” on indicators regarding inclusive housing and mixed land use and compactness, and a score of just 0.12 on economy and employment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This does not mean that the capital actually performs so poorly on these indicators, according to members of the consortium which carried out the survey and produced the Index for the government.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instead, it probably means that the NDMC and the three Municipal Corporations which govern the city simply failed to provide any data on those indicators</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Future editions of the Index may also incorporate citizen and stakeholder feedback rather than relying on government data alone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A consortium member admitted that it was a challenge to collect some of this information from data-starved urban local bodies.</li> </ul>
<b>Complex administration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Particular complications were seen in indicators such as health — where local governments did not have access to data from private hospitals.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The consortium assisted cities in plugging the data gap with regard to certain indicators.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The other cities in the top ten include Tirupati, Chandigarh, Thane, Raipur, Indore, Vijayawada and Bhopal.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The three cities at the bottom of the rankings are Rampur, Kohima and <b>Patna.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Creamy layer cannot apply to SCs/STs: Centre

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> The government told the Supreme Court that <b>the “creamy layer” concept cannot be applied to the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe communities, who have suffered for centuries.</b>
<b>Nagaraj case</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arguing before a five-judge Constitution Bench Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal argued that SCs/STs are a <b>“homogenous group and any action to regroup them based on economic or social advancement would not be appropriate.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For inclusion of communities in the list of the SCs, one of the important determinants is the traditional practice of untouchability.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government wants a larger Bench of the Supreme Court to set aside its 2006 judgment in the Nagaraj case.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This verdict mandates that the government cannot introduce quota in promotion for SC/ST persons in public employment unless they prove that the particular Dalit community is backward, is inadequately represented and such a reservation in promotion would not affect the overall efficiency of public administration.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Proposal for city-level GDP under study

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With urban India responsible for an increasingly large share of the national GDP, the Centre now hopes to bring out city-level GDP data.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This could help both cities and investors make wise decisions, and also help municipal bodies raise funds for their own infrastructure needs</li> </ul>
More on news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) — the research and analysis division of the same group</b> which brings out the <b>UK's The Economist news magazine</b> recently did a feasibility study of various models to calculate city-level GDPs for the MoHUA.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Its report was released earlier this week.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If the project is approved, the process to calculate GDP for a pilot city is likely to begin by the end of the year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The urban sector is likely to account for three-fourths or 75% of India's GDP by 2020, according to government data as well as several external reports. This is a sharp spike from 1951, when the urban sector only accounted for 29% of the national GDP.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By 1981, it was 45%, and by 2011, it had crossed the 60% mark.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A recent study by Brookings Institution found that several Indian cities rank in the 300 global cities with the fastest GDP growth rate.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Its Global Metro Monitor report, released in June 2018, estimated that Hyderabad's GDP was growing at 8.7%, followed by Surat at 7.9%, comparable with the fastest growing Chinese cities that dominate the list.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Church to demand inclusion of Dalit Christians in SC list

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Catholic Church in <b>Tamil Nadu</b> will be organising a conference in Tiruchi to highlight the long pending demand of inclusion of Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste list.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Single demand of the conference will be the removal of third paragraph of the Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order of 1950 commonly referred as the Presidential Order.</li> </ul>
More on news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> That states that any person professing a religion other than Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism cannot be considered a member of a Scheduled Caste.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a society structured based on caste hierarchy, the order was an injustice to the Dalits who converted to Christianity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities, led by former Chief Justice of India Ranganath Misra, that recommended the de-linking of Scheduled Caste status from religion.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Poll panel to brainstorm on key issues

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the times of social media and phased elections, how can campaign silence be maintained during the last 48 hours before polling?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Election Commission will be debating this and</li> </ul>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. seven other issue including limiting of expenditure and increasing participation of women, at a multi-party meeting .</li> <li>2. All seven registered national political parties and 51 State political parties have been invited.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>The law prohibits canvassing during the last 48 hours before polling.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This is meant to create an environment of neutrality and “silence” for the voter to exercise the franchise through reasoned reflection rather than be swayed by last-minute appeals by parties and candidates.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The agenda notes circulated to all political parties say the Commission has sought suggestions on how to “address the issue of online canvassing to promote or prejudice the electoral prospects of a party/candidate on social media during the last 48 hours”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Opposition parties, especially the Congress, have been consistently asking this question in view of the BJP’s extensive campaigning on the ground and on social media ahead of each election.</li> </ul>
<b>Expenditure ceiling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission wants to know the views of political parties on bringing a ceiling for expenditure in the Legislative Council elections. In these elections, huge amounts of unaccounted-for money is often spent by the candidates.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission has asked the parties to take note of alternative modes of voting for domestic migrants and absentee voters, such as postal, proxy and e-voting. The Commission has proposed five strategies, the agenda note says, to ensure that no migrant worker is left out.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These include developing portability of voting rights by linking voter ID and Aadhaar.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A one-time voluntary registration system for domestic migrants, electoral support services to be provided to migrants at the source and destination areas, raising awareness of voters’ rights and a helpline for domestic migrants are the other measures suggested by the Commission.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Election Commission has asked that what measures can political parties undertake to encourage enhanced representation of women within the organisation structure of the political party.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It has pulled out embarrassing statistics to build the case for a greater presence of women.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>There are only 11.4% women in the 16th Lok Sabha, substantially lower than the global average of 22.9%, the Commission noted.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It has said that at least seven countries have laws reserving seats for women in legislature, including Nepal.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



## 3

## Judiciary

## Revamp district courts, directs SC

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Separate washrooms for transgenders, 'court managers' with an MBA degree, Braille and colour-coded signage, crowd management arrangements, crèche facility and even a front desk for litigants to find their way are some of the slew of improvements the Supreme Court wants district courts across the country to have.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a SC said <b>infrastructure of district courts is on ventilator and needs saving.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The order came on a petition filed way back in 1989 by the All India Judges Association for better facilities to help do their job.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A sound infrastructure is the linchpin of a strong and stable judicial system.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It observed that <b>"without a robust infrastructure, the judiciary would not be able to function at its optimum level."</b></li> </ul>
New committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court ordered the State Chief Secretaries to constitute a committee of which the Secretary of the Department of Law should be a member to formulate the development plan for courts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The committee would invite an officer of the High Court, nominated by the Chief Justice of the court.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The apex court listed the case for August 23 to vet the status report and plans devised by the States to better the facilities in their respective district courts.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## SC alters Lodha's BCCI proposals

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court has finalised the new Constitution for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).</li> </ul>
New Roadmap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It rejected the <b>'one State-one vote'</b> recommendation of the <b>Justice R.M. Lodha Committee and altering the cooling-off period for cricket bosses.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Softening the rigour of the recommendations, a three-judge Bench disagreed with Justice Lodha that <b>cricket could prosper only if the BCCI was represented by every State and Union Territory.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The former CJI had relegated cricket associations to the status of associate members.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instead, the court restored full BCCI memberships to three associations in Gujarat and Maharashtra each.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They are the Maharashtra, Mumbai and Vidarbha cricket associations in the State of Maharashtra and the Baroda and Saurashtra cricket associations in the State of Gujarat.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To utilise territoriality as a basis of exclusion is problematic because it ignores history and the contributions made by such associations to the development of cricket and its popularity.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Criminals in politics leave Supreme Court anguished

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Something has to be done to keep criminals at bay and prevent them from contesting elections</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Voicing the Supreme Court's anguish at the helplessness of society to prevent criminalisation of <b>politics</b> at the very entry-point.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Chief Justice is presiding over a five-judge Constitution Bench hearing petitions to bar politicians facing charges of heinous crimes like murder, rape and kidnapping from contesting elections and transforming themselves into parliamentarians and legislators in State Assemblies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> But at the same time the <b>Supreme Court</b> said it could not legislate for Parliament.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court declares the law, the Parliament makes the law</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court is mulling over what it said was its "genuine concern about criminal politics".</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Under the Representation of People Act, only convicted lawmakers are disqualified not those accused.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fast track courts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal submitted that fast track courts to try accused politicians were "<b>the only solution</b>".</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Venugopal said charges in such cases are kept pending for long as witnesses don't testify as the <b>Whistleblowers Protection Act</b> which protects informers, is too weak to protect them or their families from repercussions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Justice D.Y. Chandrachud asked how a murder and rape accused can become a legislator.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Venugopal replied that a person is presumed innocent until he is proven guilty.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Constitution Bench even considered asking the Election Commission to frame guidelines to prevent an accused from becoming a member of a political party.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Parliament has an obligation under Article 102 (1) (e) to make a law. As conscience-keepers of the Constitution, we (Supreme Court) can ask you (Parliament) to do it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

## States can buy pulses at a discount

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Having procured an all-time high amount of pulses from farmers over the past two years the Centre has now decided <b>to offload stock from its overflowing warehouses by selling it to States for use in welfare schemes at a discount of Rs. 15 per kg over the wholesale rate.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>More on news</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the plan to sell almost 35 lakh tonnes of tur, channa, masoor, moong and urad dal.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The scheme is likely to cost the exchequer Rs. 5, 237 crore, according to an official statement.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Farmers have seen record harvests of pulses in the past two years, resulting in a sharp drop in prices.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With the government making market interventions to protect farmers' interests, price support schemes have been widespread in many States.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This has led to a record procurement of 45.43 lakh tonnes of pulses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In order to clear space for the procurement this season, the Centre has decided to offer 34.88 lakh tonnes of pulses to the States for use in ration shops under the public distribution system or in welfare schemes such as mid-day meals or the Integrated Child Development Programme.</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> This will be a one-time dispensation for a period of 12 months or till the stock runs out.
Source	The Hindu

## SC scraps NOTA option for RS polls

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court scrapped the use of NOTA (none of the above) option for Rajya Sabha polls, saying it would <b>usher back the “Satan of defections.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A three-judge Bench held that the option is meant only for universal adult suffrage and direct elections and not elections held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The option of NOTA may serve as an elixir in direct elections but in the election to the Council of States, it would not only undermine the purity of democracy but also serve the Satan of defection and corruption</li> </ul>
Counter productive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court pointed out that in the voting in Rajya Sabha elections, there is a whip and the elector is bound to obey the command of the party.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The party discipline...in this kind of election is of extreme significance, for that is the fulcrum of the existence of parties. It is essential in a parliamentary democracy. The thought of cross-voting and corruption is obnoxious.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court held that NOTA in an indirect election would not only run counter to the discipline expected from an elector under the Tenth Schedule but also be <b>“counterproductive to the basic grammar of the law of disqualification... on the ground of defection.”</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Corruption has eaten into town planning, observes SC

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> People are dying in building collapses and fires because corruption has eaten into town planning and grant of building permits across the country, the Supreme Court said in Friday.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Referring to the recent fire which engulfed Crystal Tower in Parel, Mumbai, Justice Madan B. Lokur said thousands of buildings in Mumbai are unsafe and innocent lives are lost in the mire of corruption.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Justice Lokur said many residential buildings were being used for commercial purposes also.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are about 51,000 homes used for commercial purposes in Delhi.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mixed use of buildings for commercial and residential purposes increases the risk for residents.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Town planning was a State subject and probably the respective High Courts should take action.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court was hearing the Delhi sealing case concerning illegal constructions in the Capital.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Voters have a right to know: SC

Why it is in news?	<input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court said it was contemplating whether political parties could be asked to disclose the antecedents of their members so that the electors <b>“have the right to informed choice”.</b>
Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion	<input type="checkbox"/> The observation came from a five-judge Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India while reserving its decision on a petition filed by advocates <b>seeking a ban on chargesheeted politicians from contesting elections.</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court may direct the Election Commission of India to take steps to ensure that political parties do not allow politicians facing criminal charges to contest on their tickets and symbols.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Venugopal that <b>“Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion”</b> should be made applicable in case of politicians.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Centre contended that the judiciary should not venture into the legislative arena by creating a pre-condition which would adversely affect the right of the candidates to participate in polls.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Law Commission calls for re-think on sedition clause

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dissent and criticism of the government are essential ingredients of a robust public debate in a vibrant democracy the Law Commission of India said .</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission, which is the Centre’s topmost advisory body on <b>laws</b>, headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, published a consultation paper recommending that it is time to re-think or even repeal the provision of sedition (Section 124A) from the Indian Penal Code.</li> </ul>
Right to free speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission has invited public opinion on the prospect of either redefining or doing away with Section 124A in the <b>“largest democracy of the world, considering that right to free speech and expression is an essential ingredient of democracy.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Why should India retain sedition when the British, who introduced sedition to oppress Indians, have themselves abolished the law in their country, the Commission asked. Sedition attracts imprisonment from three years to life.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission said an <b>“expression of frustration over the state of affairs cannot be treated as sedition.”</b></li> </ul>
Safety valve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The consultation paper was published a day after the Supreme Court lashed out at the government, saying <b>“dissent is the safety valve of democracy,”</b> while hearing a petition challenging the pan-India crackdown and arrests of five activists.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For merely expressing a thought that is not in consonance with the policy of the government of the day, a person should not be charged under the Section... If the country is not open to positive criticism, there lies little difference between the pre- and post-Independence eras. Right to criticise one’s own history and the right to offend are rights protected under free speech. While it is essential to protect national integrity, it should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a democracy, singing from the same songbook is not a benchmark of patriotism. People should be at liberty to show their affection towards their country in their own way</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It said <b>“every restriction on free speech and expression must be carefully scrutinised to avoid unwarranted restrictions.”</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> But the Commission has also posed the query that if contempt of court invites penal action, should <b>“contempt of government”</b> also attract punishment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Commission asks whether it would be <b>“worthwhile”</b> to rename Section 124A and find a <b>“suitable substitute”</b> for the term ‘sedition’.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu



## 4

# Economy : Banking Sector and Monetary Policy

## About Rs.70,000 cr. hit due to banking frauds in last 3 years

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ During the ongoing monsoon session, the Rajya Sabha informed that Indian banks reported a total loss of about Rs.70,000 crore due to frauds during the last three fiscals up to March 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The extent of loss in fraud cases reported by scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) for 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 was Rs.16,409 crore, Rs.16,652 crore and Rs.36,694 crore, respectively.</li> <li>□ The Minister informed the House that gross advances by SCBs increased from Rs.25.03 lakh crore on March 31, 2008, to Rs.68.75 lakh crore on March 31, 2014.</li> <li>□ On stressed assets, he said the spurt was due to aggressive lending practices, wilful default, loan frauds, corruption in some cases and economic slowdown.</li> <li>□ There were 139 borrowers with aggregate gross NPAs of more than Rs.1,000 crore.</li> <li>□ RBI had issued directions to banks in June 2017, instructing them to file applications for initiation of corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in respect of 12 borrowers.</li> <li>□ These borrowers had cumulative fund-based and non-fund based outstanding amount of Rs.1,97,769 crore as on March 31, 2017.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Strengthen governance in PSBs : IMF

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its report asked the Indian government to improve the way state-owned banks are run by bolstering board level autonomy.</li> <li>□ It also said that the government should consider eventually privatising them.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ A key area of reform is to strengthen governance in public sector banks, said the IMF mission chief for India.</li> <li>□ IMF Projects India's economic growth to recover in 2018/19 and strengthen in 2019/20 as stability oriented macroeconomic policies and progress on structural reforms continue to bear fruit.</li> <li>□ The IMF said that high foreign reserve buffers and strong FDI inflows had helped contain external vulnerabilities.</li> <li>□ However, more can be done to sustain the recent foreign direct investment inflows and remove trade barriers.</li> <li>□ This include reducing trade documentation requirements and procedures, lowering tariffs, continuing to improve the business climate, and improving governance.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal and external risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The IMF said risks to the outlook were, however, tilted to the "downside."</li> <li>□ The Fund listed higher global oil prices and tighter global financial conditions as key external risks that had grown in recent months.</li> <li>□ The IMF projected global crude oil prices to average \$72 a barrel in 2018/19, up from \$62 in its earlier forecast.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Domestic risks include tax revenue shortfalls and delays in addressing the twin bank-corporate balance sheet problems.</li> </ul>
<b>RBI's role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ According to the IMF, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) would need to gradually tighten monetary policy further due to rising inflation, driven mainly driven by higher oil prices and a falling rupee.</li> <li>□ The RBI raised the repo rate for the second straight meeting by 25 basis points to 6.5%, while warning about the inflationary pressures.</li> <li>□ The average inflation is likely to rise to 5.2% in 2018/ 19 from a 17-year low of 3.6% in the previous fiscal year, the IMF said.</li> </ul>
<b>International Monetary Fund (IMF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The IMF, also known as the Fund, was conceived at a UN conference in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, United States, in July 1944.</li> <li>□ The IMF's primary purpose is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system—the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries (and their citizens) to transact with each other.</li> <li>□ Now the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an organization of 189 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.</li> <li>□ IMF is headquartered in Washington, D.C.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, IMF

## Credit registry: RBI Act may need tweak

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ RBI Deputy Governor proposed the enactment of a special law to enable the proposed public credit registry (PCR) in order to resolve the deep data asymmetry in the financial system and prevent the bad loan accumulation.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, may need to be amended to facilitate the setting of a public credit registry (PCR).</li> <li>□ With a low credit-to-GDP ratio of a modest <b>55.7</b> per cent, the country is still under-penetrated financially.</li> <li>□ India's credit-to-GDP ratio stood low against China's <b>208.7</b> per cent, Britain's <b>170.5</b> per cent and the US' <b>152.2</b> per cent. Norway leads the chart with <b>245.6</b> per cent credit-to-GDP ratio.</li> <li>□ The proposed PCR can help the system move towards more equitable and timely access to credit, especially to the underserved segments, and thus democratise and formalise the credit flow, Deputy Governor said.</li> </ul>
<b>Public credit registry (PCR)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The public credit registry would be an information repository that collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers.</li> <li>□ A credit repository will help banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower and accordingly offer attractive interest rates to good borrowers and higher interest rates to bad borrowers.</li> <li>□ The public credit repository will address information asymmetry, improve access to credit and strengthen the credit culture among consumers.</li> <li>□ It can also go a long way in addressing the bad loans problem facing the banking system, as corporate borrowers will be unable to lend from multiple banks without disclosing their existing debt.</li> <li>□ Setting up the public credit registry will help improve India's rankings in the World Bank's ease of doing business index.</li> <li>□ PCR to serve as a registry of all credit contracts irrespective of any threshold amount and has said it should be backed by a legal framework.</li> <li>□ The committee has also recommended that registry should also capture data such as external commercial borrowings, market borrowings, and all contingent liabilities to provide a holistic picture about the borrower's indebtedness.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> PCR to serve as a registry of all credit contracts irrespective of any threshold amount and has said it should be backed by a legal framework.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The committee has also recommended that registry should also capture data such as external commercial borrowings, market borrowings, and all contingent liabilities to provide a holistic picture about the borrower's indebtedness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing privacy concerns, the committee has suggested that the data will be available to stakeholders like banks strictly on a need-to-know basis and privacy of data will be protected.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

### Rs 3 lakh crore loans to come under IBC for resolution

Why in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As much as Rs 3 lakh crore worth of loans of 70-80 companies is likely to come in for resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)</li> </ul>
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Reserve Bank of India's February 12 circular on restructuring bad loans had mandated banks to take loan accounts which remain unresolved for over 180 days, to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under the IBC.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With the deadline ending on August 27, banks will be required to push unresolved cases to NCLT benches for resolution.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The RBI had recently reviewed around 200 stressed assets of top business groups to assess the status of their classification and provisioning, and identify companies that would require resolution under the IBC.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Most of these accounts, with value above Rs 2,000 crore each, have been declared as non-performing assets (NPAs) by banks and are required to be referred to the NCLT.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For accounts with loan exposure below Rs 2,000 crore and above Rs 1,000 crore, the RBI is expected to announce the resolution framework in due course.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Power sector companies are likely to be among the main cases that will now undergo resolution under the IBC.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are about 34 stressed power projects and the combined value of their outstanding loans is about Rs 1.74 lakh crore.</li> </ul>
Previous proceedings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> RBI in last year June had sent a list of 12 defaulters with over Rs 5,000 crore of aggregate loan exposure each for resolution under the IBC.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Of this, 11 accounts are in various stages of resolution at different benches of the NCLT, with bankers expecting over 50 per cent recovery from these accounts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The RBI subsequently sent another list of 28 stressed accounts for resolution. However, banks don't expect more than 25-30 per cent from these accounts.</li> </ul>
Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Parliament has enacted Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Code offers a uniform, comprehensive insolvency legislation encompassing all companies, partnerships and individuals (other than financial firms).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For financial firms like banks, insolvency is a much delicate issue and for this a separate resolution regime will be enacted later.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Code provides clear, coherent and speedy process for early identification of financial distress and resolution of entities if the underlying business is found to be viable.</li> </ul> <p>It suggests two options – a restructuring if the firm is viable and liquidation if it is not financially viable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Resolution should be done quickly and judiciously to ensure that business is not stuck.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Lok Sabha has passed the <b>Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill 2017</b> to pave the way for tightening loopholes in existing code and to make resolution process more effective.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ It amends provision related to eligibility in IBC to state that insolvency professional will only invite those resolution applicants to submit a plan, who fulfil certain criteria laid down by him with approval of committee of creditors and other conditions which may be specified by Insolvency and Bankruptcy code.</li> <li>□ It prohibit certain people from submitting a resolution plan (specifying details of restructuring a defaulter’s debt). These persons include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) wilful defaulters,</li> <li>(ii) disqualified directors,</li> <li>(iii) promoters or management of the defaulting company, and</li> <li>(iv) any person who has committed these activities abroad.</li> </ul> </li> <li>□ The Ordinance bars an insolvency professional from selling the property of a defaulter to any such person during liquidation.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	Indian Express.

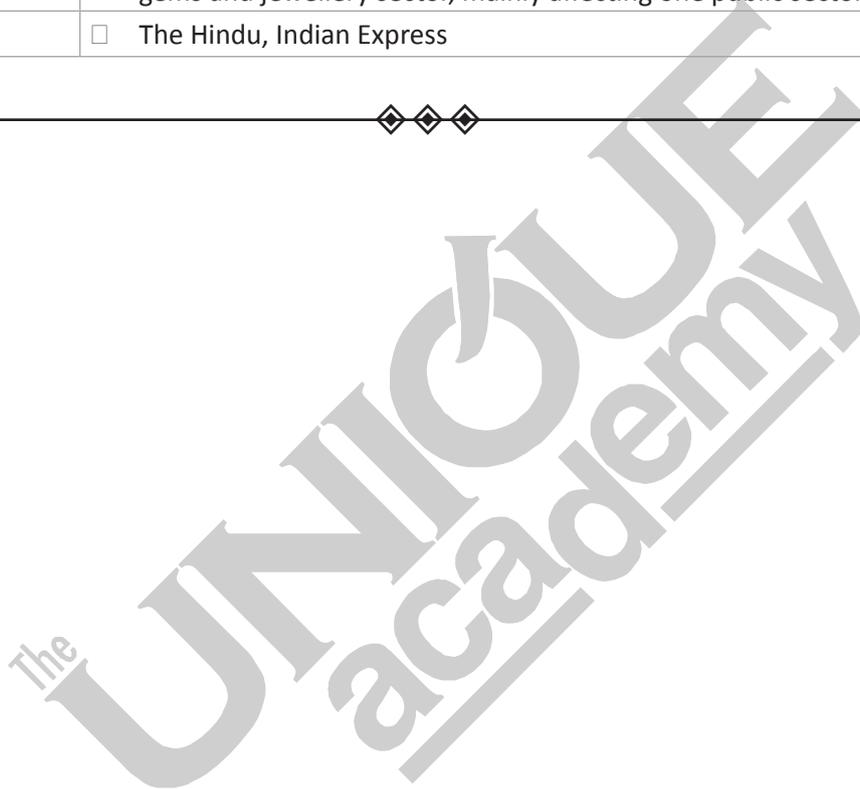
### Over 99% of demonetised notes were returned : RBI

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Over 21 months after Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes were withdrawn from circulation on November 8, 2016, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that nearly all of that money has returned to the banking system.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The RBI has received Rs 15.31 lakh crore or 99.3 per cent of the Rs 15.417 lakh crore worth of notes which were in circulation as on November 8, 2016.</li> <li>□ This means that just Rs 10,720 crore of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes failed to come back to the RBI, as against expectations that over Rs 3 lakh crore of black money would not return to the banking system.</li> <li>□ The RBI had introduced new Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 notes in place of the notes withdrawn from the system, but the pace of remonetisation was slow.</li> <li>□ The total expenditure incurred on security printing during the year (July 2017-June 2018) stood at Rs 4,912 crore, as against Rs 7,965 crore in 2016-17, the RBI said.</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The sudden withdrawal of notes in 2016 had created a liquidity shortage, with long queues outside banks and people undergoing immense hardship across the country.</li> <li>□ It had also roiled the economy, with demand falling, businesses facing a crisis, and GDP growth declining close to 1.5 per cent.</li> <li>□ Many small units were hit hard, with many reporting huge losses even after nine months.</li> <li>□ However, Department of Economic Affairs Secretary said the demonetisation process has achieved its objectives of reducing black money, fake currency, terrorist financing and promoting digital transactions.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.

### Bad loans to rise in current fiscal: RBI

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Reserve Bank of India in its annual report, said banks will witness further deterioration in their non-performing assets (NPAs) due to the “economic situation prevailing” in the current financial year.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The central bank said the gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) plus restructured standard advances in the banking system remained elevated at 12.1 per cent of gross advances at end-March 2018.</li> <li>□ A loan whose interest and/or installment of principal have remained overdue (not paid) for a period of 90 days is considered as <b>NPA</b>.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ The combined impact of the increase in provisioning against NPAs and mark-to-market (MTM) treasury losses on account of the hardening of yields eroded the profitability of banks, resulting in net losses.</li><li>□ The aggregate gross NPAs of SCBs increased primarily as a result of this transparent recognition of stressed assets as NPAs.</li><li>□ It increased from Rs 323,464 crore, as on March 31, 2015, to Rs 10,35,528 crore, as on March 31, 2018.</li></ul>
<b>Frauds on the rise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ As per the RBI report, the number of cases of fraud reported by banks increased both in terms of numbers and value in 2017-18.</li><li>□ Fraud cases, which were generally hovering at about 4,500 in the last 10 years, increased to 5,835 in 2017-18.</li><li>□ The amount involved in frauds was increasing gradually, followed by a significant increase in 2017- 18 to Rs.410 billion.</li><li>□ The quantum jump in the amount involved in frauds during 2017 -18 was on account of a large value fraud committed in the gems and jewellery sector, mainly affecting one public sector bank.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ The Hindu, Indian Express</li></ul>



## 5

# Government Policies and Taxation

## Incentives to textiles sector likely

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government is likely to hike import duty on about 300 textile products to boost domestic manufacturing and create employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Products on which imports duties are expected to increase includes some fabrics, garments and man-made fibres.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The duties could be enhanced to 20 per cent from the current level of about 5-10 per cent.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Foreign direct investment norms for the sector may also be relaxed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase in duties would give an edge to domestic manufacturers as the imported products are relatively cheaper.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase in manufacturing activity will help create jobs in the sector, which employs about 10.5 crore people.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Through a notification, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Custom (CBIC) had hiked import duties as well as raised the ad-valorem rate of duty for certain items.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The imported products which have become expensive include woven fabrics, dresses, trousers, suits and baby garments.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to trade experts, India would not be able to give any direct exports incentive to the textile sector, so there is a need to support the segment to encourage domestic manufacturing.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Imports of textile yarn, fabric, made-up articles grew by 8.58 per cent to USD 168.64 million in June.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However, exports of cotton yarn/fabrics/made-ups, handloom products grew by 24 per cent to USD 986.2 million.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Man-made yarn/fabrics/made-ups exports grew 8.45 pc to USD 403.4 million.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exports of all textile readymade garments dipped by 12.3 per cent to USD 13.5 billion.</li> </ul>
<b>Textile Industry in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Indian Textile industry is one of the largest in the world with a large raw material base and manufacturing strength across the value chain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Textile plays a major role in the Indian Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(i)</b> It contributes 14 per cent to industrial production and 4 per cent to GDP</li> <li><b>(ii)</b> With over 45 million people, the industry is one of the largest source of employment generation in the country</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India is the largest producer and the second largest exporter of cotton in the world. India is also the leading consumer of cotton.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At 50% of world production, India is the largest producer of raw jute and jute goods in the world</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India is also the second largest producer of silk in the world</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Mill sector, with 3,400 textile mills having installed capacity of more than 50 million spindles and 842,000 rotors is the second largest in the world</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Textile sector in India is dominated by women workers, with 70% of the workforce being women.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	Indian Express, Make in India

## Solar cells: Government drops safeguard duty

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The finance ministry suspended the implementation of a safeguard duty on imported solar cells following a stay order by the Orissa High Court.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The Centre had imposed a safeguard duty of 25% on solar cells imported from China and Malaysia for the period from July 30, 2018, to July 29, 2019.</li> <li>❑ Several firms had filed writ petitions in the Orissa High Court against the imposition of the duty.</li> <li>❑ While the safeguard duty was meant to help the domestic solar cell manufacturers, sector analysts and industry players said that not only was the period of two years too little to provide any real benefit, but also that the safeguard duty would adversely impact ongoing solar projects dependent on imported cells.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ India imports over 90% of its solar equipment from China.</li> <li>❑ The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) had recommended imposing a safeguard duty for two years on solar cells and modules imported from China and Malaysia.</li> <li>❑ The development comes against the backdrop of protectionism gaining traction globally, resulting in new tariff and non-tariff barriers.</li> <li>❑ Earlier this year, US President Trump also decided to levy tariff on imported solar panels.</li> <li>❑ Trump imposed a 30% tariff on imported solar cells and module in the first year, with the duties declining to 15% in the fourth year.</li> <li>❑ In the last three years, India has initiated more than 130 anti-dumping/ countervailing duty/safeguard cases to deal with the rising incidence of unfair trade practices and to provide a level playing field to the domestic industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## India seeks revision in price of gas via TAPI line

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ India has sought re-negotiation of the natural gas price it is to source through a proposed \$10 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline due to slump in global energy markets.</li> </ul>
<b>More about</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The four nations to the pipeline projects had in 2013 signed a gas sale purchase agreement (GSPA) that benchmarked the price of natural gas that Turkmenistan is to export at 55 per cent of the prevailing crude oil price.</li> <li>❑ However the slump in global energy markets, India seeks revision in price.</li> </ul>
<b>TAPI project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ TAPI gas pipeline project is a proposed trans-country natural gas pipeline from Caspian Sea, Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan.</li> <li>❑ Out of total 1,814-kilometer gas pipeline , at least 816 kilometers of the pipeline will pass through the territory of Afghanistan.</li> <li>❑ The TAPI Project is considered as an important initiative of these four countries to connect energy rich Central Asia with energy starved South Asia.</li> <li>❑ It marks a new dawn of economic engagement through regional connectivity by economically integrating region stretching from the Bay of Bengal to the Caspian sea.</li> <li>❑ From India's perspective, TAPI Project will provide an alternative supply source of gas with dependable reserves leading to enhanced energy security.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu Business Line

## E-commerce : No plans to allow FDI in inventory model

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> As per the official statement from DIPP, the government is not planning to ease rules to allow foreign direct investment (FDI) in business to consumer (B2C) e-commerce players holding the inventory of various goods, even if such products are locally-made.
<b>Concept</b>	<p><b>There are two important types of e-commerce model :</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Marketplace based model</b> of e-commerce means providing an information technology platform by an e-commerce entity on a digital &amp; electronic network to act as a facilitator between the buyer and seller. Currently 100% FDI is allowed under this model.</li> <li>2. <b>Inventory based model</b> of e-commerce means an e-commerce activity where inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly.</li> <li>3. Currently India does not allow FDI under this model.</li> </ol>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> FDI allowed in the retailing of food items produced in India up to 100 per cent through government approval, will continue.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This means players like Amazon and Flipkart can't float the so-called inventory model of e-commerce and continue to run only as online market places.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Recently, a task force on e-commerce recommended that up to 49 per cent FDI be allowed in e-tailers, provided they sell only domestically-produced items.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Currently, up to 100 per cent FDI is allowed in e-commerce marketplaces via the automatic route but no FDI is allowed in e-tailers holding inventory of goods, except in the food retailing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> So while Amazon can run its online and offline stores for food retailing, for which it has already got government approval, it can't hold inventory of other goods.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Also, it is mandated to keep its food retailing separate from other ventures.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.

## 6

# Agriculture and Allied Activities

## Maharashtra : loan waiver scheme to individual farmers

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Maharashtra government has expanded the scope of the loan waiver scheme by extending the benefits to every member of the farmer's family in case of a separate loan account.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Till now, the State government has spent Rs.14,000 crore on the scheme.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The government also claimed that the scheme had so far benefitted 35.32 lakh farmers in the state.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The decision had been announced by the government the recently concluded monsoon session of the State Legislature.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Earlier, the state government had considered the farmer's family as one unit and considered it eligible to claim a waiver of Rs 1.50 lakh agricultural debt.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the new GR, every member of the family having some agricultural debt will now be covered under the scheme, which was announced last year following strident protests by farmers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Now, each individual with an outstanding agricultural loan will be covered in the scheme, and up to Rs.1.5 lakh will be waived by the government.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the initial scheme, if a farmer had a loan outstanding of more than Rs 1.50 lakh, then that difference has to be paid by him before he becomes eligible for the waiver.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the revised rule, the farmers who have paid some money to the bank as per the first scheme but the cumulative amount of the outstanding loan is less than the revised norms; then the banks will have to return the amount to farmers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For instance, as per the earlier scheme, if a farmer family had had a cumulative loan outstanding of Rs two lakh and Rs 50,000 had already been paid by them, the state would bear the burden of Rs 1.50 lakh.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the revised norms, the paid amount of Rs 50,000 will have to be returned to the family because everyone in the family is entitled for loan waiver now.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Tea exports to China, Pak. rise

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the first half of 2018, India shipped larger quantities of tea to two neighbouring countries - China and Pakistan .</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Overall tea exports had increased to 112.1 million kg, from 107.1 million kg in the year earlier period.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to data with the Tea Board, total earnings between January and June 2018 was Rs.2,177.1 crore, against Rs.2,091.8 crore a year earlier, although the unit (per kg) price of the commodity was marginally lower both in rupee and dollar terms this year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exports dropped to India's single largest market — Russia, as also the CIS countries — which together imported 28.7 million kg against 31.2 million kg.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The opening up of the Chinese black tea market has thrown up opportunities for India.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exports to China, where India has been planning to take a delegation, rose to 4.4 million kg valued at Rs.77.1 crore in the first half, from 3.7 million kg and Rs.64.7 crore a year earlier.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India was able to score an increase in exports to Pakistan too — to 7.2 million kg from 4.8 million kg, valued at Rs.66.7 crore against Rs.52.1 crore.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unit price, however, fell from Rs.108 per kg to Rs.92.8 per kg this year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exports to Iran, a high value market, too rose from 10.9 million kg to 12.1 million kg.</li> </ul>
<b>Tea Industry in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indian tea is among the finest in the world owing to strong geographical indications, heavy investments in tea processing units, continuous innovation, augmented product mix and strategic market expansion.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The main tea-growing regions are in Northeast India (including Assam) and in north Bengal (Darjeeling district and the Dooars region).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tea is also grown on a large scale in the Nilgiris in south India.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India is one of the world's largest consumers of tea, with about three-fourths of the country's total produce consumed locally.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India stands fourth in terms of tea exports after Kenya (including neighbouring African countries), China and Sri Lanka respectively.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Total Tea exports stood at US\$ 837.33 million in 2017-18, as compared to US\$ 731.25 million during the previous year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In 2017-18 major importers of Indian tea were Iran (US\$ 126.36 million), Russia (US\$ 120.83 million), UAE (US\$ 66.28 million), USA (US\$ 64.33 million) and UK (US\$ 55.80 million)</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.

### Half of farm households indebted: NABARD

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to a recent survey by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), more than half the agricultural households in the country have outstanding debt.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17 covered a sample of 1.88 lakh people from 40,327 rural households.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Only 48% of these are defined as agricultural households, which have at least one member self-employed in agriculture and which received more than Rs.5,000 as value of produce from agricultural activities over the past year, whether they possessed any land or not.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural households reporting any outstanding debt also had a higher debt liability compared with non-agricultural ones.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The survey found that only 10.5% of agricultural households were found to have a valid Kisan Credit Card at the time of the survey.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The biggest reason for taking loans among agricultural households was capital expenditure for agricultural purposes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The southern States of Telangana (79%), Andhra Pradesh (77%), and Karnataka (74%) showed the highest levels of indebtedness among agricultural households, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (69%), Manipur (61%), Tamil Nadu (60%), Kerala (56%), and Odisha (54%).</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



## 6

## Industrial Sector

## Steel imports from Japan, South Korea surge

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ A recently published government document showed that India is being hit by a wave of steel from producers in Japan and South Korea, as mills there redirect supply after U.S. President Donald Trump slapped an import duty on the alloy earlier this year.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ During the first quarter of the fiscal year starting in April, India's steel imports from South Korea rose 31% from a year earlier, while those from Japan climbed 30%.</li> <li>□ The flood of imports is so big that the government in New Delhi is considering measures to control imports, Minister told.</li> <li>□ Between April and June, India became a net importer of steel, with foreign supplies reaching 2.1 million tonnes, 15% higher than a year earlier, according to the note.</li> <li>□ With the increase, the South Asian nation has now passed the United States as South Korea's third-largest market for steel.</li> </ul> <p>Under World Trade Organization rules, safeguards are temporary restrictions on <u>imports</u> of a product to protect a domestic industry.</p> <p>However, renewed government measures would take place despite India's domestic steel industry being unable to meet the country's demand for high-end steel products needed for railroads and structural steel used in construction projects.</p> <p>India's imports of steel products used by railways rose to more than 18,000 tonnes during the April to June period compared with 500 tonnes a year earlier, the Steel Ministry note said.</p> <p>Imports of steel products used in construction more than doubled to nearly 22,000 tonnes during the same period, the note said.</p> <p>The United States imposed tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imports in March.</p> <p>South Korea was the fourth-biggest steel exporter to the U.S.</p> <p>Indian steel manufacturers are also impacted by the tariffs and the country will retaliate with duties on products from the United States that will take effect from September.</p>
<b>Steel industry in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ India was the world's third-largest steel producer in 2017.</li> <li>□ The growth in the Indian steel sector has been driven by domestic availability of raw materials such as iron ore and cost-effective labour.</li> <li>□ Consequently, the steel sector has been a major contributor to India's manufacturing output.</li> <li>□ India is expected to overtake Japan to become the world's second largest steel producer soon, and has envisaged achieving 300 MT of annual steel production capacity by 2030.</li> <li>□ Steel consumption is expected to grow 5.7 per cent year-on-year to 92.1 MT in 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, IBEF



## 7

## Service Sector

## Zero telecom equipment imports by 2022 : TRAI

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a bid to push local manufacturing of telecom gear, TRAI recommended that India aim for '<b>net zero imports</b>' of telecom equipment by 2022.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It also mooted setting up of a Rs.1,000 crore fund for promoting research and innovation in the sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The recommendations aimed at enabling Indian telecom equipment manufacturing sector to transition from an import-dependent sector to a global hub of indigenous manufacturing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In this regard TRAI asked Telecom Equipment Manufacturing Council (TEMC) to identify and recommend specific <b>areas of priorities</b>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The import of telecom instruments was far greater than the export of such item.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to data available, the export of 'telecom instrument' stood at \$1201.7 million, while imports totalled \$2,1847.92 million in 2017-18.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The regulator has suggested that the progress of indigenous telecommunication equipment manufacturing be monitored by <b>Department of Telecommunications (DoT)</b>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It also said a dedicated unit (within the department) be made responsible for facilitation of manufacturing related activities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It has also emphasised that indigenous products be given preference in all public telecom network for <b>security reasons</b> under preferential market access policy.</li> </ul>
<b>TRAI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Established in 1997 by an Act of parliament to regulate telecom services. An independent regulator</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Its mandate is to deliver a fair and transparent environment for fair competition in telecom market.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> TRAI also fixes or revises the tariffs for telecom services in India.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.



## 8

## Infrastructure

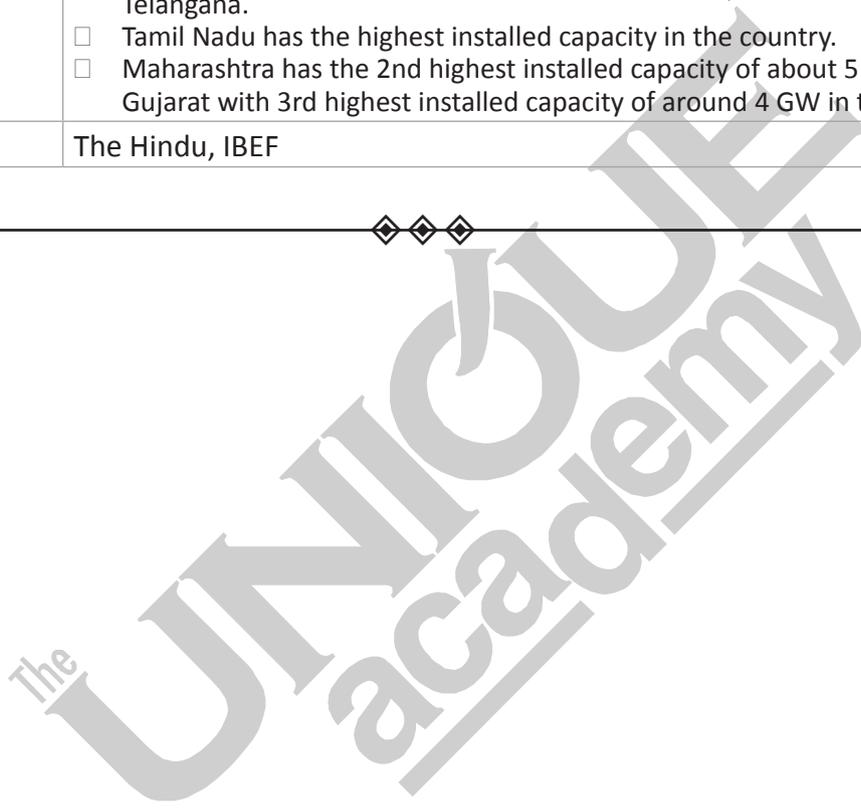
## 25% safeguard duty on import of solar cells

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India has imposed a 25% safeguard duty on solar cell imports for a year till July 29, 2019, said a government order published on Monday, as the country tries to protect the domestic solar industry.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the notification, the safeguard duty will not be imposed on imports from developing countries, except China and Malaysia.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The federal trade ministry earlier this month recommended imposing a 25% duty on imports of solar cells and modules from China for one year to try to counter what it sees as a threat to domestic solar equipment manufacturing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India imports over 90% of its solar equipment from China.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The safeguard duty on imports would be applicable for two years. It would be reduced in the second year to 20% for six months, and would be charged at 15% for the next six months, said the order.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While the move is aimed at helping the domestic solar cell manufacturing sector, it could affect existing projects dependent on cheap imports.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) had recommended imposing a safeguard duty for two years on solar cells and modules imported from China and Malaysia.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The development comes against the backdrop of protectionism gaining traction globally, resulting in new tariff and non-tariff barriers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Earlier this year, US President Trump also decided to levy tariff on imported solar panels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trump imposed a 30% tariff on imported solar cells and module in the first year, with the duties declining to 15% in the fourth year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the last three years, India has initiated more than 130 anti-dumping/ countervailing duty/safeguard cases to deal with the rising incidence of unfair trade practices and to provide a level playing field to the domestic industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## States urged to sell surplus wind energy

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At the annual meeting of the Indian Wind Power Association, a resolution has been passed that urged State Electricity Boards to arrange to sell surplus energy generated through power exchanges.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the chairman of the wind power association, in Tamil Nadu, which has 8,700 MW of the 34,000 MW installed wind energy capacity in the country, 6,234 million units of wind energy was generated between April 1 and August 5 this year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tamil Nadu has the highest installed capacity in the country with around 7.5 GW and its state regulations are very much favourable to wind power development.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several other States have 4,000 to 5,000 MW each.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evacuation of wind energy is better in States such as Gujarat and Karnataka.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> "When the load drops, the State Electricity Boards should not back down wind energy generation. Instead, they should look at options such as spot selling of the excess power or swapping it with power deficit States," chairman said.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Similarly, some States have settled all the dues for the power purchased from wind energy generators. In States such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, the dues are pending.</li> </ul>
<b>Wind power in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ India accounts for approximately 4 per cent of the total global electricity generation and contributes 4.43 per cent to the global renewable generation capacity.</li> <li>□ India has the 4th largest installed capacity in wind power after China, U.S and Germany.</li> <li>□ The total installed capacity of wind power in India as on March 2017 is around 32 GW.</li> <li>□ A recent study by National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has shown wind energy potential of 302 GW at 100 m hub-height in India.</li> <li>□ Wind Energy has spread across the South, West and North regions of India.</li> <li>□ The potential of wind energy is concentrated in the states of – Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.</li> <li>□ Tamil Nadu has the highest installed capacity in the country.</li> <li>□ Maharashtra has the 2nd highest installed capacity of about 5 GW followed by Gujarat with 3rd highest installed capacity of around 4 GW in the country.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, IBEF



## 9

## Science and Technology

## NBRC researchers decipher how Zika virus causes microcephaly

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National Brain Research Centre-led team of researchers has successfully identified the molecular and cellular mechanisms by which Zika virus causes microcephaly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Babies born with microcephaly have significantly smaller head size compared with normal babies. The researchers found the <b>envelop protein (E protein) of the virus, which is responsible for the entry of the virus into brain stem cells, was responsible for arresting the proliferation of human foetal neural stem cells and also killing the cells that were becoming neuron-like.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The combined effect reduces the pool of foetal brain cells leading to smaller size of the brain.</li> </ul>
More on research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neutralizing the E protein of the virus can help prevent or reduce the harmful effects of the virus in a developing foetus.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The E protein can be seen as a likely therapeutic target.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The E protein in Zika virus is mutated and very different from the envelop protein of other flaviviruses such as dengue, West Nilevirus, yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When four proteins that have already been identified in other flaviviruses were over-expressed [produced in excess], the <b>E protein was found to be more potent in arresting the proliferation of brain stem cells.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The other three proteins were acting in a less significant manner. Scientists sequenced the RNA of stem cells after exposure to E protein to understand how the stem cell RNA gets affected.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On sequencing the RNA, they found 25 microRNA of stem cells were either expressed in excess or very little in the presence of the E protein.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two of the microRNAs regulate the expression of human genes and play an important role in brain development and maintaining the ability of stem cells to renew themselves (stemness).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When stem cells start dividing, one cell goes into self-renewal and becomes a stem cell while the other follows the lineage to become some kind of a brain cell.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When the E protein is over-expressed inside stem cells, it promoted premature but faulty formation of neurons.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They start becoming a neuron-like cell but the entire process of becoming a neuron cell is not completed successfully and so is faulty and they tend to die naturally.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>While the E protein was unable to kill the stem cells as they are lot more resilient, it was able to kill the neurons.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neurons are more susceptible to neurotoxin and don't divide. So there are fewer brain cells leading to smaller size of the brain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To validate the findings, the researchers in collaboration with Prof. Jonaki Sen at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur introduced the E protein in pregnant mice at 13.5 days gestation and harvested the brain two days later.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other researchers had introduced the virus in brain stem cells and found the proliferation of stem cells getting inhibited.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## India bans rabies vaccines made by China firm

Why it is in news?	India has ordered an immediate recall of <b>rabies vaccines made by a scandal-hit Chinese company</b> .
Rabies Vaccine	<p><b>Vaccination against rabies is used in two distinct situations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To protect those who are at risk of exposure to rabies, i.e. pre-exposure vaccination;</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To prevent the development of clinical rabies after exposure has occurred, usually following the bite of an animal suspected of having rabies, i.e. post-exposure prophylaxis.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <b>vaccines used for pre-exposure and post-exposure vaccination are the same, but the immunization schedule differs.</b></li> <li>2. Rabies immunoglobulin is used only for post-exposure prophylaxis.</li> <li>3. Modern vaccines of cell-culture or embryonated-egg origin are safer and more effective than the older vaccines, which were produced in brain tissue.</li> <li>4. These modern rabies vaccines are now available in major urban centres of most countries of the developing world. Rabies immunoglobulin, on the other hand, is in short supply worldwide and may not be available, even in major urban centres, in many dog rabies-infected countries.</li> </ol>
More in news	It has also put a temporary stop on fresh imports of the vaccine made by Changchun Chan sheng after it emerged that it had fabricated records.
Source	The Hindu, WHO

## A game-changing diaper?

Why it is in news?	· A team at IIT Madras develops a biodegradable, super-absorbent polymer.
What it made of? and problems associated with it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diapers contain <b>super-absorbing polymers, or SAPs</b>, which can absorb and retain a large quantity of liquid.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They are <b>made of synthetic materials that are non-biodegradable</b>.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safe disposal of used diapers is thus becoming a major environmental problem.</li> </ul>
Solution by scientists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>scientists from the Department of Chemistry at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras have developed a biodegradable super-absorbent polymer using chitosan (a kind of sugar extracted from seafood waste), citric acid and urea.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This super-absorbent has capacity — <b>it can absorb 1,250g of water for each gram of the polymer.</b></li> </ul>
A comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The researchers used chitosan obtained from seafood waste source, and two easily available sustainable chemicals — citric acid and urea.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Water absorbing material from a commercial baby diaper was used for comparison.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The materials (chitosan, citric acid and urea) were mixed in a weight ratio of 1:2:2.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The mixture was heated in aqueous medium to 100° C in a closed container to form a highly viscous and porous, cross-linked gel denoted as CHCAUR (from chitosan, citric acid and urea).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The gel was then dried to remove residual solvent and powdered for further study.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It was found that the water absorption capacity of CHCAUR was about eight times more when compared to super absorbing polymers used in commercial diapers.</li> </ul>

<b>Other applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It can also find applications <b>in agriculture, especially as a controlled releasing agent of micro- and macro-nutrients to soil.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The study also mentions that when applied to soil, CHCAUR was found to decrease water evaporation rate significantly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The research team is now working on similar biodegradable <b>polymers as a substitute for polyurethane and polystyrene packaging materials that do not degrade.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Mcr-1 gene seen in *K. pneumoniae* bacteria

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A study published in <i>Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy</i> found that <b>about 10% of the <i>K. pneumoniae</i> bacteria studied were resistant to colistin.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Increased prevalence of mcr-1 gene that confers multidrug-resistance has now been reported in <i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i> bacteria, increasing the fear of infection by pan drug-resistant bugs. This gene endows resistance against last hope antibiotic — colistin.</b></li> </ul>
<b>History of mcr-1 gene</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This gene was first reported in December 2015 in <i>E. coli</i> isolated from chicken in China.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By 2017 it had spread to all continents and [is] seen in bacteria isolated from humans, chicken and environment,</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes of study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evidence suggests that the overuse of colistin in farm animals has given rise to the emergence of mcr-1 gene.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Since this gene is present on a mobile genetic element (plasmid) of bacteria such as <i>E. coli</i> and <i>K. pneumoniae</i>, the frequency of transmission to other bacteria is likely to be very high.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The presence of the gene in the chromosome also means that Indian population may be harbouring mcr-1 gene for a longer period of time and it remained undetected.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> mcr-1 gene was more prevalent in <i>K. pneumoniae</i> than <i>E. coli</i>, which is in stark contrast to findings from other countries.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While less than 1% of the <i>E. coli</i> studied was resistant to colistin, it was about 10% in the case of <i>K. pneumoniae</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Every ounce counts

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Basic nutrition:World Breastfeeding Week (August 1-7) is celebrated every year to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world.</li> </ul>
<b>More about Breastfeeding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It commemorates the Innocenti Declaration signed in August 1990 by government policymakers, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF and other organisations to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Breastfeeding, says WHO, is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need, which recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour after birth until a baby is six months old.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This year, WHO is working with UNICEF and partners to promote the importance of helping mothers breastfeed their babies within that crucial first hour of life.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## IIT-Madras powers up a desi chip

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer scientists and a student team from the IIT- Madras have developed the first of a family of six industry-standard microprocessors.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The initial batch of 300 chips named RISECREEK, produced under Project Shakti, have been fabricated free at Intel's facility at Oregon, U.S., to run the Linux operating system.</li> <li>This microprocessors can be adapted by others, as the design is open source.</li> <li>They optimise power use and compete with international units such as the Cortex A5 from Advanced RISC Machines (ARM).</li> <li>On the test bench, the IIT design fared better than the A5, measured in terms of the DMIPS per megahertz rating, scoring 1.68 against the competition's 1.57.</li> <li>At a frequency of 350 MHz, RISECREEK can meet the demands of defence and strategic equipment such as NAVIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite) and Internet of Things (IoT)electronics.</li> <li>What makes RISECREEK different is the open source nature of the designs.</li> </ul>
Project Shakti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shakti plan started in 2014 as an IIT-M initiative.</li> <li><b>Last year, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology funded a part of the project,</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Launch of India's second moon mission postponed

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The launch of India's second mission to the moon, Chandrayaan-2, may be delayed till January 2019, according to a top official.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ambitious mission was supposed to be launched in April, and was later fixed for October.</li> <li>The postponement comes in the wake of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facing quick setbacks.</li> </ul>
Previous setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earlier this year, the ISRO had launched GSAT-6A, a military communication satellite, but lost communication with it.</li> <li>ISRO also recalled the launch of GSAT-11 from Kourou, French Guiana, for additional technical checks.</li> <li>Last September, the PSLV- C39 mission, carrying the IRNSS-1H navigation satellite, failed after the heat shield refused to open and release the satellite.</li> </ul>
Chandrayaan-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is also ISRO's first mission to land on any celestial body.</li> <li><b>Chandrayaan-2 will be ISRO's first time attempt to land a rover, on the Moon.</b></li> <li>The rover, costing <b>nearly Rs. 800 crore</b> , will be made to land near the yet-unexplored south pole of the moon.</li> </ul>

## China tests hypersonic aircraft

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>China on Monday announced that it has successfully tested its <b>first hypersonic aircraft</b> which could carry nuclear warheads and penetrate any current generation anti-missile defence systems, seen as a breakthrough in developing weapons.</li> </ul>
More on news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Xingkong-2 or Starry Sky-2, was launched in a target range located in Northwest China on Friday, the state-run China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics.</li> <li>Launched by a multi-stage rocket, China's waverider was released in the air after about 10 minutes. It flew independently, made large-angle turning manoeuvres, and landed in the targeted area as planned.</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> The flight vehicle reached 30 kms in altitude at Mach 5.5-6.
<b>What is Hypersonic flight?</b>	<b>Hypersonic flight</b> is <u>flight</u> through the <u>atmosphere</u> below about 90km at <b>speeds above Mach 5, a speed where dissociation of air begins to become significant and high heat loads exist.</b>
<b>Developing and proposed aircraft of India</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Avatar (spacecraft) <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Technology Vehicle
<b>source</b>	The Hindu,wikipedia

## Scrub typhus is key encephalitis cause in eastern U.P.: study

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three years of data from Gorakhpur’s Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College has confirmed that the majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients admitted to the hospital between August and October each year have scrub typhus.</li> </ul>																										
<b>More in news</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; background-color: #f9f9f9;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spike in scrub typhus</b> Majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients hospitalised between August and October in the last three years had scrub-typhus</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>% of patients tested positive for scrub typhus in 2017</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>% of patients tested positive</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>JAN.</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>FEB.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>MAR.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>APR.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>MAY</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>JUNE</td><td>35</td></tr> <tr><td>JULY</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>AUG.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>SEP.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>OCT.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>NOV.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>DEC.</td><td>20</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Scrub typhus is an acute illness caused by a bacterium <i>Orientia Tsutsugamushi</i>, which is transmitted by the bite of an infected mite larva present in the soil.</b></p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scrub typhus can be treated easily if detected early.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first indication of scrub typhus’ role came during a 2014 study at BRD by researchers from Karnataka’s Manipal Centre for Viral Research. But there was much scepticism about this hypothesis then.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mites carried <i>Orientia tsutsugumashi</i>, the bacterium which causes scrub typhus.</li> </ul>	Month	% of patients tested positive	JAN.	15	FEB.	10	MAR.	10	APR.	10	MAY	10	JUNE	35	JULY	50	AUG.	55	SEP.	55	OCT.	55	NOV.	55	DEC.	20
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<b>Scrub typhus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scrub typhus, endemic in Asia-Pacific, is transmitted by the bite of chiggers (mite larvae).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fever (often accompanied by an eschar at the bite site), chills, severe headache, and generalized lymphadenopathy start suddenly; a rash develops and spreads.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Treat with doxycycline, which results in rapid improvement even in severe cases.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scrub typhus is a mite-borne disease <b>caused by <i>Orientia tsutsugamushi</i> (formerly <i>Rickettsia tsutsugamushi</i>).</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Symptoms</b> are fever, a primary lesion, a macular rash, and lymphadenopathy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Treatment-</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Doxycycline-Primary treatment is doxycycline</b></li> <li><b>Chloramphenicol</b></li> <li><b>learing brush and spraying infested areas with residual insecticides eliminate or decrease mite populations.</b></li> <li><b>Insect repellents (eg, diethyltoluamide [DEET]) should be used when exposure is likely.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>																										

Source	The Hindu, <a href="http://msdmanuals.com">msdmanuals.com</a>
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## Indian telescope spots distant radio galaxy

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Astronomers have used an Indian telescope to discover the most distant radio galaxy ever known, located at a distance of 12 billion light-years.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The galaxy, from a time when the universe was only 7% of its current age was found using the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> GMRT is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45-metre diameter. It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The distance to this galaxy was determined using the Gemini North telescope in Hawaii and the Large Binocular Telescope in Arizona.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The galaxy is perceived as it looked when the universe was only a billion years old.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bright radio galaxies harbour supermassive black holes.</li> </ul>
What are Radio galaxies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe. They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre that actively accretes gas and dust from its surroundings.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This activity initiates the launch of high-energy jet streams, which are capable of accelerating charged particles around the supermassive black hole to almost the speed of light.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The discovery of such galaxies at extremely large distances is important for our understanding of the formation and evolution of galaxies.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Centre launches portal for scientific research, funding

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union science ministry's communication wing, Vigyan Prasar, has launched the India Science Technology and Innovation portal that can help with queries like How does a budding math enthusiast figure out career prospects for pursuing mathematics in India? Which individual professors are blazing new trails in, say, climate change research here?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Currently the portal can be queried for information about the organisations carrying out research, those funding them, international collaborations, the scientists involved in the research, the states in which they are being carried out, their achievements and impact.</li> </ul>
Prime focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Major thrust of the portal is to reach out to students, researchers, scholars, scientists both from India and abroad, so that they can choose from the mine of fellowships, scholarships and funding and startup opportunities that India puts on their plate.</li> </ul> <p>The portal follows a launch this week of India Science (<a href="http://indiascience.in">indiascience.in</a>), an Internet-based science channel, to showcase the developments in <u>science and technology</u> in India.</p>
More in news	<p>The portal follows a launch this week of India Science (<a href="http://indiascience.in">indiascience.in</a>), an Internet-based science channel, to showcase the developments in <u>science and technology</u> in India.</p> <p>Both the portal and the channel are part of a push by the Science Ministry to improve its public outreach. By next year, the Ministry hopes to offer science programmes on Doordarshan and eventually launch a dedicated science channel. According to a roadmap prepared by the Union government, the Science Ministry proposes to spend ₹15 crore over five years to cover costs of portal development and updates.</p>
Source	The Hindu

## Genetic 'barcodes' reveal three frogs unreported in India

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Each species can be recognised by its unique genetic 'barcode' and using this method, a team of scientists has identified three frog species not recorded in India before.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The researchers also found that the ornate narrow-mouthed frog — thought to be widely-distributed in Asia — is seen only in peninsular India and Sri Lanka.</li> <li>□ It was the complex taxonomy of the ornate narrow-mouthed frog — it was first described in 1841 — that prompted the team to study it further.</li> <li>□ They collected 62 of these frogs across India and analysed their genetic data using DNA barcoding. They compared this with available genetic data from across south Asia.</li> <li>□ <b>Complex taxonomy- Unravelling complex taxonomy, the team found that India is home to not just the ornate narrow-mouthed frog but also the Nilphamari, Mymensingh and Mukhlesur's narrow-mouthed frogs (seen in other south Asian countries).</b></li> <li>□ The study reveals that the ornate narrow-mouthed frog is present only in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.</li> <li>□ However, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) currently classifies the species as "<b>Least Concern</b>" based on the outdated information that it is widespread.</li> <li>□ <b>Status review-</b> The study would "enable IUCN to review the conservation status of this group of frogs across South Asia at the earliest opportunity.</li> <li>□ These findings also increase India's frog species tally to 400.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Nano therapy for cancer cure in pipeline

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ New cancer therapy using nanoparticles to deliver a combination therapy direct to cancer cells could be on the horizon, scientists say.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The therapy, which has been shown to make breast cancer and prostate cancer tumours more sensitive to chemotherapy, is now close to entering clinical trials, said researchers from the University of East Anglia in the U.K.</li> <li>□ A study, published in the journal <i>Scientific Reports</i>, confirmed that it can be mass-produced, making it a viable treatment if proved effective in human trials.</li> <li>□ <b>The technology is the first of its kind to use nanoparticles to deliver two drugs in combination to target cancer cells.</b></li> <li>□ The drugs, already approved for clinical use, are an anti-cancer drug called docetaxel, and fingolimod, which is used to treat multiple sclerosis.</li> <li>□ We have found a way to use it that solves the toxicity problem, enabling these two drugs to be used in a highly targeted and powerful combination.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## ISRO set to launch its TV channel

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will have an <b>year-long Vikram Sarabhai centenary celebration starting in August 2019</b> to honour the visionary scientist and its legendary founding father.</li> <li>□ <b>It plans to roll out a dedicated ISRO TV channel showcasing space applications, developments and science issues, targeting young viewers and people in remote areas in their language.</b></li> </ul>
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	 <p><b>Sky is the limit</b> ISRO has identified as many as 50 missions in the next three years. A lowdown of missions in the next nine months:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>SEPTEMBER 2018:</b> NovoSAR-S &amp; SSTL-S1 (on PSLV-C42 rocket)</td> <td><b>DECEMBER 2018:</b> EMISAT (PSLV-C44), GSAT-31 (by Arianespace)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>OCTOBER 2018:</b> HYSIS + 30 small foreign satellites (PSLV-C43)</td> <td><b>JAN.-MARCH 2019:</b> Chandrayaan-2 (GSLV-Mk3)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>NOVEMBER 2018:</b> GSAT-11 (launch by Arianespace), GSAT-7A (GSLV-F11)</td> <td><b>JAN. 2019:</b> RISAT-2B (PSLV-C45)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><b>MAY 2019:</b> GSAT-30 (by Arianespace)</td> </tr> </table> <p><b>ALSO IN 2019:</b> Solar mission Aditya-L1 (PSLV) Navigation satellite IRNSS-1J (PSLV) Fixed or Geostationary Earth Imager GISAT (GSLV)</p> <p>Loaded years ahead: ISRO Chairman Dr. K. Sivan gestures during the unveiling of a bust of Vikram Sarabhai, in Bengaluru on Sunday. • PTI</p>	<b>SEPTEMBER 2018:</b> NovoSAR-S & SSTL-S1 (on PSLV-C42 rocket)	<b>DECEMBER 2018:</b> EMISAT (PSLV-C44), GSAT-31 (by Arianespace)	<b>OCTOBER 2018:</b> HYSIS + 30 small foreign satellites (PSLV-C43)	<b>JAN.-MARCH 2019:</b> Chandrayaan-2 (GSLV-Mk3)	<b>NOVEMBER 2018:</b> GSAT-11 (launch by Arianespace), GSAT-7A (GSLV-F11)	<b>JAN. 2019:</b> RISAT-2B (PSLV-C45)		<b>MAY 2019:</b> GSAT-30 (by Arianespace)
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	<b>MAY 2019:</b> GSAT-30 (by Arianespace)								
<p><b>Series of events</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sarabhai, the architect of the Indian <b>space programme</b>, the first ISRO chief and renowned cosmic ray scientist, was born on August 12, 1919.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>ISRO's tributes to Sarabhai start with naming the first Indian moon landing spacecraft of the Chandrayaan-2 mission 'Vikram'.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The mission is planned for early 2019.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A chair each at Sarabhai's two alma maters, Cambridge University and Gujarat University, as also at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), would be set up, apart from giving awards, scholarships and fellowships in the country and abroad.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 100 lectures by science luminaries would be held across the country and in association with the International Astronautical Federation, the global space networking body. Space clubs, knowledge centres and talk shows are also among the plans.</li> </ul>								
<p><b>Public satellite launches</b></p>	<p>As it strengthens its public outreach, ISRO will shortly start allowing the public to watch satellite launches from its Sriharikota launch centre.</p>								
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>								

### Small launcher will have a big impact

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· A small Indian satellite launch vehicle that was made in three days by a handful of people at about 10% of current costs looks set to revolutionise the global satellite launch industry.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SSLV (small satellite launch vehicle)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>The SSLV (small satellite launch vehicle)</b> is being developed at a furious pace at ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SSLV will be an on-demand rocket for small satellites weighing about 500-700 kg.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>It will be autonomous and highly intelligent, versatile and capable of adapting to different launch situations and requirements.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Its first test launch is planned for mid-2019.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Once proven, the SSLV's production would be offered to industry through Antrix Corporation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SSLV is said to be Dr. Sivan's dream concept for a quick-response space vehicle, and the project was initiated when he was the Director of the VSSC until January this year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

### Scientists to test land for LIGO

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Environment Ministry has allowed scientists to test the suitability of land in Maharashtra's Hingoli district to host the India wing of the ambitious Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO) project.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This is a key step to establishing the one-of-its-kind astronomical observatory.</li> </ul>
<b>Project details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The project involves constructing a network of L-shaped arms, each four kilometres long, which can detect even the faintest ripples from cosmic explosions millions of light years away.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The discovery of gravitational waves earned three U.S. scientists the Nobel for physics in 2017.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The scientists were closely involved with LIGO.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hosting such a detector in India, scientists have said, will improve the odds of detecting more such phenomena.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However the construction of such a large, sensitive device — there are only three of its kind in the world — requires an extremely flat surface.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The LIGO-India consortium, made up of physicists from several institutes, had submitted a proposal to “prospect” 121 hectares of forest land in Dudhala village, Hingoli.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Typically, mining companies prospect a region by sinking boreholes to get a sense of the geology of the site and ascertain availability of required minerals and metals.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the case of the LIGO project, it is to check if the land can be made perfectly level at a reasonable cost.</li> </ul>
<b>Network of detectors across world</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The LIGO project operates three gravitational-wave (GW) detectors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two are at Hanford in the State of Washington, north-western USA, and one is at Livingston in Louisiana, south-eastern USA.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Currently these observatories are being upgraded to their advanced configurations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The proposed LIGO-India project aims to move one Advanced LIGO detector from Hanford to India.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The LIGO-India project is an international collaboration between the LIGO Laboratory and three lead institutions in the LIGO-India consortium: Institute of Plasma Research, Gandhinagar; IUCAA, Pune; and Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology, Indore.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The LIGO lab would provide the complete design and all the key detector components.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indian scientists would provide the infrastructure to install the detector and it would be operated jointly by LIGO-India and the LIGO-Lab.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The project, piloted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST), reportedly costs ₹1,200 crore and is expected to be ready by 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## IISc duo's claim of ambient superconductivity may have support in theory

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In July, a two member team of chemists, Anshu Pandey and Devesh Kumar Thapa, posted a preprint on the arXiv server claiming to have observed superconductivity at ambient temperature and pressure in samples in their lab in the Solid State and Structural Chemistry Unit at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They had studied materials with silver nanoparticles embedded in a gold matrix and found that their samples showed the signs of becoming a superconductor on cooling below 236 K (-37 degrees Celsius).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Further, when they altered the mole fraction of gold in the samples, they could bring up the critical temperature T<sub>c</sub> (the temperature at which the transition to superconductivity happens) up to room temperature.</li> </ul>
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<b>Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They found the two effects that are the considered the signatures of superconductivity — resistance dropping close to zero below the critical temperature and the expulsion of magnetic flux from within the material — which often shows up as magnetic levitation at the superconducting temperature.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The possible applications of such a discovery are unimaginably vast — a material that conducts electricity without resistance, or loss of power at room temperature.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Magnetic levitation has also been discussed in the context of mag-lev trains etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Drones to space Internet, IISc incubates start-ups

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Better known for his former role as the programme director and chief designer of India’s indigenous light combat aircraft (LCA), 75-year-old Kota Harinarayana is the founder-chairman of General Aeronautics, an Indian Institute of Science (IISc) incubated start-up.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The start-up designs and makes unmanned aerial vehicles or drones focused on security and civilian applications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One application is to use these drones to transport organs faster than ambulances for organ transplant procedures to save lives.</li> </ul>
<b>Start-up stories</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The road transport takes a long time as a result of which quite often when the organ reaches to the recipient, it is in unusable condition.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Most of the start-ups are based on moonshot ideas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These include drones to transport organs, satellites that provide Internet connectivity in rural areas and devices that help doctors to detect and diagnose diseases like cancer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The company is also working with IISc to develop ‘<b>Life Box</b>’ a device which can keep the heart harvested from the donor in good condition and increase its preservation time by maintaining various parameters such as temperature.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The box would be transported to the recipient for transplant using a drone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>SpaceX challenger- Astrome, a space technology company which could potentially compete globally with tech entrepreneur Elon Musk’s SpaceX. Astrome’s goal too is to solve the problem of connectivity by beaming high bandwidth Internet from space.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Astrome is developing a technology that it says would cut the cost of Internet access through satellites by 12 times.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It plans to launch 200 satellites in the next few years to low-earth-orbit to beam reliable Internet to people living in small towns and villages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The firm says its Internet would be available in all developing countries and along major sea and air routes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reliable Internet connectivity, says Astrome, has the potential to bridge the rural-urban economic divide and revolutionise healthcare and education.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Another <b>start-up SIAMAF Healthcare</b> has built a technology for the staging and treatment of breast cancer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Its first product is <b>MafPro</b>, an ultrasensitive hand-held magnetic probe which offers “unprecedented quality and value of care benefits” to patients, doctors and hospital administrators, according to the company.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It can tell how far cancer has spread and that provides enough information to the doctor to make a proper diagnosis.</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Most of these ventures have received grants and funds from government-run organisations such as Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) and the State government’s Department of Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science &amp; Technology and niche investors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However, at a time when e-commerce companies are raising billions of dollars, many of the founders said “scaling up” is a challenge as most of big mainstream venture capital investors shy away from investing in deep science start-ups.</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> The mindset of the investors has to change... [and] not only focus on e-commerce but also on intellectual property and technology-led companies
Source	The Hindu

### Antidepressants may counter effects of brain ageing: study

Why is it in news?	A commonly used antidepressant medication Prozac can counter some of the effects of brain ageing, such as sensory and cognitive decline, an MIT study suggests.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fresh evidence that the decline in the capacity of brain cells to change — called ‘plasticity’ — rather than a decline in total cell number, may underlie some of the sensory and cognitive declines associated with normal brain ageing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scientists at Massachusetts Institute of Technology showed that they could restore a significant degree of lost plasticity to the cells by treating mice with the commonly used antidepressant medication fluoxetine, also known as Prozac.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Despite common belief, loss of neurons due to cell death is quite limited during normal ageing and unlikely to account for age-related functional impairments.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Structural alterations in neuronal morphology and synaptic connections are features most consistently correlated with brain age, and may be considered as the potential physical basis for the age-related decline.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Researchers focused on the ageing of inhibitory interneurons which is less well-understood than that of excitatory neurons, but potentially more crucial to plasticity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plasticity, in turn, is key to enabling learning and memory and in maintaining sensory acuity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the study, while they focused on the visual cortex, the plasticity they measured is believed to be important elsewhere in the brain as well.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

### ISRO awaits advanced materials

Why is it in news?	<b>A national effort is needed to develop and produce advanced and exotic materials to drive the future space programme, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman K. Sivan has said.</b>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Along with high propulsion systems for its launch vehicles, the ISRO is pursuing materials that have extraordinary properties, such as aluminium and beryllium alloys and carbon nanotubes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These are needed for the upcoming high-profile national missions such as the Human Space Programme (HSP), the Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV), re-entering crew capsules, fuel-saving scramjet missions and the distant single-stage launchers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Locally made materials will also help to cut imports and also lower mission costs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In recent years, ISRO has indigenised a large number of materials that are hard to get. This has reduced the import content from around 32% to 8% now.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However, development of advanced materials such as carbon composites and those for electronics is the immediate need of the space programme. A national effort is required in these two areas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lab-level R&amp;D can produce small quantities of special materials.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## ISRO telemedicine nodes for soldiers in high-altitude areas

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	In a major effort to improve emergency medical support to soldiers posted in high-altitude areas, especially Siachen, the Integrated Defence Staff of the Defence Ministry and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) signed a memorandum of understanding on Friday to set up telemedicine nodes in critical places across the country.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ISRO will establish 53 more nodes in the first phase over and above the existing 20, in various establishments of the Army, Navy and Air Force across the country.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As part of this, in addition to a functioning node on the Siachen glacier, four more nodes are being established to enable medical consultation between soldiers deployed on the glacier and medical echelons in the rear.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> During winter months, many of the remote posts are cut off for several months because of adverse terrain and extreme weather, making emergency evacuation near impossible.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Communication through satellite-enabled telemedicine nodes will be a paradigm shift in the delivery of lifesaving health care till the weather clears up and movement is possible.</li> </ul> <p>This joint initiative by ISRO and the <u>Armed Forces</u> Medical Services will transform the reach of telemedicine to soldiers, airmen and sailors in remote and isolated posts.</p>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Green process cuts water use, pollution in textile industry

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	A completely green method developed by researchers from the University of Calicut, Kerala, can potentially do away with using water for sizing and desizing cotton and polyester yarn. Textile industry is highly water-intensive and also one of the biggest water polluters.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> By using liquid and supercritical carbon dioxide instead of water, and sucrose octaacetate in place of starch, has made the sizing and desizing process eco-friendly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Before the yarn is woven into fabric, it is coated with sizing agents to strengthen the yarn (to decrease breakages on the loom) and protect it from damage and reduce friction. Sizing also removes or smoothens the projecting microfibrils that might interfere with the weaving process.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Traditionally, starch mixed in water is used for the sizing process, and this requires plenty of water. The used water is disposed of, leading to water pollution.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The researchers used liquid carbon dioxide as solvent and tested three agents that easily dissolve in carbon dioxide for sizing both cotton and polyester yarn.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The yarn after sizing has to be dried when water is used, making the entire process energy-intensive. But no drying is needed when liquid carbon dioxide is used as it is an inherently dry process.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When the pressure of carbon dioxide is reduced to gas phase pressure, the carbon dioxide changes its state from a liquid to gas leaving the yarn dry.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Once the weaving is completed, the sizing agent has to be completely removed from the yarn as it might resist dyes and chemicals commonly used in textile processing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the conventional desizing process, large volume of water is used for desizing or washing the fabric to remove the sizing agent from the yarn, which generates lots of waste water.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instead of water, the researchers used supercritical carbon dioxide for desizing. "While both liquid and supercritical carbon dioxide have lower viscosity and surface tension compared with water, the molecular diffusion of supercritical carbon dioxide is 10 times more than liquid carbon dioxide</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Close watch on climate change

<p><b>Why is it in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is considering a ₹79-crore proposal to study the impact of climate change on Kerala.</li> <li>❑ The project has been proposed by the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (NISCAIR) under the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR).</li> </ul>
<p><b>More in news</b></p>	<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 10px; border: 1px solid #ccc;"> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>Studying climate change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nodal institute to develop climate change adaptation programmes for islands and coastal ecosystems</li> <li>▪ To assess the dynamics of riverine discharge and saline water incursion</li> <li>▪ To demarcate vulnerable regions; develop a framework and decision support tool to assess climate change impact on livelihood and developmental processes</li> </ul> <p style="margin: 0;">• Over 100 scientists from nearly 28 research agencies and institutes to be part of the initiative</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The project involves experts from various scientific institutions across the country. It consists of 25 work packages and covers all the aspects of climate change adaptations for Kerala.</li> <li>❑ The ambitious project, spread over a period of three years, will assess the impact of climate change on agriculture (including plantation crops and spices); fisheries (marine and inland); industries; health; transport — vehicular and inland water transports; tourism; biodiversity; forestry; and landslips.</li> <li>❑ It assumes significance in the wake of devastating floods that ravaged many parts of the State as the research initiative will specifically assess the dynamics of riverine discharge and saline water incursion under the climate change scenario.</li> <li>❑ The experts will study the spatial and temporal changes in water resources (surface and groundwater — quantity and quality).</li> <li>❑ CSIR-NISCAIR was the nodal institute to develop climate change adaptation programmes for islands and coastal ecosystems as part of the 12th Five Year Plan programme approved by the CSIR.</li> <li>❑ The Kerala project will analyse the trends in climatic elements, their spatial pattern and its relationship with extreme events such as El Nino, cyclones etc.</li> <li>❑ It is part of the vulnerability assessment and development of adaptation strategies for climate change impact with special reference to coasts and island ecosystems of India project launched by CSIR-NISCAIR in 2015.</li> <li>❑ Researchers associated with the project will assess the monsoonal variations and its impact, besides looking at the climate change scenario on the islets of Kerala.</li> <li>❑ <b>Framework tool-</b> The objective of the project was to develop a framework and decision support tool to assess the climate change impact on livelihood and developmental processes.</li> <li>❑ Researchers will study the atmospheric chemistry related to climate change and monsoonal variations from Kerala's perspective and develop large-scale forecasting and modelling of the various parameters using high-power computer simulation tools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

## Manned space mission before 75th I-Day: ISRO chief

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	If everything goes according to plan, in 40 months, three Indians will be launched into space by an Indian rocket. This is the aim of India's ambitious manned spaceflight mission, Gaganyaan, the contours of which were outlined by Dr. K. Sivan, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Tuesday.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ISRO began work on the manned mission in 2004 and some of these technologies have been demonstrated successfully through various tests — Space Capsule Recovery Experiment, Crew module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment and Pad Abort Test.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the Independence Day address from the Red Fort, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that an Indian will go to space by 2022 "with the tricolour in his hand."</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ISRO will use its GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle, which has the necessary payload capability to launch.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Two unmanned missions will be undertaken prior to sending humans on the first manned flight within 30 months and manned mission in 40 months.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The mission will aim to send a three-person crew to space for a period of 5-7 days. The spacecraft will be placed in a low earth orbit of 300-400km.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The total programme is expected to cost less than ₹10,000 crore and will result in significant spinoffs in multiple dimensions, including technology spinoffs in the social sector.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A crew module, along with the service module, together called the orbital module weighing seven tonnes, will be mounted atop the GSLV launch vehicle.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the return phase, at 120 km above earth, the crew module will separate from the service module and head towards earth in a controlled manner.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It will take 36 minutes to reach the earth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The project will also result in employment for 15,000 people most of it in the private sector.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To accelerate the programme, ISRO is considering seeking collaborations with space agencies from friendly countries with advanced space programmes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The programme once launched, will make India the fourth nation in the world to have a manned space mission. So far only the U.S., Russia and China have launched human space flight missions.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Google to go local with technology, products

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	Google on Tuesday said it is working to bring technology and product experiences which are locally relevant to users in India in vernacular languages.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The majority of Internet users today are Indian language users, a number expected to reach 500 million-plus in the next two years. [As much as] 95% of video consumption is in vernacular languages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With an aim to expand the reach of Indian content, the technology giant said it is working with the more than one lakh offline Indian language publishers on 'Project Navlekha', allowing them to start their website and publish on a branded domain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Google Search feed will now also display users' topics of interest and news, from both English and Hindi sources.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Google Station is partnering with Andhra Pradesh State FiberNet Limited to bring free public Wi-Fi to more than 12,000 villages, towns and cities in Andhra Pradesh.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This will provide high-quality Internet access to potentially 10 million people.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Bees get hooked on harmful pesticide

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	Bumblebees acquire a taste for food laced with a pesticide known to harm them, according to a study suggesting the chemicals pose an even greater threat to pollinators than previously thought.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> In experiments, researchers showed that bees initially put off by sugar water containing neonicotinoids — the most widely-used class of insecticides worldwide — soon started seeking them out to the exclusion of untainted food.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Neonicotinoids, earlier research has shown, disrupt the ability of bees to reproduce and lower their resistance to disease.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Even when the position of their feeders was switched, the pollinators made a beeline for the one laced with insecticide.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Neonicotinoids target nerve receptors in insects.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> The United Nations warned last year that 40% of invertebrate pollinators risk global extinction.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



The Unique Academy

## 10

## Social Issues

## WHO thumbs up for Swachh Bharat's rural component

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ According to World Health Organisation (WHO) report, released on 3 August 2018, It is estimated that the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) will result in preventing more than three lakh deaths due to diarrhoea and protein-energy malnutrition between 2014-October 2019.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The WHO study showed that before the initiation of SBM-G, unsafe sanitation caused 199 million cases of diarrhoea annually and that by 2019, the initiative aims to achieve 100% sanitation coverage.</li> <li>□ The report said, India's rural sanitation coverage escalated to 89.07% till August 2.</li> <li>□ The report notes that under the SBM-G, 19 States and Union Territories were declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) and 7.9 crore toilets were built, while 421 districts were declared ODF.</li> <li>□ Also, more than 4.9 lakh villages in the country were declared ODF.</li> <li>□ The report further estimated that 14 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) can be avoided between 2014 and 2019.</li> <li>□ WHO estimation of health impacts is based on comparative risk assessment (CRA) methods.</li> </ul>
<b>Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ SBM was launched in October 2014 to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation.</li> <li>□ The mission aims to achieve Swachh Bharat or make India clean by 2019, as a fitting tribute to 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.</li> <li>□ The SBM consists of two sub-missions Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), implemented in rural areas, and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), implemented in urban areas.</li> <li>□ SBM-G seeks to eliminate open defecation in rural areas by improving access to sanitation by ensuring use of toilets, besides their construction.</li> <li>□ It motivates communities and Panchayati Raj institutions to adopt sustainable sanitation practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.

## Scrub typhus is key encephalitis cause in eastern U.P

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The data collected over 3 years from Gorakhpur's Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College has confirmed that the majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients admitted to the hospital between August and October each year have scrub typhus.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Scrub typhus?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Scrub typhus is a miteborne bacterial disease caused by <i>Orientia tsutsugamushi</i>.</li> <li>□ Clinical features generally include fever, headache, and myalgia, with or without eschar/rash.</li> <li>□ In severe forms, pneumonia, myocarditis, azotemia, shock, gastrointestinal bleed, and meningoenephalitis are known to occur.</li> <li>□ Relative unawareness of presentation of scrub typhus makes a prompt diagnosis difficult, resulting in significant morbidity and mortality.</li> <li>□ In India context, scrub typhus was first reported in Assam during World War II (1944–1945) across the India–Myanmar border .</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The northeastern region of India then experienced decades without the disease until it reemerged in 2010 .</li> <li>□ Assam, a northeastern state in India, is recognized as an endemic zone for acute encephalitis syndrome (AES), especially that caused by Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV).</li> </ul> <p><b>Acute encephalitis Syndrome (AES) :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Acute encephalitis syndrome (AES) is characterized by an acute onset of fever and clinical neurological manifestation that includes mental confusion, disorientation, delirium, or coma.</li> <li>□ Viruses have been mainly attributed to be the cause of AES in India although other sources such as bacteria, fungus, parasites, spirochetes, chemical, and toxins have been reported over the past few decades.</li> <li>□ Apart from viral encephalitis, severe form of leptospirosis and toxoplasmosis can cause AES.</li> <li>□ The causative agent of AES varies with season and geographical location, and predominantly affects population below 15 years</li> <li>□ The history of AES in India has paralleled with that of the Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) since the first report in 1955 from Vellore, Tamil Nadu.</li> </ul>																										
<p><b>More on news</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The first indication of scrub typhus' role came during a 2014 study at BRD by researchers from Karnataka's Manipal Centre for Viral Research. But there was much scepticism about this hypothesis then.</li> <li>□ In the following years, however, other researchers reported similar findings.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spike in scrub typhus</b> Majority of Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) patients hospitalised between August and October in the last three years had scrub-typhus</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <caption>% of patients tested positive for scrub typhus in 2017</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Percentage (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>JAN.</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>FEB.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>MAR.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>APR.</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>MAY</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>JUNE</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>JULY</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr><td>AUG.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>SEP.</td><td>50</td></tr> <tr><td>OCT.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>NOV.</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>DEC.</td><td>20</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>■ Scrub typhus is an acute illness caused by a bacterium <i>Orientia Tsutsugamushi</i>, which is transmitted by the bite of an infected mite larva present in the soil</small></p> <p><small>— % of patients tested positive for scrub typhus in 2017</small></p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ In 2015, a team led by the director of Chennai's National Institute of Epidemiology, found that out of 370 AES patients tested during September-October, 63% had antibodies to scrub typhus.</li> <li>□ The findings were reported in the <i>Journal of Infection</i>. In 2016, out of 407 AES patients during the same period, 65% had the illness.</li> <li>□ Also, when all AES patients were given azithromycin, a treatment for scrub typhus, 35% of non-scrub-typhus patients died, while only 15% of scrub patients died, indicating that azithromycin was effective.</li> <li>□ These findings were published in the <i>Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal</i> in May this year.</li> <li>□ Finally, in 2017, over 50% of patients admitted to BRD in August-September were positive for scrub typhus, according to data shared by the Indian Council of Medical Research.</li> </ul>	Month	Percentage (%)	JAN.	15	FEB.	10	MAR.	10	APR.	10	MAY	10	JUNE	30	JULY	45	AUG.	55	SEP.	50	OCT.	55	NOV.	55	DEC.	20
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<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, NCBI</p>																										

## Most babies not breastfed in their first hour

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the new report made public, as many as 6 out of 10 babies born in the country are not able to begin breastfeeding within one hour of birth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reasons are lack of supportive work environment, inadequate skills of health care providers as well as caesarean deliveries.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance of First milk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mother's breast milk within one hour of birth ensures that the infant receives the colostrum or first milk, which is rich in protective factors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The WHO and UNICEF also recommend exclusive breastfeeding for infants up to the age of six months and thereafter complementary foods with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The 5th Report of Assessment of India's Policy and Programmes on Breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding in 2018 also gives India a score of 45 out of 100 on 10 parameters under the category of policy and programmes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> However, India performs better in terms of infant and young child feeding practices scoring 34 out of 50 on five parameters.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour of birth is 41.5%, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is 54.9%, inclusion of complementary feeding between 6-8 months is 42.7%.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adequate complementary feeding and minimum acceptable diet among 6-23 months children is as low as 9.6%, the report cites data from NFHS-4.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India has made some progress over the years and between National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-3 and NFHS-4, early initiation of breastfeeding has improved from 23.4% to 41.5% children breastfed within one hour of birth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This hasn't kept pace with the stark increase in institutional deliveries which more than doubled during the same period, from 38.7 % to 78.9%.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Unnat Bharat Programme 2.0

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Government has recently launched Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0, which is the phase-2 of scheme.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It covers 750 Higher Educational Institutes.</li> </ul>
<b>Unnat Bharat Abhiyan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unnat Bharat Abhiyan aims to link the Higher Education Institutions with villages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These institutions can contribute to the economic and social betterment of these village communities using their knowledge base.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions to help build the architecture of an Inclusive India.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It also aims to create a virtuous cycle between the society and an inclusive university system, with the latter providing knowledge base; practices for emerging livelihoods and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private sectors</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Currently 688 Institutions covering 33 States/UT's are participating under the scheme.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Objective of the scheme :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions in understanding rural realities;</li> <li>2. Identify and select existing innovative technologies, enable customization of technologies, or devise implementation methods for innovative solutions, as required by people; and</li> <li>3. To allow Higher Educational Institutions to contribute to devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government Programs.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	PIB.

## Panel to be formed to study the plight of children in jails

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court has ordered the appointment of a committee headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to look into issues of children of women prisoners.</li> </ul>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The bench had expressed concern about children who are in prison only because their mother is in prison.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It had also suggested the appointment of a committee to look into this issue in great depth with the assistance of psychologists, social scientists and experts in different fields so that some pragmatic policy is framed for looking after such children.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The order came after the Supreme Court's amicus curiae and advocate Gaurav Agarwal submitted a report showing that there were 18 jails exclusively for women.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Also, there are separate areas for women in other jails, but there is a huge lack of space for women inmates. He said these jails were not modelled to house women inmates, especially those with minor children staying with them.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The committee would also look into what reforms could be introduced within the prison walls.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court said the Centre should issue a notification on the setting up of the committee, highlighting the importance of prison reforms and the fundamental right to life and dignity of the prisoners.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court advised the Centre that criminals sentenced to imprisonment for six months or a year should be allocated social service duties rather than be sent to prison to further choke the already overflowing prisons.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 240 jails across the country are housing inmates 150% above their normal capacity.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.

## Curbing open urination is next step

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For the first time that the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) is officially including the elimination of open urination in its agenda.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Under new norms, cities and towns wanting to be declared ODF+ (Open Defecation Free Plus) must also be free of public urination and not just open defecation.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The rural division of SBM had previously said preventing public urination was not on their agenda.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Mission is focussed on infrastructure and regulatory changes, on the assumption that this will lead to behaviour change.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In cities, if toilets are available, accessible and clean, people will automatically use them rather than using the road.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The ODF+ protocols, released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, are the next step for the SBM-U and aim to ensure sustainability in sanitation outcomes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The original ODF protocol, issued in March 2016, said, "A city/ward is notified as ODF city/ward if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open."</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> So far, 2,741 cities have been certified as ODF, based mostly on third-party verification of toilet construction.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The new ODF+ protocol, issued last week, says that a city, ward or work circle could be declared ODF+ if, "at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well-maintained."</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Mission is also pushing forward in its drive to get public toilets listed on Google Maps.</li> <li>□ A search for “toilets near me” will now display the location of public toilets in over 700 cities, and allow users to rate and review them.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### SC stresses adverse impact of female genital mutilation

<b>Why in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra said the Constitution does not allow a person to cause injury to another.</li> <li>□ Female genital mutilation leaves permanent emotional and mental scars in a young girl, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed .</li> </ul>
<b>Concept</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Female genital mutilation (FGM)</b> comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.</li> <li>□ It is also known by other names including 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'.</li> </ul>
<b>The case</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Supreme Court hearing the case of practicing female genital mutilation of minor girls in the Dawoodi Bohra community, saying it violates the bodily "integrity" of a girl child.</li> <li>□ Earlier Chief Justice Misra had said such practices on children was an offence under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.</li> <li>□ Attorney General had urged the court to issue directions against the practice.</li> <li>□ Attorney General submitted that female genital mutilation is punished with seven years' imprisonment.</li> <li>□ However, the court also hearing an application for impleading filed by the Dawoodi Bohra Women's Association for Religious Freedom.</li> <li>□ Justice Chandrachud responded that the court has to test it in the light of constitutional morality.</li> <li>□ Just because something is “essential”, does not mean it is above constitutional morality, he said.</li> <li>□ However, senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, appearing for the group, had said “khafz/female circumcision as practised by the Dawoodi Bohra community is not female genital mutilation.”</li> <li>□ Singhvi said, It was an essential part of their religion and protected under the Constitution under article 25 and 26.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu.



## 11

## Environment

## Greenhouse gases surge to new highs

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Planet-warming greenhouse gases surged to new highs as abnormally hot temperatures swept the globe and ice melted at record levels in the Arctic last year due to climate change, a major U.S. report .</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A host of indicators show that the world is warming as the burning of fossil fuels builds heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere, said the annual State of the Climate for 2017 Report, issued by the American Meteorological Society and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.</li> </ul>
Greenhouse gas surge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Last year the top three most dangerous greenhouse gases released into Earth's atmosphere <b>carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide</b> reached new record highs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The annual global average carbon dioxide concentration at the Earth's surface climbed to 405 parts per million <b>the highest in the modern atmospheric measurement record and in ice core records dating back as far as 800,000 years</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The global growth rate of CO2 has nearly quadrupled since the early 1960s.</li> </ul>
Heat records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The record for hottest year in modern times was set in 2016 but 2017 was not far behind, with "<b>much-warmer-than-average conditions</b>" across most of the world.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Annual record high temperatures were observed in Argentina, Bulgaria, Spain and Uruguay, while Mexico "<b>broke its annual record for the fourth consecutive year.</b>" <b>Smashing more heat records, temperatures reached 110.1 degrees Fahrenheit (43.4 Celsius) on January 27 at Puerto Madryn, Argentina, "the highest temperature ever recorded so far south anywhere in the world."</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The world's highest temperature ever for May was observed on May 28 in Turbat, western Pakistan, with a high of 128.3 degrees Fahrenheit.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The 10 warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998, with the four warmest years occurring since 2014.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Last year marked either the second or third hottest since the mid 1800s, depending on which data is consulted.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In another alarming milestone, 2017 was also "<b>the warmest non-El Nino year in the instrumental record,</b>" referring to the absence of the occasional ocean warming trend that pushes temperatures higher than normal.</li> </ul>
Source	Phys.org

## Bandipur : Ministry 'overlooks' key issues

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) which has proposed to the State government <b>to lift the ban on night traffic through Bandipur</b> seems to have overlooked key issues brought to light in reports by the <b>National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)</b> .</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A report submitted to the NTCA pointed to the fact that before the introduction of the ban on night traffic through Bandipur <b>there were 23 accident deaths in the core zone between 2004 and 2009.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This declined to seven between 2010 and 2017 and all of them were on the stretch from Maddur to Moolehole gate leading to Wayanad during the daytime.</li> </ul>
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<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The NTCA which is part of the committee constituted by the Supreme Court to look into the night traffic ban.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It stated in its report that wild animals such as tigers, elephants, gaurs, and other animals had behaviourally <b>adjusted to the restricted traffic at night time and this was beneficial to the long-term conservation of these species.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> But the MoRTH has not taken note of it.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The claims that Kerala was dependent on Karnataka for vegetables and fruits was countered by pointing out that the APMC markets close at 5 p.m. and vehicles carrying perishable commodities had time till 9 p.m. to pass through Bandipur.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It was also pointed out that elephant movement during daytime itself was high on NH 766 and causing disturbance during night would only aggravate conflict situations.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Indian Star Tortoises

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 1,125 endangered Indian Star Tortoises which were meant to be smuggled to Bangladesh were seized</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Divisional Forest Officer of Vizag certified that the species were <b>Indian Star Tortoises (<i>Geochelone elegans</i>).</b></li> </ul>
<b>Listed 'Vulnerable'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indian Star Tortoises is categorised as <b>'Vulnerable'</b> in the <b>red list of endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)</b> the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The species are also listed in the <b>Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and prohibited from export under the Foreign Trade Policy.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The species are <b>liable for confiscation under the Customs Act, 1962.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## To help clean the Ganga, visit an ATM

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The cleaning of the Ganga is not only an environmental imperative but also an issue weighted by public sentiment and national prestige.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a bid to make it easier for the public to participate in the efforts <b>the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is talking to the State Bank of India (SBI) to make it possible to donate to the Clean Ganga Fund (CGF) from ATMs.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A major aspect of the CGF is that it isn't about collecting a lot of money but about ensuring that people from all walks of life are involved in the task of cleaning the river</li> </ul>
<b>Separate corpus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While the NMCG an affiliate of the Union Water Resources Ministry is executing the government's Rs. 20,000-crore commitment to clean the Ganga</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The CGF is a separate corpus made up of donations from corporates and individuals.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At present, it has Rs. 250 crore in its kitty, which is being managed by the NMCG.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Mission already has an agreement with Yes Bank, under which its ATMs display messages on keeping the river clean.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Since Ganga rejuvenation projects have been notified as Corporate Social Responsibility activities, donations to the CGF qualify for income tax exemption.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A web page on CSR activities lists projects such as ghat/crematoria construction and development and cleaning of ghats and drains through bio-remediation, river surface cleaning, solid waste disposal and afforestation.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As of now, about 90% of the CGF comes from State and Central government public sector units, according to information from the Lok Sabha.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ About Rs. 250 crore was collected as of July, and projects worth Rs. 225 crore sanctioned.</li> <li>□ The Shipping Corporation of India, Indorama Corporation, Industrial Bank, Yes Bank, the Hinduja Group, Arcelor Mittal, Bajaj Electricals, Amer Maritime, HCL, and Reliance Industries have either shown interest in or undertaken projects,</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Indians will live longer if pollution is under check'

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ More than 660 million Indians live in areas that exceed the country's standard for what is considered safe exposure to fine particulate pollution (PM 2.5).</li> <li>□ To help improve India's air quality, researchers from the University of Chicago and Harvard Kennedy School have laid out five key evidence-based policy recommendations in a new report, released, titled '<b>A Roadmap Towards Cleaning India's Air</b>'.</li> <li>□ The group's recommendations include improving emissions monitoring by better aligning incentives of auditors, providing regulators with real-time data on polluters' emissions, applying monetary charges for excess emissions, providing the public with information about polluters, and using markets to reduce abatement costs and pollution.</li> <li>□ If India were to achieve its own air quality standards, life expectancy would increase by more than one year on an average, says the 16-page report.</li> <li>□ This number would increase to four years if India were to meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO) norms.</li> <li>□ Air pollution is causing hundreds of millions of people in India to lead shorter and sicker lives</li> <li>□ EPIC-India researchers have developed the air quality life index (AQLI), a metric that provides a means to predict the overall reduction in life expectancy caused by living in places with high levels of air pollution.</li> </ul>
No easy solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ While the economic costs of pollution are high, and there is no easy solution, we remain optimistic because of the incredible innovations currently being experimented with throughout India.</li> <li>□ Some of the greatest gains would be seen in big cities such as Delhi.</li> <li>□ There, people would live six years longer if air quality met the national standards.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Coral reefs could survive global warming, says study

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ There may be hope for marine reefs to survive modern-day global warming, say scientists who have found that coral-algal partnerships have endured numerous climate change events since the age of dinosaurs.</li> <li>□ The relationship between corals and the mutualistic micro-algae that enable them to build reefs is considerably older and more diverse than previously assumed"</li> <li>□ Past estimates placed the initiation of these symbiotic relationships at 50 to 65 million years ago</li> <li>□ Their research indicates that modern corals and their algal partners have been entwined with each other for much longer — since the time of the dinosaurs, approximately 160 million years ago</li> <li>□ They have faced severe episodes of environmental change, but have managed to bounce back.</li> <li>□ The micro-algae, commonly called zooxanthellae, lives inside the cells of corals, allowing them to acquire energy from sunlight and to build the massive, economically valuable reef formations upon which countless marine organisms rely for habitat.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The fossil record shows that today's reef-building corals exploded in diversity around 160 million years ago.</li> </ul>
<b>Genetic evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Finding that the origin of the algal symbionts corresponds to major increases in the abundance and diversity of reef-building corals implies that the partnership with Symbiodiniaceae was one of the major reasons for the success of modern corals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The team used genetic evidence — including DNA sequences, phylogenetic analyses and genome comparisons — to calculate the micro-algae's approximate age of origin.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They also used classical morphological techniques, in which they compared visual characteristics of these symbionts using light and electron microscopy, along with computer modelling and other methods, to discover that in addition to being older, the algae family is far more diverse than previously perceived.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using genetic techniques, we provide evidence that the family actually comprises at least 15 genera.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This is important because some micro-algal symbionts have characteristics that make them more resilient to environmental changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Odisha to showcase its biodiversity

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Odisha government is setting up a world-class interpretation centre at Dangamal near Bhitarkanika National Park to showcase its efforts in protecting crocodiles and preserving its rich mangrove diversity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The project, which has been approved under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project, will be taken up at an estimated cost of ₹3 crore.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government plan to develop the centre both as a tourist attraction and a place for students to learn about the environment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experts are being consulted for adding value to the project</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bhitarkanika, one of the State's finest biodiversity hotspots, receives close to one lakh visitors every year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The tourist inflow has seen an increase lately.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The park is famous for its green mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles and countless creeks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is said to house 70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.</li> </ul>
<b>Bio-shield</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In 1999 when coastal Odisha was battered by Super Cyclone, the rich mangrove forests had then acted as a bio-shield.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There was very little impact of the cyclone in the mangrove-forested regions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In fact, Kalibhanjdia Island spread over 8.5 square km, a place in Bhitarkanika, has attracted the attention of foreign scientists as it possesses 70% of the total mangrove species of the world.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

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<b>Environment learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Government plan to develop the centre both as a tourist attraction and a place for students to learn about the environment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Experts are being consulted for adding value to the project</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bhitarkanika, one of the State's finest biodiversity hotspots, receives close to one lakh visitors every year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The tourist inflow has seen an increase lately.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The park is famous for its green mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles and countless creeks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is said to house 70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.</li> </ul>
<b>Bio-shield</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In 1999 when coastal Odisha was battered by Super Cyclone, the rich mangrove forests had then acted as a bio-shield.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There was very little impact of the cyclone in the mangrove-forested regions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In fact, Kalibhanjdia Island spread over 8.5 square km, a place in Bhitarkanika, has attracted the attention of foreign scientists as it possesses 70% of the total mangrove species of the world.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### 'Aerodrome would hit Chilika's biodiversity'

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Airports Authority of India's move to set up a water aerodrome in Odisha's Chilika Lake has stirred a controversy.</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local politicians cutting across party lines, green activists and fishermen in Chilika have all opposed the proposal to set up an <b>aerodrome in one of Asia's largest brackish water lagoons, asserting that it would impact the lake's biodiversity.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The proposed project has caught many unawares as adequate consultations have not been held for the project.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fishermen under the aegis of the Chilika Mastchyajibee Mahasangha a federation of local fishermen unions fear that the livelihood of around two lakh fishermen from 150 villages in and around the lake spread over the districts of Khordha, Puri and Ganjam may be affected on account of loss of spawning ground.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prafulla Samantara, winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, has accused the Centre and the State governments of tinkering with the biodiversity of the lagoon, which is designated a Ramsar site – wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instead of Chilika, the official suggested that Tampara Lake in Ganjam district may be considered for the proposed water aerodrome. Tampara Lake, being close to both Chilika Lake and National Highway 16, would serve the purpose well, he added.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### In rhino country, a division to boost conservation efficiency

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In about a week's time, an entire forest division in Assam will start moving 160 km northeast.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The one-horned rhino of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) is the reason for this long march.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On August 14, Assam's Environment and Forest Department issued a notification saying the KNP had been split into two divisions — the existing Eastern Assam Wildlife and the new Biswanath Wildlife — for intensive wildlife management.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Brahmaputra separates the two divisions straddling a total area of 1,030 sq.km.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Kaziranga had an area of only 232 sq.m when it began its journey as a proposed reserve forest on June 1, 1905.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The KNP officials said the creation of the Biswanath Wildlife Division, with headquarters at Biswanath Chariali in northeastern Assam, will entail relocating the Central Assam Afforestation Division at Hojai 160 km away.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In fact, the afforestation division has been renamed a wildlife division.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All these years, the KNP was being administered by the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division with headquarters at Bokakhat on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This division was formed in 1966, two years before the State government designated Kaziranga a national park, though it was given the official status in 1974.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The KNP, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985, currently has a staff strength of nearly 1,300. Wildlife officials estimate that the park would require at least 3,000 men if they were to be deployed in eight-hour shifts.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the last rhino census in March, the KNP has an estimated 2,413 rhinos.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The park also has 57% of the world's wild water buffalo population, one of the largest groups of Asian elephants and 21 Royal Bengal tigers per 100 sq.km – arguably the highest striped cat density.</li> </ul>
<b>Significance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Much of the rhino poaching was being done from the northern side of the Brahmaputra, which was difficult to manage for officers posted on the southern side.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Splitting the KNP into two divisions means there will now be two divisional forest officers under one director (based in Bokakhat near the Agratoli range), ensuring better vigil.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Kaziranga will now have many more hands.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### In U.P., plans to save the Taj Mahal

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Supreme Court's critical observation on the preservation of the Taj Mahal has redirected focus on the deterioration of the iconic Mughal monument.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While multiple agencies are responsible for preventing pollution in and around the Taj and its preservation, the Uttar Pradesh government in July submitted a draft of its Vision Document in the court to outline its plan for the monument.</li> </ul>
<b>What does it say?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Compiled by the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi, the 240-page document makes a number of recommendations to protect the Taj precinct, Agra city and the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Encompassing an area of 10,400 sq km, the restricted region of the TTZ includes five districts of Uttar Pradesh — Agra, Mathura, Firozabad, Hathras and Etah — and one in Rajasthan — Bharatpur.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For example, the draft suggests that the entire precinct be declared a no-plastic zone, including the use of bottled water; no untreated sewage discharge be allowed throughout the stretch of the Yamuna; closure of polluting industries in the region and promotion of alternative industries with incentives, and a ban on construction on the Yamuna Flood Plains.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the challenges?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apart from the natural deterioration of the monument, the Taj has over the years faced an onslaught by pollutants, including that from vehicles and industries.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In the recent past, activists have complained that the white marble structure was developing greenish-black patches on several parts as a result of the release of faeces and dirt by an insect identified as Geoldichironomus (Chironomus calligraphus).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The activists attributed it to the rising pollution in the Yamuna.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In May 2016, the then Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav, ordered a probe into the discolouring.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To offset the discolouring, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has periodically been giving the monument a mud-treatment using fuller's earth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The mud is applied to the monument and left to dry for 24 hours; thereafter, it is washed out.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The herbal earth absorbs all the impurities absorbed by the marble from the atmosphere.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Activists termed it eyewash and criticised the government and other agencies for not being serious about preserving the monument.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> While no issues are faced in the structural conservation of the Taj, the chemical cleaning faces hurdles created by the high footfall.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Taj remains closed only on Friday, and the ASI has adapted methods such as area segregation and tourist diversion to ensure the cleaning goes smoothly.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## NDRF aid only for severe calamities

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union government has declared the Kerala floods a “calamity of severe nature”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Here is a look at what this means, whether the State can expect additional help from the Centre and how the various disaster relief funds in the country are funded and deployed.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the classifications of disasters, and how does this affect funding?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the National Disaster Management Policy, the State governments have to provide disaster relief from their respective State Disaster Response Funds (SDRFs), and only for a “calamity of severe nature”, will additional assistance be provided from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is, however, no provision in the law or rules for the government to designate a disaster as a “national calamity”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju informed Parliament recently that the guidelines of the NDRF and the SDRFs did not contemplate declaring a disaster a national calamity.</li> </ul>
<b>How are the NDRF and the SDRFs funded?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The NDRF is funded through a National Calamity Contingent Duty levied on pan masala, chewing tobacco and cigarettes, and with budgetary provisions as and when needed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A provision exists to encourage any person or institution to make a contribution to the NDRF. However, this source of funding has not been tapped so far, according to the government.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The 14th Finance Commission recommended changes to this structure once the cess was discontinued or subsumed within the Goods and Services Tax. However, the government, instead, decided to continue with the National Calamity Contingent Duty even in the GST regime.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SDRF corpus is contributed by the Union government and the respective State governments in a 75:25 ratio for general category States and 90:10 for Special Category States.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The allocation of the SDRF for each State is done by the Finance Commission, and the Centre contributes its specified share each financial year. The Central share of SDRF is released in two equal instalments, in June and then in December.</li> </ul>
<b>What has been the trend in budgetary allocations to the NDRF and SDRFs?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Union government has maintained a steady flow of funds to the NDRF each year, ranging from Rs. 5,690 crore in 2015-16 to a budgeted amount of Rs. 2,500 crore for the current financial year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In addition, the Centre has also been contributing to the SDRFs every year, amounting to Rs. 8,374.95 crore in 2016-17 and Rs. 7,281.76 crore in 2017-18.</li> </ul>

<p><b>How have NDRF funds been allocated to States in the recent past?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ In 2017-18, up to December 27, 2017, the Union government released NDRF funds to nine States — Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana — over and above its contributions to their respective SDRFs. The recipient of the highest amount was Karnataka, which got Rs. 913 crore that year.</li> <li>□ Over the four years till December 27, 2017, the Centre has released the most cumulative funds to Maharashtra (Rs. 5,244.69 crore), Karnataka (Rs. 5,122.45 crore), Uttar Pradesh (Rs. 4,949.04 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs. 3,115.31 crore), and Madhya Pradesh (Rs. 1,958.93 crore).</li> <li>□ For specific calamities, the Centre released Rs. 1,365.67 crore for the Chennai floods of 2015 and Rs. 218.76 crore after Cyclone Vardah in 2016. Andhra Pradesh received Rs. 400 crore and Rs. 230 crore after Hudud ravaged Visakhapatnam.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The hindu</p>

### Kerala flood lesson for Assam: experts

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Flood-experienced Assam can learn a lesson from the Kerala deluge to avoid large-scale disaster say water resources and ecology experts in the Northeast.</li> <li>□ The experts have found a similar pattern to recurrent floods in Assam – up to four times a year between April and October – and Kerala’s worst flood in 100 years that has claimed 357 lives so far.</li> <li>□ The most worrying similarity is a network of dams in the “control of other States” surrounding Kerala and Assam.</li> <li>□ A majority of 39 dams that affected Kerala are on inter-State rivers and under the control of neighbouring States such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.</li> <li>□ The decision of how much water and when to be released is not within the purview of Kerala, which is suffering from downstream impact of those dams and the situation is similar for Assam.</li> </ul>
<p><b>More dams coming</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ More dams coming up in other northeastern States and in Bhutan could spell doom for Assam, <b>“all these years of living with floods”</b> notwithstanding.</li> <li>□ Arunachal Pradesh too is wary of the impact of big dams.</li> <li>□ The river Siang (one of three that meet to form the Brahmaputra downstream) has suffered from dams and other constructions in China upstream</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rampant deforestation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The second lesson that Assam needs to learn from Kerala is the effect of rampant deforestation, mining, and quarrying.</li> <li>□ Kerala has allowed settlement on elephant corridors such as Thirunelli-Kadrakote and Kottiyoor-Periya leading to felling.</li> <li>□ The consequence has been killer landslides on an unprecedented scale</li> <li>□ Kerala is by far one of the more developed States in terms of literacy and development planning, but it has suddenly been exposed like Tamil Nadu was during the devastating 2015 floods in 2015.</li> <li>□ Kerala is reaping the consequences of neglecting, like other Western Ghats States, <b>the recommendations of the Gadgil and Kasturirangan panels against hydro-power projects in ecologically sensitive zones.</b></li> <li>□ Experts said micro-climate controlled by land use was the primary reason behind the catastrophe in Kerala though climate change was the overriding factor.</li> <li>□ Rainfall in Kerala has been increasing after a dip in 2013, but the annual rainfall in many parts of the northeast is much higher than the southern coastal State.</li> <li>□ The densely populated floodplains of Assam thus have to worry because of changes in land use that have impacted the micro-climate adversely.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

## Centre rules out total ban on firecrackers

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Centre on ruled out a national ban on firecrackers and suggested production of “green crackers” community cracker bursting in major cities and a freeze on production of series crackers or <i>laris</i> as alternative measures to curb pollution during Diwali.</li> </ul>
More on news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ It told the Supreme Court that crackers could even be burst in areas pre-designated by the State governments.</li> <li>□ The Supreme Court was hearing a bunch of applications seeking a complete nationwide ban on the use, manufacture, licensing, sale, resale or distribution of firecrackers and sparklers of any kind in a bid to combat pollution on an emergency basis.</li> <li>□ The Union Ministry of Environment submitted a five-page affidavit to the Supreme Court suggesting ways to deal with the pollution problem and chalking out short-term measures to combat pollution during Diwali.</li> <li>□ The Centre suggested working together with institutions like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, National Environment Engineering Research Institute, Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), CPCB to deal with Diwali pollution.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Flood damage may slash India’s coffee output by 20%

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ India’s coffee production in 2018/19 is likely to fall by at least one-fifth from a year earlier as floods in key producing states damaged the crop and delayed exports, industry officials told Reuters.</li> <li>□ Some of the worst flooding in India in a century killed hundreds of people in the southern states of Kerala and Karnataka earlier this month, both of which account for more than 90% of the country’s total coffee production.</li> <li>□ Severe crop loss was reported in the coffee-growing regions of Kodagu in Karnataka and Wayanad in Kerala, while the Chikmagalur and Hassan districts in Karnataka also reported damage on limited scale</li> </ul>
Sixth-largest grower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The South Asian country, famous as a tea producer, is the world’s sixth-largest coffee grower, according to state-run Coffee Board, mainly churning out the robusta beans used to make instant coffee, but also producing some of the more expensive arabica variety.</li> <li>□ In 2017/18 marketing year to September 30, India produced 3.16 lakh tonnes coffee, Coffee Board data show.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## M.P. seeks revival of cheetah reintroduction project

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The <b>Madhya Pradesh</b> forest department has written to the <b>National Tiger Conservation Authority</b> to revive the plan <b>to reintroduce cheetahs in the State’s Nauradehi sanctuary.</b></li> <li>□ The ambitious project, conceived in 2009, had hit a roadblock for want of funds. The country’s last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947.</li> <li>□ <b>Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.</b></li> </ul>
Money matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The M.P. forest department would need finances from the Centre for the project,NTCA a statutory body under the Union Environment Ministry had committed ₹ 50 crore to the State for it in 2011.</li> <li>□ The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹ 260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It was estimated that an amount of ₹ 25 crore to ₹ 30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary, he added.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### Millions risk malnutrition as CO2 levels climb: study

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rising levels of carbon dioxide in the air threaten to sap wheat, rice, and other staple grains of valuable nutrients, raising the spectre of mass malnutrition, researchers have warned.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On current trends, higher CO2 concentrations could reduce iron, zinc and protein levels in the crops that feed the world by up to 17% by mid-century, they reported in the journal <i>Nature Climate Change</i> .</li> </ul>
<b>More on news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hundreds of millions of people could become newly deficient in these nutrients, primarily in Africa, Southeast Asia, India and the Middle East</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> These are in addition to the billions of people already deficient that could see their condition worsen.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Protein, along with the minerals iron and zinc, are essential nutrients for normal human growth and development.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Zinc deficiency affects the immune system and makes children, particularly, more vulnerable to malaria, lung infections and deadly diarrhoeal diseases.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A lack of iron increases the likelihood of mothers dying during childbirth, can lower IQ, and causes anaemia, or a drop in red blood cells.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wheat, rice and maize together account for roughly 40% of protein, zinc and iron supply in the diet worldwide.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In general, humans get three-fifths of dietary protein, four-fifths of iron, and 70% of zinc requirements from plants.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The global food system is also vulnerable to rising temperatures, prolonged drought, and other forms of extreme weather driven by climate change, earlier research has shown. Impacts include reduced crop yields, heat-stressed livestock, and shifts in the quantity and location of commercially-fished ocean species.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To assess how extra CO2 in the atmosphere might impact global health by 2050, Smith and colleague Samuel Myers ran models for 225 different food plants grown in 151 countries.</li> </ul> <p>The team found that nearly 2% of the global population could become zinc deficient.</p>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### Trapped heat below Arctic surface could melt entire region's ice: study

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 'Archived' heat trapped below the surface of the Arctic has the potential to melt the entire region's sea ice, scientists warn.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The study shows that Arctic sea ice is not just threatened by the melting of ice around its edges.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>More on news</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Warmer water that originated hundreds of miles away has penetrated deep into the interior of the Arctic, researchers found.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The upper ocean in the Canadian Basin has seen a two-fold increase in heat content over the past 30 years, the researchers said.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They traced the source to waters hundreds of miles to the south, where reduced sea ice has left the surface ocean more exposed to summer solar warming.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In turn, Arctic winds are driving the warmer water north, but below the surface waters.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This means the effects of sea-ice loss are not limited to the ice-free regions themselves, but also lead to increased heat accumulation in the interior of the Arctic Ocean that can have climate effects well beyond the summer season</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Presently this heat is trapped below the surface layer. Should it be mixed up to the surface, there is enough heat to entirely melt the sea-ice pack that covers this region for most of the year</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p><b>The Hindu</b></p>

### Pollution may affect thinking skills, says study

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A large study in China suggests a link between air pollution and negative effects on people’s language and math skills.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The link between pollution and respiratory diseases is well known, and most experts now believe that small particulates may also raise the risk for strokes and heart attacks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Whether this form of air pollution impairs cognition is not yet certain, but several studies have hinted at a connection.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The latest study, by researchers based in China and the U.S., analysed how long-term exposure to air pollution affected performance on nationwide math and word-recognition tests by more than 25,000 people across 162 Chinese counties.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weather, pollution data</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The authors based their findings on models they built that combined weather and pollution data from specific locations in China, where people had taken nationwide tests in 2010 and 2014, as well as the test scores themselves.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Their analysis tried to document how short and long-term pollution exposure might have affected the scores — and, by extension, the test-takers’ brains.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The authors found that the cognitive impact of cumulative exposure among the test takers was especially pronounced among older men, and that the results were troubling in part because cognitive decline and impairment are risk factors for Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The study “further amplifies the need to tackle air pollution now to protect the health of particularly the young and elderly populations,”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Atmospheric pollution has long been recognised as a significant threat to global public health.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A 2014 study found that traffic-related pollution in greater London was associated with declining cognitive functions over time among study participants, who had an average age of 66.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The study used test scores from the 2010 and 2014 editions of China Family Panel Studies, an interview-based exam given nationwide, as well as air-quality data from readings of three types of pollutants: sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter that is between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in diameter, called PM10.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p><b>The Hindu</b></p>

## The Nilgiri tahr climbs population charts

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ In a heartening development for conservationists a recent census has revealed that the population of <b>the Nilgiri tahr (an endangered mountain goat) at the Mukurthi National Park has grown by an impressive 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568.</b></li> <li>❑ A count conducted in 2016 had put the population in the national park at around 480, but a revised count in 2017 pegged it at 438.</li> <li>❑ Getting an exact figure each year is difficult, so there is always a small discrepancy in numbers.</li> <li>❑ This year, however, there is a definite increase in the number of animals in the only pristine habitat left in the <b>Nilgiris</b> for the tahr.</li> <li>❑ The population estimation exercise, completed in May, was conducted jointly by the Forest Department and the Department of Zoology and Wildlife Biology, Government Arts College, Udthagamandalam.</li> </ul>
<b>Several threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ If that is the good news, the bad news is that the population also faces several threats.</li> <li>❑ Researchers point to the continuing spread of <b>invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (<i>Cystisus scoparius</i>) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.</b></li> <li>❑ The rise in the animals' population has led to a few herds migrating out of the national park into the erstwhile Nilgiris South Forest Division.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>



# International Relations

## India and Its Neighbourhood

### 'Mattala project with India is on'

<b>Why it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Three rounds of official negotiations were completed on a likely <b>joint venture between the AAI and the Airport &amp; Aviation Services in Sri Lanka</b>, to run the <b>loss-making Mattala airport</b>, located in Sri Lanka's Southern Province</li> </ul>
<b>What is in the deal?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The two governments, after detailed negotiations, have agreed that <b>India, with a 70% stake in the joint venture</b>, will contribute \$225 million to revamp and run the airport.</li> <li>□ While the Sri Lankan side will invest the balance.</li> <li>□ India will operate the airport on a <b>40-year lease</b>, as per the draft agreement.</li> </ul>
<b>Mattala airport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ first greenfield airport and the second international airport in the country, after Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo.</li> <li>□ Situated about 40 km from the southern town of Hambantota, where China has majority stake in a strategic port it built.</li> <li>□ It has been called "<b>the world's emptiest international airport</b>" due to its low number of flights despite the large size of the airport.</li> <li>□ The joint venture would see India gain a major stake of the airport.</li> <li>□ Mattala airport, named after former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, was one of the major infrastructure projects of Rajapaksa's nearly a decade-long rule.</li> <li>□ The project was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans. The airport was officially opened in March 2013.</li> <li>□ The only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.</li> <li>□ The government in 2017 invited investors to turn the airport into a profit-sharing joint venture. However no proposals were received to operate, manage and maintain it.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian express

### Tight-fisted neighbour? Indian aid to SAARC nations falls

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	India's financial assistance to <b>SAARC</b> neighbours declined considerably in the past five years, a reply by the government in Parliament this week showed.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ According to the figures, the GA actually fell from ₹5,928.6 crore for 2013-14 to ₹3,483.6 crore for 2017-18 for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka combined.</li> <li>□ Significantly, the drop for most SAARC countries was most steep in 2014, the year the NDA government launched its tenure with the "Neighbourhood First" slogan.</li> <li>□ The one exception was the Maldives, to which Indian assistance has been consistently increasing year on year since 2013, despite the dip in bilateral ties.</li> <li>□ Indian largesse appears to have increased ten-fold to the islands: from ₹9.67 crore in 2013-14 to ₹109.24 crore.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Dip in financial aid</b> India's financial assistance to SAARC countries, with the exception of Maldives, has been dipping since 2013. Aid to Bangladesh dropped by the largest margin (87%)</p> <p>(all figures in tcr.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Indian diplomat now serving in the region, explaining that the GA figures did not include the lines of credit extended to Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. These lines of credit are given at the minimal interest rates of 1-2%, compared with loans offered by China at 6-7%.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why decline in aid?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ One of the major reasons for the decline was that many projects had been completed in the neighbourhood, and there were fewer projects started in the period since 2014.</li> <li>□ In Afghanistan, India has shifted to work on small development projects (SDPs) rather than the ambitious highways, dams and big building projects that were started in 2008-09.</li> <li>□ In Bangladesh, the main grant for land acquisition for the Akhaura-Agartala rail “last link” project has now been completed.</li> <li>□ In Bhutan, which has always received the largest share of Indian assistance, the assistance required for major hydroelectric power plants like Punatsanghchu 1 and 2 and Mangdechu has been disbursed 75-90%, said officials, while Indian assistance to Bhutan’s 11th five-year plan (2013-2017) has been handed over nearly fully.</li> <li>□ In Sri Lanka, the decline was explained by delays in land acquisition for 15,000 homes to be built by India in the plantation areas, though the work on 45,000 homes in the north and east of the island has been completed.</li> <li>□ India is still completing three main projects in Maldives: a police academy, a coastal radar project, and the refit of MNDF ship <i>Huravee</i>.</li> <li>□ An offer to build a new Defence Ministry building is pending, which explains why the Maldives alone is the outlier to an otherwise declining trend in neighbourhood aid.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

**Will honour ceasefire if Pakistan curbs infiltration: India**

<p><b>Why it is in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Indian Army will “abide by its commitment” to uphold the ceasefire understanding of 2003 if the Pakistan Army “initiates positive steps to control infiltration and abetment of terrorism” in J&amp;K, Pakistan was told on Thursday.</li> <li>□ This was conveyed during a conversation between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) over the established hotline, which was held on Pakistan’s request.</li> </ul>
<p><b>More in news</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Pakistan DGMO made an assurance that Pakistan Army would take prompt action against move of inimical elements in proximity to the Line of Control and respond to information shared by the Indian side, thereby facilitating conduct of anti-terrorist operations.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan DGMO expressed satisfaction on the measures being taken along the LoC by troops to maintain peace and tranquillity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Over the last two months, there has been a sharp reduction in the quantum of ceasefire violations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> infiltration has increased in the north areas of Pir Panjal mountain ranges and stressed that Pakistan must initiate steps to prevent it</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Pakistan Speaker hails MFN status for India

Why it is in news?	Pakistan's decision to give India the "Most Favoured Nation" status is an example of what can happen when regional cooperation and networking are given full play in South Asia, according to Fehmida Mirza, Speaker of the Pakistani National Assembly.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Addressing the fifth Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians here on Sunday, Dr. Mirza noted that while the nations of the South Asian region shared a range of common problems, they could also work on common solutions together.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> She said that these can be solved together if our respective Parliaments join hands for a meaningful cooperation through experience-sharing, joint resource mobilisation, and strong networking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is in this spirit that Pakistan recently agreed to accord the 'Most Favoured Nation' status to India by replacing a 'positive trade list' to a 'negative trade list.'</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This vital decision will open new vistas of enhanced commerce and trade in the entire South Asia.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> She also revived the dream of a South Asian Parliament which could "infuse a new life into SAARC exactly in the same manner as the European Parliament remains the driving force behind the European Union.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Nepal crime reform sparks press freedom concerns

Why it is in news?	Nepal introduced a new criminal code on Friday that makes sharing confidential information a jailable offence, sparking concerns among journalists that the laws could be used to muzzle the press.
Facing criticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Media have warned that the Communist-led government, which has shown an increasing intolerance for dissent, could use the vaguely worded code to silence critics.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The new laws make publishing private information, recording audio or taking pictures without permission punishable by up to three years in jail and a fine.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Publishing content that damages a person's reputation directly or through satire is also subject to the same sentence.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The new laws mark a slide towards "authoritarianism".</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>The Himalayan nation is ranked 106 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.</b></li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## India-Pakistan ties key to regional stability: China

Why is it in news?	<input type="checkbox"/> China on Wednesday offered to play a "constructive role" to ease tensions between India and Pakistan.
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<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To move forward Pakistan and India must have a dialogue and resolve their conflicts, including Kashmir.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Both Pakistan and India are important countries in South Asia.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The improvement and development of their relations are quite important to the regional peace and stability and prosperity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As a common neighbour to Pakistan and India, China firmly supports the two sides to enhance dialogue and increase mutual trust and properly handle and solve their differences.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> China has been visibly emphatic in its advocacy for the resolution of Indo-Pakistan differences since the June summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), where New Delhi and Islamabad were welcomed as full members of the grouping.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> SCO could provide a “better platform” to resolve the bitter feud between New Delhi and Islamabad of over seven decades.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### India, China to improve military links

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India and China on Thursday agreed to work towards full implementation of ongoing confidence-building measures (CBM) along the border as well as improve military to military interactions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This was agreed during bilateral consultations between Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and visiting Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It was decided to expand the engagement between the Armed Forces relating to training, joint exercises and other professional interactions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Both sides also decided to work towards a new bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on defence exchanges and cooperation to replace the MoU signed in 2006.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In order to ensure peace and tranquility on the border, both Ministers agreed on greater interactions at the working level, including operationalisation of the hotline between the relevant departments of the Armed Forces.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The two countries are also working on setting up additional Border Meeting Points (BPM) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are five BPM points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Bum La and Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh, Daulat Beg Oldi and Chushul in Ladakh, and Nathu La in Sikkim.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Another BPM was added earlier this month on the eve of Independence Day.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The two armies are expected to resume the bilateral joint training exercise Hand-in-Hand this year. Last year, it did not happen because of the Doklam stand-off.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The exercise is normally scheduled for November and officials said the modalities have to be worked out.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### U.S., China swap tariffs on billions in commodities

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The U.S. slapped steep tariffs on another \$16 billion in Chinese goods on Thursday, triggering a swift tit-for-tat retaliation from Beijing, even as negotiators from both sides seek to soothe trade tensions.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The latest action completes the first round of \$50 billion in Chinese products that President Donald Trump had targeted, with Beijing striking back at American products dollar-for-dollar at each step.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> China “firmly opposes the tariffs and has no choice but to continue to make the necessary counterattacks.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Beijing hit back with tariffs on an equal amount of U.S. goods, targeting iconic products such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles, dump trucks and asphalt, among hundreds of others.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> U.S. tariffs were “clearly suspected” of violating the World Trade Organisation rules, and noted it would file a lawsuit against them under the WTO’s dispute resolution mechanism.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The escalation came as the world’s two largest economies hold their first formal discussions since June on the spiralling trade war.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Trump has pushed aggressive trade actions to lower the U.S. trade deficit. But U.S. trading partners have retaliated aggressively, which is hurting American farmers, manufacturers and consumers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Still pending is the possibility of new duties on another \$200 billion in Chinese goods, which are the subject of public hearings this week, as well as Mr. Trump’s proposed 25% taxes on all auto imports to protect the U.S. car industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### ‘China should forge closer ties with India, Japan’

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	In countering the Indo-Pacific strategy led by the U.S, China should forge closer ties with India, Japan and Australia, says an official media commentary.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> China should positively intervene in shaping the Indo-Pacific agenda.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is advisable for China to participate in the construction of an Indo-Pacific discourse system selectively, and join the discussions about some concepts that are in China’s national interests, such as ‘(Indo-Pacific) community of shared future for mankind’ and ‘the Indo-Pacific and the Belt and Road Initiative.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> China may deconstruct some concepts put forward by the U.S. and other countries that are not in China’s interests, and replace them with new concepts that are beneficial to China by means of discourse substitution strategies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Necessity of China’s firmer connect with India, Japan and Australia — the three countries that are part of the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific quad.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Chinese initiative should focus on shared interests with these countries to “weaken their motivation to join Indo-Pacific countries to contain China”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The write-up highlights that the U.S.’s focus on promoting “democratic values” was the political bedrock of its Indo-Pacific doctrine.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sowing discord between China and other countries,” is part of Indo-Pacific diplomacy, which opens the gates for joint military exercises and arms sales.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Once deployed, these tools can “co-opt China’s neighbouring countries to undermine China, contain China’s rise, and ultimately maintain US hegemony.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Despite the provocation, China should avoid a military confrontation with the United States. Instead Beijing should pursue a defensive approach to safeguard its “national sovereignty and security interests at a lower cost and with controllable risks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> China’s riposte to the Indo-Pacific policy should include turning around its ties with the ASEAN, under the 10+3 template.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Besides, China needs to further consolidate its relations with Eurasia, focusing on Russia and Iran on the principle of “partnership without alliance”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It also has an economic dimension of developing exclusive economic and trade arrangements. Besides, “sowing discord between China and other countries,” is part of Indo-Pacific diplomacy, which opens the gates for joint military exercises and arms sales.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## India committed to boosting BIMSTEC connectivity: PM

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	Making a strong pitch for enhanced regional connectivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that India was committed to working with the BIMSTEC member states in the critical sector and to combating the menace of terrorism and drug trafficking.
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ The Prime Minister said the region had become a meeting point for India's 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policies.</li> <li>□ India is committed to working with the BIMSTEC member states to enhance regional connectivity.</li> </ul> <p>The BIMSTEC is a regional grouping, comprising India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and <b>Nepal</b>.</p> <p>Addressing the summit, Mr. Oli said the BIMSTEC was not a substitute to the SAARC, and the two organisations could complement each other. He underlined the need for implementing the <b>BIMSTEC poverty plan</b> as well as the Millennium Development Goals for the benefit of the member states. He stressed the need for deeper economic integration and collaboration among the members for speedy development of the region.</p> <p>Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the BIMSTEC member states, situated between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal, face frequent natural disasters such as flood, cyclone and earthquake, and called for "cooperation and coordination" among them in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.</p> <p>"As no single country can move alone for attaining peace, prosperity and development, we need to collaborate and cooperate with each other in this interconnected world," he said.</p> <p>For <b>research on art</b>, culture and other subjects in the Bay of Bengal, India would set up a Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies at the Nalanda University.</p> <p><b>India will host the International Buddhist Conclave in August 2020</b> and invited all BIMSTEC leaders to attend the event as guests of honour.</p>
<b>BIMSTEC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ BIMSTEC is a regional grouping comprising Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.</li> <li>□ The first BIMSTEC summit was held in Thailand in 1997, second in 2008 in India and third in 2014 in Myanmar.</li> <li>□ Nepal has assumed the chairmanship of BIMSTEC since 2014.</li> <li>□ The grouping accounts for 22 percent of the global population, and has a combined gross domestic product of \$2.8 trillion.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



# International Issues

## Iran rejects Trump's offer for talks

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Iran</b> waved away U.S. President Donald Trump's claims that talks with the country's leaders were imminent.
<b>More on news</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> With Washington pulling out of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal and set to reimpose full sanctions on Iran from August 6, Tehran has responded coolly to Mr. Trump's offer on Monday to talk "any time" without preconditions. <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that Threats, sanctions & PR stunts won't work. Try respect: for Iranians & for (international) commitments. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>'Great Satan'</b> - The Revolutionary Guards also made their opposition to talks calling Trump as great satan.
<b>Historical Background of deal</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> The historic <b>Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal</b> was struck in Vienna <b>between Iran and the P5+1 nations</b> in the year 2015 which includes the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China — plus Germany. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>According to this framework</b> , Iran would <b>redesign, convert, and reduce its nuclear facilities and accept the Additional Protocol</b> , with provisional application, in order to lift all nuclear-related economic sanctions, freeing up tens of billions of dollars in oil revenue and frozen assets.
<b>Trump's strategic re-positioning in the region</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Trump's strategic re-positioning in the region has two parts-</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The first is the reversal of the Iran nuclear deal framework, brokered by former President Barack Obama in 2015, which calls for a restriction of Iran's nuclear capacities in exchange for significant economic incentives from the West.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Building a coalition against Iran and its Shiite proxies with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.</b></li> </ol>
<b>Where is the geo-economic impact of the new tensions?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>US sanctions on Iran may lead to an oil price rally</b> , according to economists at RBC Capital Markets. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sanctions against the third-largest oil producer among the OPEC</b> , Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, will <b>penalise foreign energy companies operating in Iran</b> as well as countries that import crude from the nation. <input type="checkbox"/> While <b>large importers of Iranian crude such as India and Turkey</b> will be badly impacted.
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, The Diplomat, MoEA

## Trump cancels plans for military parade

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> President Donald Trump said on Friday that he had cancelled plans for a Veterans Day military parade, citing the "ridiculously high" price tag a day after U.S. officials said the November event could cost \$92 million, more than three times the price first suggested by the White House.
<b>High cost</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary estimates from the Pentagon showed that roughly \$50 million would cover military aircraft, equipment, personnel and other support. The remainder would be borne by other agencies and largely involve security costs.
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Russia, China set to launch joint military exercises

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	China will join Russia in a giant military exercise, sending a message of deterrence to the U.S. which has designated Beijing and Moscow as “revisionist powers”.
<b>Vostok 2018 exercises</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The five-day <b>Vostok 2018 exercises</b>, to be held from September 11, will be bigger than Zapad 81 — the mammoth manoeuvres carried out in Eastern Europe by the former Soviet Union in 1981.</li> <li>❑ <b>Mongolia</b> will be the third country participating in the drills.</li> <li>❑ The Vostok-2018 will involve 300,000 troops.</li> <li>❑ They will engage in tri-service mock-operations, involving 1,000 military aircraft, two of Russia’s naval fleets and all its airborne units.</li> <li>❑ Nearly 36,000 military vehicles will participate in the drills that will take place at Russia’s Tsugol training range in the trans-Baikal region.</li> <li>❑ China will dispatch about 3,200 troops, along with more than 900 pieces of weaponry, as well as 30 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons for the exercise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ These exercises are taking place amid Washington’s growing friction with <b>Russia</b> and China, which include mounting sanctions and a trade war.</li> <li>❑ The Pentagon’s national defence strategy unveiled in January focused on Russia and China as principle strategic challenges to the U.S.</li> <li>❑ In presenting the new strategy, U.S. Defence Secretary James Mattis called China and Russia “<b>revisionist powers</b>” that “seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models”.</li> <li>❑ He stressed that “great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security”.</li> <li>❑ Upcoming exercises are “a clear indication to the U.S. that it’s a response to their national security strategy, as well as a response to U.S. and NATO posturing in the South China Sea, in the Taiwanese Straits, as well as...the permanent stationing of troops that we are seeing on Russia’s western border”.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## China to expand energy footprint in Iran

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The next episode of friction between Beijing and Washington could be staged in Iran, where a top Chinese energy firm, defying latest U.S. sanctions, is likely to expand its stake in a giant Iranian gas field.</li> </ul>
<b>China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Iran’s state-run news agency IRNA has reported that China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the world’s third-largest oil and gas firm, has replaced Total, the French energy giant, in the South Pars 11 project.</li> <li>❑ China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) has replaced Total of France with an 80.1% stake in the phase 11 of the South Pars (gas field).</li> </ul>
<b>South Pars- World’s largest gas field</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>South Pars</b> is the world’s single largest natural gas field, which is being developed in several phases.</li> <li>❑ In 2017, Total acquired a 50.1% stake in the South Pars 11 project, following the 2015 sanctions-easing Iran nuclear deal.</li> <li>❑ CNPC held a 30% stake, while the rest was allocated to Iran’s Petropars Ltd.</li> <li>❑ But after its withdrawal from the Iran atomic deal in May, Washington gave foreign firms 90 to 180 days limit to scrap their businesses from Iran.</li> <li>❑ It warned that non-compliance would entail “secondary sanctions”, which would bar dissenting firms from doing business in the United States.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

# India and Other Countries Relations

## Asian nations slam U.S.-China trade war

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asian countries have voiced concern about the potentially devastating impact of a <b>U.S.-China trade war</b>, with Ministers calling for the acceleration of talks for a gigantic Beijing-backed free-trade deal that excludes the United States.</li> </ul>
<b>Topics dominating discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear that a <b>simmering trade spat between the world's top two economies could spiral into a full-blown trade war</b> — with painful consequences for China's neighbours — was among topics dominating discussion at a regional summit in Singapore on Saturday.</li> </ul>
<b>Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other top diplomats at the forum, hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, <b>spoke out against protectionism</b>, warning that it places the region's development in jeopardy.</li> <li>Some Ministers called for the early conclusion of talks for <b>the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a 16-nation free trade pact</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Ties with India critical for growth of Texas: Governor

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of trade ties with India was his top priority in office, Texas Governor Gregg Abbott told a gathering of the State's business leaders on Saturday.</li> </ul>
<b>Trade and Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Houston and surrounding areas are emerging as a magnet for several Indian companies expanding their operations in North America.</li> <li>Texas is now the <b>second largest exporter of goods to India and the fourth largest importer of Indian goods, among American States</b>.</li> <li><b>Oil imports</b>- India has started importing crude and natural gas from America this year, and Texas, as the country's petroleum hub, stands to benefit.</li> <li>A petroleum import from America has begun to reduce India's trade surplus with it, partially blunting an irritant for the Donald Trump administration.</li> <li>Trade between Houston and India is now worth \$ 8.5 billion.</li> <li>Jindal Steel Works has announced plans to invest \$500 million into expanding their steel manufacturing in Baytown, Texas, and Wipro Limited will set up a new Texas Technology Centre in Plano.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## India rejects U.K. proposal on DNA tests for 'illegal migrants'

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India rejected a proposal by the U.K. to use DNA sampling to establish the nationality of illegal migrants living there citing "privacy issues".</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although a Memorandum of Understanding on return of illegal migrants was initialled after due approval of the Union Cabinet in January, India refused to sign the final pact during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to U.K. in April.</li> <li><b>As per the original MoU</b>, security agencies in India were to verify the antecedents of illegal migrants without documents in the U.K. within 72 days and those with documents within 15 days.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If no report was given within the stipulated time frame, the illegal migrant would be deported automatically.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The agreement was put on indefinite hold after National Security Adviser Ajit Doval conveyed that the 15-day limit was unworkable.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>According to the British government’s estimates, there are around 1,00,000 Indians overstaying their visa in the U.K.</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India has contested this and said that as per their estimate, the number will not be more than 2,000.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Post-April, at least two high-level delegations from the U.K. have raised the issue with India.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> During her first visit to India on November 7, 2016, British Prime Minister Theresa May said the U.K. would consider an improved visa deal “if at the same time we can step up the speed and volume of returns of Indians with no right to remain in the U.K.”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> As per the original MoU, the security agencies in India were to verify the antecedents of document less illegal migrants in the U.K within 72 days and those with documents within 15 days.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> India pulled out of the pact saying the time frame was not feasible.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### Modi recalls Annan’s role in pushing development goals

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nobel Peace Laureate and former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan was “a conscience keeper of international peace and security”, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as many Indian leaders expressed condolences over Mr. Annan’s <b>death</b> on Saturday.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Kofi Annan’s significant contribution to the Millennium Development Goals will always be remembered.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mr. Annan, who set up a foundation to work on the two issues of climate change and poverty reduction, which he called the “twin pillars of sustainable development”.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He was always appreciative of the humane approach of Indian peacekeepers in Africa.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> He was also an ardent advocate of reform of the Security Council and a greater role for developing countries such as India</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



# Important International/ Regional Organisation, Groups, Summits

## Quad countries discuss ocean security

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Quad grouping is one of the many avenues for interaction among India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. and should not be seen in an exclusive context, a senior Japanese diplomat said on Wednesday.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This four-country meeting is an important modality. There are various modalities where India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. interact, including on a bilateral and trilateral basis.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The four countries should work to oppose “the establishment of permanent Chinese military bases” in the IOR and demonstrate to China that security needs can be met through cooperation with other nations.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Terror, reforms raised with top UN official

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ahead of the convening of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, India has indicated that the campaign against global terrorism will be on top of its UN agenda.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj conveyed India’s concerns regarding the issue to the visiting UNGA president Maria Fernando Espinosa Garces, who maintained that there is not yet a consensus among the member-states about the definition of terrorism.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>UNSC reforms-</b> The External Affairs Minister emphasised the need for UN Security Council (UNSC) reforms, especially continuation of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations, as well as early finalisation of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Garces, the fourth woman president in the history of the largest organ of the UN interacted with Ms. Swaraj and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during her four-day visit.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In an interaction at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), she said India’s demand for expansion of the UNSC had featured in the discussion with the Prime Minister and indicated that she would try to build consensus among all UN member-states regarding issues such as expansion of the UNSC and counter-terrorism.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ms. Garces said she will appoint two co-facilitators to help her address reform issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



# Miscellaneous

## Hiroshima marks 73rd anniversary of atomic bombing in WWII

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hiroshima marked the anniversary of the Aug. 6, 1945, atomic bombing with a somber ceremony Monday to remember the people killed and injured and a call to eliminate <b>nuclear weapons</b> amid hopes of denuclearizing North Korea.
<b>Historical background</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> During the final stage of World War II, the United States detonated two nuclear weapons over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. <input type="checkbox"/> The United States dropped the bombs after obtaining the consent of the United Kingdom, as required by the Quebec Agreement. <input type="checkbox"/> They remain the only use of nuclear weapons in the history of warfare. <input type="checkbox"/> The U.S. attack on Hiroshima killed 140,000 people, and the bombing of Nagasaki killed more than 70,000 three days later, leading to Japan's surrender and ending World War II. <input type="checkbox"/> The ethical and legal justification for the bombings is still debated to this day. <input type="checkbox"/> The anniversary comes amid hopes to denuclearize North Korea after Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump made vague aspirational statements of denuclearizing the peninsula when they met in Singapore in June.
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

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## Internal Security

## AMBIS to increase detection, conviction rates : Fadnavis

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Once the Maharashtra government implements its <b>ambitious Automated Multi-modal Biometric Identification System (AMBIS)</b>, crime detection and conviction rates in the State will go up, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Sunday.</li> </ul>
More about system and its work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The system is unique because it uses mobile live scanners, and a police patrol team can ascertain on the spot if a suspect has criminal antecedents.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Besides detecting crime through fingerprints at the crime scene, the system with the help of retinal scan, writers pad, palm and even bare sole scans can help trace criminals with 100% accuracy, and that too within a 0.46 milliseconds.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ever since the British introduced fingerprint identification in Kolkata in 1857, the Fingerprint Bureau has been under the jurisdiction of the State Criminal Investigation Department (CID).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> After the system crashed in 2012, the CID has been manually scanning and matching fingerprint data with available crime scene data, employing eight to 10 different characteristics.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The task is huge as the CID has to go through 6.5 lakh fingerprints data stored with it.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Data sharing-</b> Fingerprint data can be shared by the State government with the National Crime Records Bureau, other State governments, investigation agencies, courts, crime experts and even with Interpol and foreign investigation agencies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advantage of the system is that with retinal scans, it will be difficult for criminals to escape the law.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes, fingerprints are not available if the criminals try to burn their hands, but they surely cannot burn their retina.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The retina of every individual is unique, and the blood vessels inside the retina too have unique arrangement.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Another feature of the system is facial recognition of suspects in cases of mob violence and mob lynching, with the help of photographs and CCTV footage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Zero data loss-</b> The hi-tech system ensures there will be no data loss, and has back-up facility at a very high level.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Another feature of AMBIS is that it can be interfaced with any other operating system, whereby data can be accessed anywhere, anytime.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> At present the world over, AMBIS is being used by Interpol and other European agencies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It uses NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) file and process standards, which allow free interchange of data with Interpol and other international agencies, when required.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## JCOs are gazetted officers, says Defence Ministry

Why it is in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) in the Indian military are gazetted officers, the Defence Ministry has clarified in an order issued on August 1.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The clarification follows a long standing controversy over the issue.</li> </ul>
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<b>What order says?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Ministry has instructed the three services to issue suitable identity cards to the JCOs immediately in the order, the subject of which reads: "Issue of blue Securitised Laminated Identity Cards (SLIC) to JCOs and equivalent officer having been accorded gazetted officer status by an Act of Parliament."</li> </ul>
<b>Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO)</b> is a term describing a group of military ranks found in the Indian Army, Pakistan Army, Bangladesh Army and Nepal Army.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Those soldiers holding JCO rank receive a commission from the President, but this commission is of a lower status than that held by full commissioned officers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The JCO ranks in the Indian Army (from highest to lowest) are:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Subedar-Major (infantry and other arms)/Risaldar-Major (cavalry and armour)</li> <li>2. Subedar/Risaldar</li> <li>3. Naib Subedar/Naib Risaldar</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### 300 Army personnel move SC against prosecution

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Over 300 Army officers on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court against what they called "persecution" by the court and civilian agencies, like the CBI, for doing their duty in the insurgency-hit areas of Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern States.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The petition, filed by senior officers at the level of Commanders, comes shortly after the court directed a CBI SIT to file chargesheets, in a time-bound manner, against Army officers involved in the Manipur extra-judicial killings, in which innocents were allegedly killed after being branded as insurgents.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The court is monitoring the CBI probe and cases number up to over 1,500.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> According to the petition, an "<b>extraordinary circumstance</b>" was prevailing over armed forces personnel fighting in the insurgency-hit areas and the nation's borders.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> They are plagued by doubts whether performing their duty to fight enemies would expose them to prosecution and land them in jail.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### 'Massive Army reform under way'

<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<p>Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her first address to the armed forces on the eve of Independence Day, highlighted the government's efforts to reform the Army in a big way.</p>
<b>Details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a first ever exercise after Independence, the Ministry of Defence in consultation with the Indian Army has decided to reform the Indian Army in a planned manner.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This restructuring is aimed at enhancing the combat capability of the Army in a manner that the officers, Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and Other Ranks (OR) will be used for improving the operational preparedness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> first phase of the reforms involved redeployment and restructuring of approximately 57,000 posts of officers, JCOs, ORs and civilians.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The major reforms include optimisation of signals establishments, restructuring of repair echelons, redeployment of ordnance echelons, better utilisation of supply and transport echelons and animal transport units besides closure of military Farms and Army postal establishments in peace locations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In line with the recommendations of the <b>7th Pay Commission</b>, the Ministry has taken "the decision to pay uniform allowance" and clarity has been brought in with respect to what is covered within the ambit of the allowance and what clothing items will be provided by the government.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> To ensure faster decision making, for day-to-day requirements of the troops or ammunition, greater powers have been delegated to the service headquarters and other lower functionaries.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## India building new fighter jet

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), India's next indigenous fighter, is expected to make its first flight by 2032. Development work on the jet is under way.</li> </ul>
More about project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The AMCA will feature geometric stealth and will initially fly with two GE-414 engines.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are two major ways of making a military platform stealthier.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One is geometric stealth and other is material stealth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>In geometric stealth</b>, the shape of the aircraft is designed at such angles so as to deflect away maximum radar waves thereby minimising its radar cross section.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>In material stealth</b>, radar-absorbing materials are used in making the aircraft which will absorb the radio waves thus reducing the radar footprint.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The AMCA will initially be based on geometric stealth, look at material stealth at a later stage.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The plan is to build on the capabilities and expertise developed during the development of the light combat aircraft (LCA) and produce a medium fifth generation fighter aircraft.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Apart from the technologies developed from the LCA project, the new fighter programme is important as technologies coming in through that will flow into the AMCA project.</li> </ul>
Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The aircraft will be powered by the same GE-414 engine on the LCA Mk-2 variant which is in the design phase.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A GE-414 produces 98kN thrust compared to 84kN thrust of the GE-404 engine which is on the LCA Mk1.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This is India's only fifth generation aircraft programme following the decision not to go ahead with the fifth generation project with Russia.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Security budgets of Indian companies have tripled

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Indian companies are investing more on securing their data rather than pumping more money into technology as they try to build comprehensive solutions to prevent hackers from attacking their network.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> IT budgets are shrinking and security budgets are going up.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Security investments or budgets in India have doubled or even tripled.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There are now security departments under a chief information officer, chief security officer or a risk officer, which are being allocated a lot of budgets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> IT budgets are shrinking because it is mostly pay-as-you-go model now, and there is less capital expenditure required.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Also, overall costs are coming down.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Here, the device cost may come down, but the need for building an overall solution which has more components, and upgrading it with more features and functionalities, that is on the rise.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Global spending on information security products and services will reach more than \$114 billion in 2018, an increase of 12.4% from last year, according to an August 16 report from Gartner, Inc.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ In 2019, the market is forecast to grow 8.7% to \$124 billion. Privacy concerns, persisting skills shortages and regulatory changes such as EU's Global Data Protection Regulation are the main drivers.</li> <li>❑ A recent attack on Singapore Health Services (SingHealth) network compromised personal health records of 1.5 million patients in the island and reinforced the need to view sensitive data and IT systems as critical infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## New copters to enable tech transfer

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The Defence Ministry is shortly expected to release project-specific implementation guidelines for the 111 naval utility helicopters to be procured under the Strategic Partnership (SP) model. However, foreign companies say there is still some clarity required on crucial legal, liability and technology transfer issues.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ For the first time, under the SP model, Indian private companies will get to tie up with global original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and build major defence platforms in India under technology transfer.</li> <li>❑ So far, it was defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) which played the lead role.</li> <li>❑ The other issue, he said, was about the liability of the end product.</li> <li>❑ This liability issue was one of the major reasons the earlier medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) deal for 126 jets got derailed at the contract negotiation stage, after Dassault Aviation refused to stand guarantee to the aircraft manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).</li> <li>❑ There is large infrastructure already present in the country with DPSUs and this must be utilised for the benefit of both the country as well as form a business sense.</li> <li>❑ All procurements under the SP model would be executed by specially constituted empowered project committees (EPC) to ensure timely execution, the Ministry said.</li> <li>❑ Apart from the helicopters, the projects to be processed under the SP model are fighter aircraft, P-75I submarines and armoured vehicles.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Tech giants must reinvest in infra, jobs

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Global technology giants should reinvest part of their profits for development of infrastructure and job creation in revenue generating countries such as India, Union Minister of Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad said.</li> <li>❑ Speaking at the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial meeting in Argentina, the Minister said the largest and most dynamic markets for digital services are in Asia, Latin America and Africa, with India having one of the largest footprint of several popular social media and other digital platforms.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ It is only fair and just that some of the revenue and profit generated from these platforms be equitably reinvested in the largest markets to create more infrastructure and generate more job opportunities for the people there.</li> <li>❑ During the meeting, the G20 member nations agreed to promote policies that will contribute to bridging all forms of the digital divide, with special attention to the digital gender divide.</li> <li>❑ The countries agreed to promote digital government and digital infrastructure, strengthen the digital skills of the workforce, deepen the analysis towards digital economy measurement, and to share experiences and lesson learned.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>□ He also reiterated that India had taken serious note of reported misuse of data from social media platforms.</li><li>□ The borderless cyberworld creates almost 'limitless opportunities of trade, commerce and knowledge sharing but to fully reap the benefits of the digital transformation for the global economy, there is a need cyberspace that is safe and secure.'</li><li>□ Stating that 'nefarious' use of the Internet is a reality that needs to be met by concerted action by all.</li><li>□ The use of the cyber medium to spread radical thought is again a 'challenge that needs to be addressed both domestically by better regulations as well as international cooperation.'</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



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