

**UPSC**

**Contemporary  
Issues  
&  
Current Affairs  
January 2019**

By Jawwad Kazi

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# **UPSC**

## **Contemporary Issues & Current Affairs January - 2019**

### **(Study Material)**

**By Jawwad Kazi**

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

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# Contemporary Issues

Sr. No	INDEX	Page No.
1.	124th Constitution Amendment Bill	8
2.	Female Labour Force Participation	11
3.	All India Judicial Services	14
4.	Women's Reservation Bill.	17
5.	Sedition Sec 124A	20
6.	Marital rape	23
7.	Manipur's new anti-lynching law	25
8.	Gene Editing and Bioethics	29
9.	Rat Hole Mining	32
10.	Prevalence of Devadasi in India	35
11.	The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019	37
12.	ASER Survey	40
13.	Nuclear energy and Energy Security	43
14.	New H1B visa proposal	47
15.	BREXIT	50
16.	Bank Consolidation in India	54
17.	Global slowdown and India	56
18.	Agglomeration Economies	58
19.	Universal Basic Income (UBI)	60
20.	Startup India Review	63
21.	India-Bangladesh relations	66
22.	India's role in Afghanistan	69
23.	Look West Policy	72
24.	The Aadhar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018	75
25.	Consumer protection Bill 2018	78

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

Sr. No	INDEX	Page No
<b>I</b>	<b>POLILTY</b>	
	<b>Bills/Act/Laws</b>	
1	123rd Amendment bill	
2	Aadhaar Amendment Bill	
	<b>Policies</b>	
1	Chardham projects	
2	Specific names on Arunachal ST list	
3	Assam Accord Clause 6	
4	New entries of STs in Aasam	
5	NREGA	
6	MISA pension	
	<b>Judiciary</b>	
1	No plan to up judge retirement age: Law Ministry	
2	Quota for women judges not under consideration	
	<b>Constitutional and statutory bodies</b>	
1	Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERAs)	
2	Lokpal search panel	
3	Panel concerned at CBI vacancies	
4	SC on CBI director	
5	Irrigation projects delay led to jump in costs: CAG	
<b>II</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	
1	Oceans are heating up at a quickening pace	
2	Parliamentary committee on Western Ghats	
3	Cinereous vulture	
4	Morocco ranks high in climate action	

5	Exotic trees eating up Western Ghat's grasslands	
6	Fine on Meghalaya govt for failing to curb illegal mining	
7	Desalination plants harm environment: UN	
8	Ganga water quality	
<b>III</b>	<b>INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</b>	
	<b>Bilateral</b>	
1	India, South Africa to revise 22-year-old Strategic Partnership	
2	Gilgit-Baltistan region	
3	Authorised immigration check post designation to Andamans	
4	India to buy U.S. oil and gas	
5	India's stand on Taliban	
6	Rupee pact with Iran	
7	Raisina Dialogue	
	<b>International Events</b>	
1	U.S. Israel quit UNESCO	
2	Taiwan's reunification with China	
3	China tests its Mother of All Bombs (MOAB)	
4	New post-Brexit immigration system	
5	China-backed port city in Colombo	
6	PravasiBharatiya Divas	
7	Venezuelan crisis	
8	UN to declare climate change an international security issue	
9	Taliban peace talk	
	<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
1	Republic day awards	
<b>IV</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>	
1	Child care homes Study	
2	Bill to remove leprosy as ground for divorce	
3	Guinness record with sanitary napkins	

4	The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018	
5	Centre proposed hike in pensions for weaker sections	
6	Roshni App	
7	Northeastern States lag behind in toilets for schoolgirls	
<b>V</b>	<b>ECONOMICS</b>	
	<b>Banking Sector &amp; Monetary Policy</b>	
1	RBI reserves ratio among the highest	
2	Restructuring of MSMEs loans	
3	RBI's Financial Stability Report	
4	Card tokenisation	
	<b>Government Policies and Taxation</b>	
1	Bank of Baroda's merger approved by Cabinet	
2	Indian economy on track: Finance Ministry	
3	GST burden on small businesses eased	
4	Farm-to-port project	
5	Technology centres for MSMEs	
6	Global Housing Technology Challenge	
7	Rural housing reaches only 66% target	
8	No e-way bills for non-filers of GST returns	
9	GST Appellate Tribunal	
10	DIPP renamed	
	<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
1	Project 'Trinitea'	
2	Surge in crude oil can impact macro-economic stability: RBI study	
3	Unemployment rate grows	
4	Changes in Gold monetization scheme	
5	Centre's debt-to-GDP falls, States' rises	
6	ILO urges universal labour guarantee	
<b>VI</b>	<b>SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY</b>	

1	Ultima Thule	
2	Yutu 2	
3	New planet discovered by NASA's probe	
4	Decreased deep sleep and Alzheimer's disease	
5	ISRO cranks up Gaganyaan project	
6	PSLV-DL	
7	Rapid diagnostic kit for Chikungunya detection	
8	Swine Flu	
9	Microsat-R	
10	Sickle-cell disease	
11	CMB-Bharat project	
12	WHO report on Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)	
13	New Delhi superbug gene on Arctic	
14	Zika virus-Rajasthan case	
<b>VII</b>	<b>INTERNAL SECURITY</b>	
1	China building 'advanced' warships for Pakistan: report	
2	Defence manufacturing rules eased	
3	Section 66A of IT Act	
4	Light Combat Helicopter	
5	Operation Kabaddi	
6	Exercise Sea Vigil- Largest coastal security drill	
7	Al Qaeda on the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)	

## 1

124<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Bill

<b>Syllabus</b>	<b>GS 2:</b> Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of the vulnerable sections.
<b>Question</b>	"Reservation is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end". Examine this statement in the light of 124th Constitutional Amendment.
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parliament passed the Constitution 124th Amendment Bill 2019 providing 10 percent reservation in jobs and educational institutions to general category people with family income below a threshold level.</li> </ul>
<b>What are provisions of the bill?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Bill seeks to provide for the advancement of “economically weaker sections” of citizens.</li> <li>● <b>Amendment to Article 15 :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) To <b>additionally permit the government to provide for the advancement of “economically weaker sections”.</b></li> <li>(2) Such reservation will <b>not apply to minority educational institution.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Amendment to article 16 :</b> To permit the government to reserve up to 10% of all posts for the <b>“economically weaker sections” of citizens.</b></li> <li>● <b>Takes reservation to 60 %</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The reservation of up to 10% for <b>“economically weaker sections”</b> in educational institutions and public employment will be in <b>addition to the existing reservation.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Qualifying Criteria for the proposed quota for General category individuals</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) All members of whose family together earn less than Rs. 8 lakh per annum</li> <li>(2) Have less than five acres of agricultural land.</li> <li>(3) Do not possess a residential flat of area 1,000 sq ft or larger.</li> <li>(4) Do not possess a residential plot of area 100 yards or more in notified municipalities and 200 yards or more in areas other than notified municipalities.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Post-independence History of reservations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>1953:</b> The first Backward Classes Commission was appointed under Article 340(1) in 1953 under the Chairmanship of Kaka Saheb Kalelkar.</li> <li>● <b>1978:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The second Backward Classes Commission was appointed in 1978 under B P Mandal to review the state of the Backward Classes.</li> <li>(2) This report recommended <b>27.5% reservations in government jobs for OBCs.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>1990:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) V P Singh government applied Mandal commission’s recommendations in 1990.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>1991:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) P.V. Narasimha Rao’s government in 1991 brought two changes in the OBC Reservation Policy.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(1) <b>Non-Creamy layer</b> :_Within the OBC reservation quota, preference was to be given to the candidates belonging to the poorer sections.</p> <p>(2) <b>Economically backward section</b> : 10 per cent of Public Services shall be reserved for economically backward sections of the people, not otherwise covered by the scheme of reservation. Thus, the reservation quota for Government jobs was raised to 59.5%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>1992 :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) P V Narsimha Rao’s policy was challenged in Supreme court.</li> <li>(2) A nine-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India in INDRA SAWHNEYS Case (1992) gave a historic judgement.           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) <b>EWS category was struck down</b> : 10% reservation based on economic criteria proposed by the Narasimha Rao government was struck down.</li> <li>(b) <b>27 % Reservation upheld</b> : 27% job-reservation for the OBCs/SEBCs (Socially and Economically Backward Classes) was upheld.</li> <li>(c) <b>50 % limit</b> : All reservations (for SCs, STs and OBCs) shall not exceed 50% within a grade/cadre/or service in any year.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>How this bill is different from earlier?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>PV Narasimha Rao government</b> brought 10% reservation for economically weaker sections through a <b>notification</b>.</li> <li>● But this govt brought reservation though constitutional amendment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why not on basis of economic criterion?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Genesis in Caste system</b> : The poverty prevailing among the Dalits has its genesis in the social-religious deprivations based on caste system. <b>Therefore, poverty is an effect and caste system a cause.</b> The solution should strike at the cause and not the effect.</li> <li>● <b>Economic status can change</b> : An individual's Economic status can change. Low income may be taken to mean poverty. But the purchasing value of money, in India depends upon caste.</li> <li>● <b>Corruption in getting Income certificate</b> :</li> </ul>
<p><b>How it will stand judicial review?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>cap</b> of reservation is <b>50%</b>.</li> <li>● This limit was given by the Supreme Court <b>to avoid the quota based populism</b> thus compromising on merit.</li> <li>● SC in Indira Sawhney case had further held that <b>social backwardness cannot be determined only with reference to an economic criterion.</b></li> <li>● So, the limits imposed by the nine-judge bench in 1992 would be the major litmus test for this bill.</li> <li>● If the same standards are upheld by the Supreme Court, the 124th Constitutional Amendment Bill may be declared null and void.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Need of Reservation on economic grounds</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Constitutional mandate : Article 46:</b> Promotion of educational and economic interest of suppressed and depressed people of the society, such as SC, ST, and <b>other weaker sections.</b></li> <li>● <b>No progress of caste-based reservation</b> : Caste -based reservations have not been able to improve the lot for majority of the SC/ST leading to calls for a rethink.</li> <li>● <b>Reinforce the caste identity</b> : Caste-based reservations further entrench caste identity instead of eliminating it.</li> <li>● <b>Excluded community</b> :       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Economically weaker sections have largely remained excluded from higher education as well as from public employment due to their financial capacity.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(2) In <b>Balaji v. Mysore, 1962</b>, the Supreme Court noted that ultimately, poverty, rather than community identity was the real marker of social and educational backwardness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Giving fair chance</b> : it provides economically weaker citizens with a fair chance of getting higher education and public employment.</li> </ul>
<b>What are arguments against?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Violation of 1992 ruling</b> : The Supreme Court in a 1992 ruling said economic criteria cannot be the sole basis of reservation and this bill is in violation of the SC orders.</li> <li>● <b>50 percent cap</b> : The overall cap for reservation was capped at 50 percent by the Supreme Court in 2006 and was reiterated in 2018.</li> <li>● <b>Opening up of Pandora box</b> : There is now possibility that SC/ST/OBCs can ask for reservation according to their numbers.</li> <li>● <b>Criteria</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) 8 lakh income threshold is too high (about 66 thousand per month).</li> <li>(2) This will cover nearly 98% population not already covered by reservations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Adequately represented community</b> : EWSs are already adequately represented in public employment. Reservation could benefit them disproportionately.</li> <li>● <b>Compromise with meritocracy</b> : With only 40 percent seats for unreserved candidates merit based order would be compromised.</li> <li>● <b>Not based on Academic Research</b> : Such an important decision must have been based on rigorous academic research, statistical analysis and informed public debate.</li> <li>● <b>Inclusion errors</b> : With such a huge chunk of the population falling in this category, there is a likelihood of inclusion error on account of corruption or negligence.</li> <li>● <b>Mechanism for purging the ineligible</b> : Since the family incomes are fluid, there was a need for a robust mechanism to ensure that those who become ineligible subsequently are purged from the list.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Primary Education</b> : Universal and quality education should be aim.</li> <li>● <b>Restriction of Benefits</b> : it should be restricted per family to a maximum of two children irrespective of the number of children in a family.</li> <li>● <b>Regular Surveys</b> : Conduct regular surveys to identify the beneficiaries who can claim the benefits under the reservation policy.</li> <li>● <b>One-time use</b> : It may be stipulated that the reserved category certificate can be used only once in 20 years. Thus, allowing for the benefits to reach even the sections that have hitherto been excluded from their ambit.</li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, PRS, Indian express



## 2

## Female Labour force participation

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<p><b>GS 3:</b> Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.</p> <p><b>GS 2: Social Justice:</b> Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection of vulnerable sections.</p>
<b>Question</b>	"With India aiming to become a \$5 trillion economy, it cannot afford to leave half of its workforce behind." Discuss in relation to declining female labour force participation in India.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) study</b> - there is rise in literacy levels among women but it failed to translate into an increase in the number of working women.</li> <li>● NITI Ayog India @ 75 Strategy has given a target of raising the female labour force participation rate to 30% from the current 23% by 2022-23.</li> </ul>
<b>More findings of the study:</b>	<p>(1) There is a <b>rise in the percentage of women out of labour force</b> between 2011-2012 and 2015-2016 across all levels of education and age-cohorts</p> <p>(2) As per the study, despite one's educational attainment there has been a <b>decline in the incentive for women to participate</b> in the labour force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Factors :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The role education plays in <b>marriage markets, social norms, poor condition for educated women and quality of education.</b></li> <li>(2) For many the incentive behind ensuring better education for their daughters is not so much the lure of a better paying job but the promise of a <b>better marriage prospect.</b></li> <li>(3) An increase in educational enrolment among the younger cohort, attainment of socio-economic status, and household composition largely contributed to the drop.</li> <li>(4) Growth in formal sector jobs has not kept pace with the supply of educated women, which may have led to "crowding out of females" from the workforce.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Female labour force in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Female labour force participation rates (LFPR) usually calculated as the <b>share of women that are employed or are seeking work as a proportion of the working age female population.</b></li> <li>● The number of indicators that reflect the position of women in Indian society have moved in the right direction.</li> <li>● Out of 17 indicators pertaining to women's agency, attitudes and outcomes, 14 have improved over time.</li> <li>● However, a <b>declining female LFPR despite increasing levels of education</b> and declining fertility rates has emerged as a worrying trend.</li> <li>● The current <b>female LFPR is 23.7%</b> (26.7% in rural areas and 16.2% in urban areas).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The declining trend is particularly strong in rural areas, where it has gone down <b>from 49.7% in 2004-05 to 26.7% in 2015-16.</b></li> <li>● As per the new strategy of government think tank <b>NITI Aayog</b>, the female labour force participation rate should <b>at least 30% by 2022-23.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Significance of Women's participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GDP Growth:</b> It is estimated that if women did as much formal work as men, India would experience an additional <b>1.4% GDP growth.</b></li> <li>● <b>Socio-Economic:</b> Employment is vital for <b>eliminating poverty and for improving women's status.</b></li> <li>● <b>Demographic Dividend:</b> India could benefit fullest from its demographic dividend only if the FLFP rate is enhanced, else the dividend will be wasted.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Informal jobs:</b> Women are confined mainly to the large informal sector.</li> <li>● <b>Majorly Unpaid:</b> On average, 66% of women's work in India is unpaid, compared to 12% of men.</li> <li>● <b>Lower Position of the country with respect to LFPR:</b> India had the lowest female LFPR in South Asia, with the exception of Pakistan.</li> <li>● <b>Positive Income Effect:</b> As the males in the family start earning more income, women tend to withdraw from work in the formal economy to give more attention to household activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Various Constraints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Constraints of <b>workplace distance, inflexibility in working hours, lack of availability of crèches, safety</b> etc..</li> <li>● The <b>absence of opportunities for part-time work</b> and challenges surrounding <b>re-entry into the workforce</b> further worsen the situation.</li> <li>● Women's work comprises mostly of <b>invisible/ unpaid work.</b></li> <li>● Women's are pushed both by the pressure to stay at home and by lack of ample jobs that match their <b>intermediate levels of education.</b></li> <li>● It is only at <b>higher levels of education</b> and income that women re-enter the workforce through well-paying jobs that match their education and skills.</li> </ul>
<b>Government Initiatives to promote female participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Self Help Groups :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) They help to build Social Capital among the poor, especially women in generating income security and social wellbeing.</li> <li>(2) Government ,through programmes such as SHG Bank Linkage programme, has supported the SHGs.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Stand-up India :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Launched in 2016, with a motive of promoting entrepreneurship among <b>women</b> and SC/ST communities.</li> <li>(2) Bank loans worth Rs. 10 lakh and up to Rs. 1 crore provided to at least one SC/ST and one woman by every scheduled commercial bank branch.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Maternity benefit amendment act now enhanced paid maternity leave from a period of 12 weeks to 26 weeks.</li> <li>(2) Providing crèche (day care) facilities is now mandatory for employers with more than 50 employees.</li> <li>(3) Maternity leave and other maternity benefits are to protect the dignity of motherhood and maintaining and promoting the women's participation in work force.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana :</b> It Provides partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentives so that the woman can take adequate</li> </ul>

	rest before and after delivery of the first living child.
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Behavioural changes</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The government policies should focus on behavioural changes that make female employment more acceptable in the society.</li> <li>(2) The communication programmes on gender equality in secondary education to help students imbibe equitable gender norms.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Incentives for Education</b> : Provide relatively higher financial incentives for girls' education until Class XII to curb the higher dropout rate among girls and raise the average age at marriage by keeping girls in education system.</li> <li>● <b>Legal Framework</b> : Bring in legislations for women engaged in the <b>unorganized sector</b> to ensure at least a minimum set of gender-sensitive provisions.</li> <li>● <b>Access to credit</b>: Create policies and guidelines, on priority, to enhance access to credit by women entrepreneurs.</li> <li>● <b>Improve asset ownership and economic security</b> : Encourage joint registration with spouses/ sole registration of land in the name of the woman through registration fee and stamp duty concessions</li> <li>● <b>Enhance skills</b> : Promote skill development among women in non-traditional work such as electronic technicians, electricians, plumbers, taxi drivers</li> <li>● <b>Ensure security and safety</b> : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Provide affordable housing, residential hostels and gender friendly facilities in upcoming towns and big cities.</li> <li>(2) Ensure gender-sensitive, rights-based and time-bound trials as well as disposal of cases pertaining to violence against women, including new forms of violence such as cybercrimes.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, NITI Aayog, PIB, The Guardian.



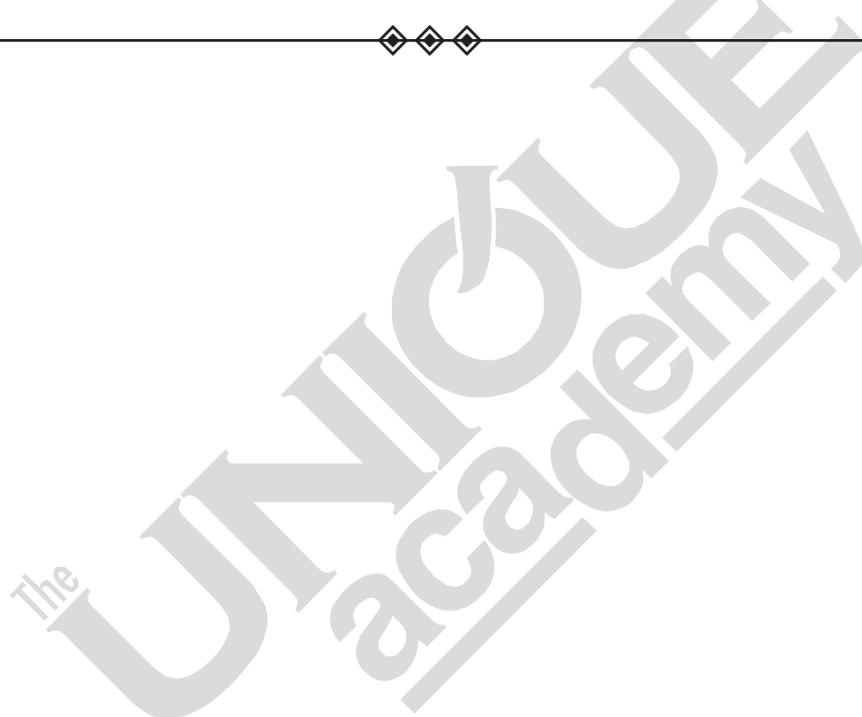
## 3

## All India judicial Services

<b>Syllabus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 2</b> : Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<p>“According to National Judicial Data Grid more than 4 million cases are pending in India judiciary.” Critically analyze how All India Judicial Services can help solve this problem.</p>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NitiAyog, in its report titled “<b>Strategy For New India @ 75</b>”, has suggested All-India judicial services examination on a ranking basis to maintain high standards in the judiciary.</li> </ul>
<b>Outline of AIJS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District judges will be recruited centrally through an all-India examination and allocated to each State along the lines of the AIS.</li> </ul>
<b>NITI Aayog on judicial reforms</b>	<p>(1) <b>Quality of Justice:</b> An all-India judicial services examination on a ranking basis can be considered <b>to maintain high standards in the judiciary.</b></p> <p>(2) <b>Continuing training:</b> Continuous training may be introduced to ensure the development of skills, ethics, knowledge and awareness of international best practices.</p> <p>(3) <b>Performance Index:</b> for judges and a separate state wise index for ease of getting justice.</p> <p>(4) <b>Administrative Cadre</b></p> <p>(a) Introduce an administrative cadre in the judicial system to streamline processes.</p> <p>(b) To maintain judicial independence, the cadre should report to the Chief Justice in each High Court.</p> <p>(1) <b>Use of ICT :</b></p> <p>(a) Prioritize court process automation and ICT enablement for electronic court and case management.</p>
<b>All India Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Art 312 (3)</b> : The all India judicial service shall not include any post inferior to that of a district judge as defined in <b>article 236.</b></li> <li>● <b>Art 312 (4)</b> : The law providing for the creation of the all India judicial service may contain such provisions for the amendment of Chapter VI of Part Vi and no such law shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of article 368</li> </ul>
<b>History Of AIJS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>1961 :</b> <p>(1) The proposal for an All-India Judicial Service was first suggested in the <b>Chief Justices' Conference in 1961</b> to remove any scope for judicial or executive intervention in the appointments to the judiciary in the High Courts and the Supreme Court in India.</p> <p>(2) The idea had to be held back after some states and High Courts opposed it.</p> </li> <li>● <b>1977 :</b> The Constitution was amended in 1977 to provide for an AIJS under Article 312.</li> </ul>
<b>Other govt reports which</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Law commission :</b> The Law Commission, in its 1st, 8th and 116th reports, called for such a service.</li> </ul>

<p><b>favoured AIJS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Supreme Court</b> : The Supreme Court, first in 1991 and the second time in the all-India judges' case (1992) had endorsed the creation of the AIJS.</li> <li>● <b>Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice</b> : In its 15th report, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice favoured AIJS.</li> <li>● <b>First National Judicial Pay Commission</b> : The first National Judicial Pay Commission had supported the proposal of AIJS.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Need of all India judicial services</b></p>	<p>(1) <b>Lack of Transparency in Recruitment process.</b></p> <p>(2) <b>Huge vacancy:</b> There are at least 4,400 vacancies for judges in the subordinate judiciary, including for district judges.</p> <p>(3) <b>Pendency of cases: As of December 31, 2015, 51.2 per cent of all cases pending in the subordinate courts have been pending for more than two years.</b></p> <p>(4) <b>Unable attract young talent:</b> talented law students do not want to go for state judicial services for hassles involved and lack of a clear streamlined path of growth.</p> <p>(5) <b>Inefficiency and Low productivity of Indian Judiciary.</b></p>
<p><b>What are benefits of AIJS?</b></p>	<p>(1) <b>Open competition:</b> The requirement of judges at the entry level will be handled by an <b>independent and impartial agency</b> such as the UPSC thereby ensuring fair selection.</p> <p>(2) <b>Efficiency:</b> Well trained and qualified judicial officers would be instrumental to <b>reduce the time required</b> for the litigation.</p> <p>(3) <b>Attracting young talent:</b> It would help attract bright and capable young law graduates to the judiciary.</p> <p>(4) <b>Equitable service conditions:</b> For the subordinate judicial officers, it would ensure equitable service conditions for SCs, STs and women.</p> <p>(5) <b>Minimizing Nepotism in judiciary:</b> It will lead to minimizing the <b>scope of partiality, arbitrariness and nepotism in judicial selection.</b></p> <p>(6) <b>Quality of dispensation of Justice:</b> The quality of dispensation of justice, as it essentially depends upon the quality of judges, will also improve from the top to the bottom.</p> <p>(7) <b>Low cost:</b> The creation of the AIJS is a low-cost proposition and should not pose any financial problem to the government in introducing this long overdue reform.</p>
<p><b>Arguments against</b></p>	<p>(1) <b>Constitutional limitation :</b></p> <p>(2) NITI aayog proposed much wider composition of the AIJS than what is permissible under Article 312.</p> <p>(3) It has called for an all inclusive service to cover: <b>Entry level civil judges, Prosecutors, Legal advisers</b> to comprise the service.</p> <p>(4) It would require considerable amendments to the Constitution, especially with respect to the appointments process for the lower subordinate judiciary (that is, all ranks below that of a district judge).</p> <p>(5) These amendments are vulnerable to being struck down as <b>violations of the basic structure doctrine and judicial federalism.</b></p> <p>(6) <b>National exam :</b> It may not take into account <b>local laws, practices and customs</b> which vary widely across States.</p> <p>(7) <b>Government intervention :</b> Chances of government intervention exist. It can lead to violating basic structure of constitution.</p>

	<p>(8) <b>Small talent pool</b> : Talent pool is already small because of <b>lack of good law schools</b>.</p> <p>(9) <b>Low pay-grade: Low pay-grade and no attractive conditions of service deter talented students from opting judicial service as carrier option.</b></p> <p>(10) <b>Underprivileged people</b> : People from less privileged background may not be able to clear AIJS.</p> <p>(11) <b>No empirical evidence:</b> To say that the quality of adjudication in lower courts is average, there needs to be some metric or measurement to determine the quality of adjudication.</p> <p>(12) <b>Erosion of control of the High Court</b> : Erosion of control of the High Court over subordinate judiciary would <b>impair independence of the judiciary.</b></p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● AIJS is a much needed reform to attract capable judicial professionals who can ensure speedy disposal of cases and reduce the pendency of cases. It will help bring justice closer to the common man by making it easy, accessible and cheap.</li></ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, livemint



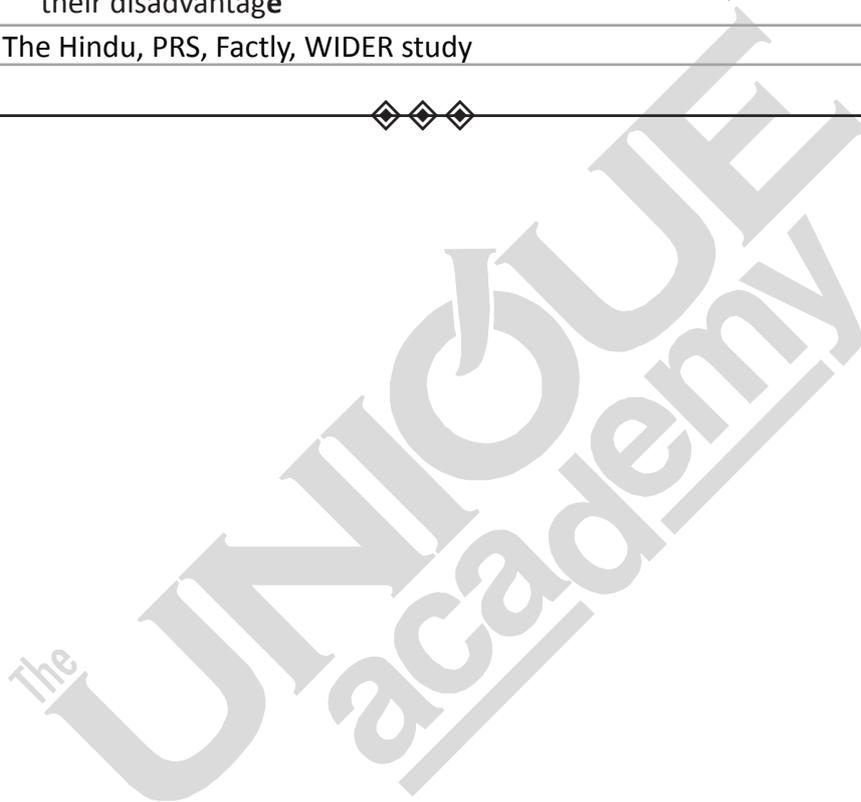
## 4

## Women's Reservation Bill

<b>Syllabus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS2</b> :Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers &amp; privileges and issues arising out of these</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	Examine the significance of Women Reservation Bill in empowerment of women.
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women Parliamentarians in the Rajya Sabha cutting across political lines called for the passage of the Bill by Lok Sabha recently.</li> <li>● Women's collective in Bengaluru launched a campaign to press for the passing of the Women's Reservation bill in the parliament.</li> </ul>
<b>Highlights of the bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>33 percent reservation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bill seeks to reserve one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies.</li> <li>➤ The allocation of reserved seats shall be determined by such authority as prescribed by the Parliament.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Reservation for SC/ ST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ One third of the total number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be reserved for women of those groups in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Reservation through rotation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Reserved seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the States or Union Territories.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Journey of the bill</b>	<p><b>Charting the journey of the Women's Reservation Bill (WRB)</b></p> <p>1996: WRB first introduced in Parliament.</p> <p>1998-2003: NDA govt. tables the Bill 4 times without success.</p> <p>2009: UPA govt. tables Bill amidst loud protests by RJD, SP &amp; JD(U).</p> <p>Feb. 2010: Union Cabinet approves Bill.</p> <p>March 2010: Rajya Sabha passes the Bill.</p> <p>Nov. 2014: Bill expected to be tabled in Lok Sabha. Favourable signals from the ruling party.</p>
<b>Data on women representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>According to ADR data:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>12 percent in LS</b> : Women occupy just 66 seats in the 543 member Lok Sabha which is 12%.</li> <li>(2) <b>State assembly</b> : Women across all state assemblies in India fare worse with the <b>national average of 9%</b>.</li> <li>(3) <b>International comparison</b> : Countries like Rwanda (63.8%), Mozambique (39.2%), Mexico (37.4%) and Kazakhstan (25.2%) are doing better India's 11.4%.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>The infographic consists of two parts. The first part, titled 'Women representation in India - Global scale (higher is better)', shows a horizontal scale from 0% to 100%. India is marked at 12.2% and Rwanda at 63.8%. The second part, titled 'How does India rank in different groups? (lower is better)', shows four circles representing different groups: Global (103/141*), Asia (13/18), SAARC (5/8), and BRICS (4/5). A note below states '* 141 ranks awarded to 190 nations'.</p>
<p><b>Need of Women's Reservation in Parliament</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Low political representation:</b> The Economic Survey (2017-18) highlighted low political participation women compared to other developing countries.</li> <li>● <b>Need of reservation at higher level:</b> While India has given Constitutional status to Women's reservation at the level of the third tier, it is all the more logical to provide the same at the highest level.</li> <li>● <b>Historical disability:</b> Reservation will ensure a level playing field in uplifting women who had several disabilities imposed upon them historically.</li> <li>● <b>Gender Parity:</b> It would lead to gender equality in Parliament resulting in women empowerment.</li> <li>● <b>Women related issues get more focus:</b> Issue related to women will get due attention in the Parliament.</li> <li>● <b>Cleaning of politics:</b> The recent downward spiral in the climate of our Parliament as well as Assemblies can be arrested.</li> <li>● <b>Level playing field for women:</b> It will give the women of India a level playing field in politics and raise their status and efficiency.</li> <li>● <b>Active role in governance:</b> It will enable women to play an active role in the governance of our country.</li> <li>● <b>Other benefits</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Designing laws that encourage better education for girls.</li> <li>(2) Securing financial independence and formal employment for women.</li> <li>(3) Ensuring that female hygiene products are not taxed as luxury goods.</li> <li>(4) Neutralise the effect of deep-rooted patriarchy.</li> <li>(5) Social and Political Decision making.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>World Institute for Development Economics Research Study</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>This analyses the performance of MLAs in state assemblies by gender :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The study found that male legislators were three times as likely to have criminal charges against them as their female counterparts.</li> <li>(2) The growth in assets of women legislators was 10 per cent less than their male counterparts.</li> <li>(3) Both male and female legislators canvassed equally for road construction projects in their constituency but women were more likely to see these projects to completion.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What are arguments against</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Making less space for deserved candidates :</b> This Bill takes away the democratic right of 33% of the electorate to elect their representatives as after the implementation of bill it became compulsory to fill the reserved seats for women.</li> <li>● <b>Question on abilities of women :</b> This law is raising questions on the abilities of women and perpetuates gender discrimination.</li> <li>● <b>Exclusion error :</b> It is not guaranteed that benefits are received by the socially backward and underprivileged women who really need them.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Close relatives of MPs and MLA may come to power</b> : Many MLAs and MPs who are already having seats in Parliament and state assemblies will try to bring their own wife's and other relatives to fulfil the seats.</li> <li>● <b>Rotational System</b> : The model for reservation based on rotation would lead to weaker commitment of MPs to their constituency and hinder the enforcement of accountability by the people.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Passing the Women's Reservation Bill</b></li> <li>● <b>Role of Political parties</b> : Political parties should come forward to increase women representatives.</li> <li>● <b>Alternative Model</b> : To avoid the limitations of the rotation based model alternative models could be thought of.</li> <li>● <b>Training in rural areas</b> : Tailor training and support programmes for elected representatives to help women from lower caste and class overcome their disadvantage</li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, PRS, Factly, WIDER study



## 5

## Sedition Sec 124A

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<p><b>GS 2: Constitution and Polity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.</li> <li>● Separation of powers, redressal mechanisms and institutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	The use of colonial era sedition law in a democracy is against the ethos of a vibrant democracy. Critically Analyse.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India opposition politicians and media called for a colonial-era sedition law to be scrapped, accusing authorities of trying to suppress dissent after it was invoked against JNU students.</li> <li>● Police used the sedition law against 10 people, including a student organiser, for the 2016 rally at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University where police say anti-India posters were raised.</li> </ul>
<b>What is meant by sedition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The literal meaning of sedition is <b>conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch.</b></li> <li>● As per the Indian Penal Code, for an act to be called "seditious", it should have the following components:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Any words, which can be either written or spoken, or signs which include placards/posters (visible representation)</li> <li>(2) Must bring hatred/contempt/disaffection against the Indian Government</li> <li>(3) Must result in 'imminent violence' or public disorder.</li> </ol>             ('Disaffection' has been defined as a feeling that can exist only between 'the ruler' and 'the ruled'. The ruler must be accepted as a ruler. Disaffection is the opposite of that feeling, and manifests a lack of, or repudiation of acceptance of a particular government as ruler.)           </li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It was drafted by Thomas Macaulay and introduced in 1870.</li> <li>● According to the British Era Law, under the old IPC, "Exciting or attempting to excite feelings or disaffection was considered as Sedition".</li> <li>● In the 19th and early 20th Centuries, the law was mainly <b>used against Indian political leaders seeking independence from British rule.</b></li> <li>● The first known instance of the application of the law was the trial of newspaper editor <b>Jogendra Chandra Bose in 1891.</b></li> <li>● More prominent examples include the trials of Indian nationalists <b>Bal Gangadhar Tilak</b> and <b>Mahatma Gandhi.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Gandhiji on Sedition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● "Section 124-A under, which I am happily charged, is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the IPC designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by the law. If one has no affection for a person, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence."</li> </ul>
<b>Significance of Sedition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sedition is described an offence that <b>criminalizes speech</b> that is regarded to be <b>disloyal to or threatening to the state.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sedition is considered to be a crime against the society as it involves all those practices that result in conduct <b>disturbance in the state</b> or to lead to <b>civil war</b> which contempt the sovereign and <b>promotes public disorder</b>.</li> <li>● In today's scenario, the sedition law expects that citizens <b>should not show enmity, contempt towards the Government</b> established by the law.</li> <li>● Also, the purpose of restricting speech under Sedition Act is the <b>protection of National Security</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sedition and Right to speech and expression</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A <b>democratic form of government</b> attaches a lot of importance to the <b>freedom of speech and expression</b> as it lays the foundations to a truly democratic form of governance.</li> <li>● At the same time, Article 19(2) imposes '<b>reasonable restrictions</b>' on the freedom of speech and expression.</li> <li>● The perpetual problem it seems to raise is that of <b>striking a balance</b> between individual <b>freedom of expression</b> and <b>the security of the State</b>.</li> <li>● Thus, the freedom of speech and expression are <b>not absolute</b> in nature.</li> <li>● But the imposition of restrictions does not mean that the right to speech and that of expressing oneself are restricted always.</li> <li>● Whatever restrictions are imposed <b>should not be unreasonable and arbitrary in nature</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Judgments regarding Sedition</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In <b>Kedar Nath Singh's Case</b>, the 5 judges bench of the Supreme Court made it clear that allegedly seditious speech and expression may be punished only if the speech is an 'incitement' to 'violence', or 'public disorder'.</li> <li>● The court <b>upheld the constitutionality</b> of the sedition law, whilst also curtailing its meaning and limiting its application to acts involving intention or tendency to create disorder, or disturbance of law and order, or incitement to violence. The judges observed that if the sedition law were to be given a wider interpretation, it would not survive the test of constitutionality.</li> <li>● Subsequent cases have further clarified the meaning of this phrase. In <b>Indra Das v. State of Assam</b> and <b>Arup Bhuyan v. State of Assam</b>, the Supreme Court unambiguously stated that only speech that amounts to "incitement to imminent lawless action" can be criminalised.</li> <li>● In <b>Shreya Singhal v. Union of India</b>, the famous 66A judgment, the Supreme Court drew a clear distinction between "advocacy" and "incitement", stating that only the latter could be punished.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Critics to Sedition law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code was an instrument used by the colonial administration <b>to repress the voices in the freedom movement</b>.</li> <li>● Critics of the section say that just by changing the words 'Her majesty ' to government established by law did not take away the oppressive nature of the section.</li> <li>● Recognising the potential for <b>its misuse</b>, the <b>Supreme Court in 1962 had restricted its usage</b> to cases in which there was a clear incitement to violence.</li> <li>● The sedition law is <b>excessively vague and broad</b>, making it an easy <b>tool to stifle dissent and debate</b>.</li> <li>● Mahatma Gandhi, who was charged with sedition, famously said the law was "<b>designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen</b>".</li> <li>● The Section openly criminalises "attempts to excite disaffection towards the government". Not the country or national security, but any elected government.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government and nation neither mean the same and nor are they interchangeable.</li> <li>● Free speech must not be curtailed in the name of sedition.</li> <li>● The Allahabad High Court found Section 124A unconstitutional in 1958.</li> <li>● The Supreme Court (SC) has repeatedly constrained the ambit of the Section and the definition of sedition as well.</li> <li>● In many instances, the SC chided the Government and law enforcement agencies for misusing the sedition law.</li> <li>● Even Britain has repealed its law of sedition.</li> <li>● Although the law is against violent action and not mere sloganeering, it has not been followed.</li> <li>● It facilitates clubbing of anti-government utterances with anti-national utterances.</li> <li>● It undermines right to dissent and right to criticize the state policy.</li> <li>● Even if someone charged with sedition is acquitted along the way, he faces punishment by being put through a torturous legal process.</li> <li>● The offences should be made non-cognisable— A judicial check on the police acting on the basis of politically motivated complaints be maintained.</li> <li>● Strict Action to be taken against those who bring malicious complaints against speech acts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Way Ahead</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In a democracy, while showing their <b>affection towards their country</b>, one might indulge in constructive criticism or debates, pointing out the loopholes in the policy of the Government.</li> <li>● Expressions used in such thoughts might be harsh and unpleasant to some, but that <b>does not render the actions to be branded seditious</b>.</li> <li>● Section 124A should be invoked <b>only in cases</b> where the <b>intention behind any act is to disrupt public order or to overthrow the Government with violence and illegal means</b>.</li> <li>● <b>A Balance:</b> While it is essential to protect national integrity, the Sedition law should not be misused as a tool to curb free speech.</li> <li>● Dissent and criticism are essential ingredients of a robust public debate on policy issues as part of vibrant democracy.</li> <li>● Therefore, every restriction on free speech and expression must be <b>carefully scrutinised to avoid unwarranted restrictions</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, The Wire, Law commission.</p>



## 6

## Marital rape

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<b>GS-1:</b> Social empowerment. <b>GS-2:</b> Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse the issue of women empowerment in light of increases cases of marital rapes.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recently, Congress MP Dr. Shashi Tharoor has introduced a private member bill titled Women's Sexual, Reproductive and Menstrual Rights Bill 2018 in the Lok Sabha to make marital rape a crime.</li> <li>The Bill proposes the deletion of <b>Exception 2 to Section 375 of Indian Penal Code that provides marriage as an exception in definition of rape given in Sec 375.</b></li> </ul>
<b>What is Marital Rape?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marital Rape refers to unwanted intercourse by a man with his wife obtained by force, threat of force, or physical violence, or when she is unable to give consent.</li> </ul>
<b>Women's Sexual, Reproductive and Menstrual Rights Bill 2018</b>	<p><b>Bill mainly Talks about 3 main rights to women:</b></p> <p>(1) <b>Sexual rights:</b> It restores a married woman's autonomy over her sexual rights and ensures unrelated facts are not used in presuming her sexual consent by criminalizing marital rape.</p> <p>(2) <b>Menstrual rights:</b> It guarantees menstrual equity of all women by obligating schools and public authorities to provide sanitary pads free of cost to any female by acknowledging that menstruation is an involuntary essential bodily function.</p> <p>(3) <b>Reproductive rights:</b> Bill ensures that a woman successfully realizes her reproductive rights by protecting the privacy of women who intend to terminate a pregnancy, changing the title of the Act from 'Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act' to 'Legal Termination of Pregnancy Act'.</p>
<b>Legal status of marital rape in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No concrete protection :</b> Current legal system in India does not provide any concrete protection to the victims of marital rape.</li> <li><b>Section 375 of IPC :</b> It considers forced sex in marriages as a crime only when the wife is below 15 or the couple is legally separated. Thus, marital rape is not a criminal offense under the IPC.</li> <li><b>Hindu marriage act, 1955 :</b> Under Hindu marriage act, 1955 one of the “conjugal duties” of the wife is to provide sexual satisfaction to her husband, a very archaic thought congruent to the thoughts of a patriarchal society.</li> <li><b>Limitations to PWDVA :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marital rape victims have to take recourse to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005(PWDVA).</li> <li>However, it offers <b>only a civil remedy</b> for the offence.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Arguments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Fundamental right violation :</b> It is considered as the violation of Fundamental</li> </ul>

<p><b>in favour of criminalizing marital rape</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Right guaranteed under <b>Article 14</b> (equality before law), <b>Article 21</b> (right to privacy, bodily integrity, right to life and personal liberty) of the Indian constitution.</li> <li>● <b>International Examples</b> : Nepal, Malaysia Turkey, Bolivia, United States began criminalizing marital rape and most European countries also started it in the 1990s.</li> <li>● <b>Law Commission’s report and Justice Verma panel recommendations</b> : Both recommended removing the exemption granted to marital rape in the laws.</li> <li>● <b>Patriarchal mindset of society</b> : It promotes patriarchal society where women rights and consent are ignored and theory that husband cannot be a rapist.</li> <li>● <b>Report figures</b> : (1) According to one survey 97.7% rapes were committed by the people known to the victim, out of which marital rapes accounts for 2/3rd.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arguments against criminalizing marital rape</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Prone to Misuse</b>: If it is criminalized without any adequate safeguards it may be misused by the wives to harass and torture their Husbands.</li> <li>● <b>Difficult to prove</b>: It is difficult to prove marital rape thus has potential to be misused.</li> <li>● <b>Destabilisation of institution of marriage</b>: The Central Government before the Delhi HC argued that criminalising marital rape would destabilise the institution of marriage and can be an easy tool for harassing the husbands.</li> <li>● <b>Concurrent list</b>: As criminal laws are come under <b>Concurrent List</b> and implemented by the <b>states</b>, it is difficult to achieve uniformity in law and every state has variation in their cultures.</li> <li>● <b>Broad based consensus of the society</b>: As only the offence of rape is defined under Section 375 of the IPC and not marital rape, thus, defining it would require a <b>broad-based consensus of the society</b> which is difficult to achieve.</li> <li>● <b>Mere deletion of section is not solution</b>: Only deleting the exception to Section 375 would not stop marital rape but it requires widespread social, moral awareness among the society.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Way forward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Implementing recommendations of Justice Verma committee</b> : (1) <b>Removal of exception</b> : The Committee recommended that the exception to marital rape should be removed. (2) <b>Irrevocable consent</b> : Marriage should not be considered as an irrevocable consent to sexual acts. (3) <b>Independent of relationship between the victim and the accused</b> : The relationship between the victim and the accused should not be relevant with regard to an inquiry about whether the complainant consented to the sexual activity.</li> <li>● <b>Addressing the issue from deeper, grassroot level</b> : As the institution of marriage has deep roots in Indian society, mere legislative interventions without addressing existing customs at individual level, societal level will end up operating at the periphery.</li> <li>● <b>Initiative from women itself</b> : There needs to be a movement from the side of women to bring this issue strongly in national discourse.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, Indian express, Business standard, FinancialExpress</p>



## 7

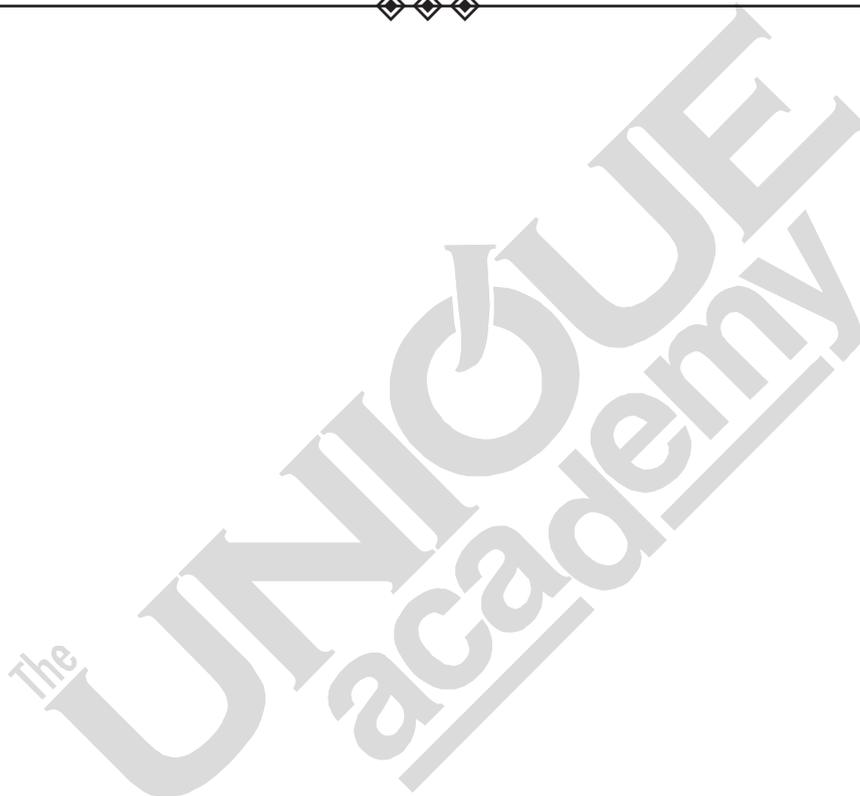
## Manipur's New Anti-Lynching Law

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 2:</b> Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.</li> <li>● <b>GS 3:</b> Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In recent years there has been increase in number of lynching in different parts of the country. Analyse the factors behind it and give your opinion on recent Manipur anti-lynching law as solution to it.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, Manipur became the first to pass a law against lynching named 'The Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Bill, 2018'.</li> <li>● It follows the Supreme Court verdict which issued a number of directions to the Union and State governments to protect India's 'pluralist social fabric' from mob violence and urged Parliament to consider passing a law to combat mob hate crime.</li> </ul>
<b>What is lynching?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lynching is the practice whereby a mob--usually several dozen or several hundred persons--takes the law into its own hands in order to injure and kill a person accused of some wrongdoing.</li> <li>● The alleged offense can range from a serious crime like theft or murder to a mere violation of local customs and sensibilities. The issue of the victim's guilt is usually secondary, since the mob serves as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner. Due process yields to momentary passions and expedient objectives.</li> <li>● Vigilantism, or summary justice, has a long history, but the term lynch law originated during the American Revolution with Col. Charles Lynch and his Virginia associates, who responded to unsettled times by making their own rules for confronting Tories and criminal elements.</li> </ul>
<b>Why we Need Anti-Lynching Laws?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Increase in number of lynching cases:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There has been increase in number of lynching all over the country.</li> <li>(2) About 86% of those killed belonged to vulnerable communities and minorities.</li> <li>(3) Cow-related lynchings rose sharply in 2017 with 75% increase over year 2016.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Reasons for lynching in India:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Poor Law and Order situation:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Law and order is a state subject. Due to political interference and inefficiencies states are failing to maintain good law and order.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Failure judiciary:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) In lynching incidents, perpetrators of crime are difficult to identify.</li> <li>(b) Time taken for cases from Lower Courts to Supreme court has reduced the confidence of citizens in the judiciary.</li> <li>(c) Often incidents of lynching have happened with an urge for "immediate justice."</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Implicit support from political class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Vested interests and vote bank politics has often resulted in politicians openly or tacitly supporting those involved in such crimes.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Impunity of offenders:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Poor Law and Order, failure of judiciary, implicit support from political class create an attitude of impunity amongst the offenders.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Polarization of society:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Indian society has been witnessing polarization on multiple faultlines such as Majority vs Minority, Insiders vs Outsider, Communalism, Casteism, etc.</li> <li>(b) This has led to the perception of 'the other' about certain communities making them legitimate targets for mob justice.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Post-truth regime:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Social Media has been held responsible for promoting hate crimes in the form of fake news and rumors.</li> <li>(b) However, it is a part larger post-truth era, where people tend to believe what has been presented before them without critical analysis.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>SC ruling on lynching</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Supreme Court condemned mob lynching incidents across the country and urged Parliament to enact a law to deal with the crime that threatens rule of law and the country's social fabric.</li> <li>● <b>Supreme Court gives following prescription :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Designation of a senior police officer</b> in each district.</li> <li>(2) <b>Identification of districts, sub-divisions and villages</b> where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.</li> <li>(3) <b>Appointing nodal officers</b> to bring to the notice of the DGP any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy against lynching.</li> <li>(4) <b>Fixing duty of police officers</b> to disperse mob causing violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise.</li> <li>(5) <b>Creating public awareness.</b></li> <li>(6) <b>Scanning of social media to purge provocative content.</b></li> <li>(7) <b>Preparing victim compensation schemes.</b></li> <li>(8) <b>Designation of court/fast track courts</b></li> <li>(9) <b>Action against deliberate negligence of duty by officers.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Features of Manipur's anti-lynching law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Nodal officer post:</b> It follows the prescriptions of Supreme Court to appoint a nodal officer to control such crimes.</li> <li>● <b>Comprehensive definition of lynching:</b> "Any act of violence, spontaneous or planned, by a mob of people on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, dietary practices, sexual orientation, political affiliation, ethnicity or any other related grounds."</li> <li>● <b>Exclusion of solitary hate crimes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The law excludes from its provisions solitary hate crimes.</li> <li>(2) I.e. Law only considers groups actions (who are assembled with a common intention of lynching) and not individual's actions as hate crimes.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Rules for strict police actions:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It termed dereliction of duty by public officials as crime and provided for punishment of imprisonment of one year, which may extend to three years with fine.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(2) It thus removes the protection that is otherwise extended to public officials from being charged with any offence committed while acting in their discharge of official duty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Removal of prior sanction:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) At present, no court can take cognisance of such an offence except with the previous sanction of the State government.</li> <li>(2) Now, as per the Manipur law, no prior sanction is required to register crimes against public officials who fail in their duties to prevent hate crimes such as lynching.</li> <li>(3) It thus made acts against hate crimes far more effective and non-partisan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Laid down duty and responsibilities of the State government:</b> State government should protect the victims from against any kind of intimidation, coercion, inducement, violence or threats of violence.</li> <li>● <b>Rehabilitation:</b> It requires the state to formulate a scheme for relief camps and rehabilitation in case of displacement of victims, and death compensation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Issues with the Law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Exclusion of solitary hate crimes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Majority of hate crimes were indeed by mobs of attackers and spectators, but there were also cases of solitary hate murders.</li> <li>(2) For instance, case of Bengali migrant Mohammad Afrazul in Rajasthan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Arbitrary restriction of numbers of attackers:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The essence behind these kind of crimes is not the numbers of attackers but the motivation of hate behind the crimes.</li> <li>(2) Therefore, provisions of this law should apply to all hate crimes not just lynching, regardless of the numbers of persons who participate.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Way Forward</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Practicality of law:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There are number of such ideal laws present in our law books but their implementation on ground is ineffective which ultimately defeats their legislated purpose.</li> <li>(2) Thus, there is need for check on practicality of law and strict implementation guidelines at place.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Good precedent for other to follow:</b> Manipur being 1<sup>st</sup> to set anti-lynching law also set good precedent for other states to come up with law even better than it and it also provided basic framework for it.</li> <li>● <b>Incorporation of command responsibility:</b> It will help to fix accountability on part of public officials to perform their duty sincerely.</li> <li>● <b>Gender-sensitive compensation model:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There is also need for law prescribing all encompassing framework for gender-sensitive reparation on a compensation model.</li> <li>(2) States need to ensure that the victim of hate violence is assisted to achieve material conditions that are better than what they were before the violence.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What is MASUKA?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● National Campaign Against Mob Lynching led by Youths of different ideologies had demanded a special law against lynching.</li> <li>● The drafting committee has formed the Draft naming 'Manav Suraksha Kanoon' or MASUKA against lynching.</li> <li>● Its purpose is to safeguard human life from angry Mob.</li> </ul>

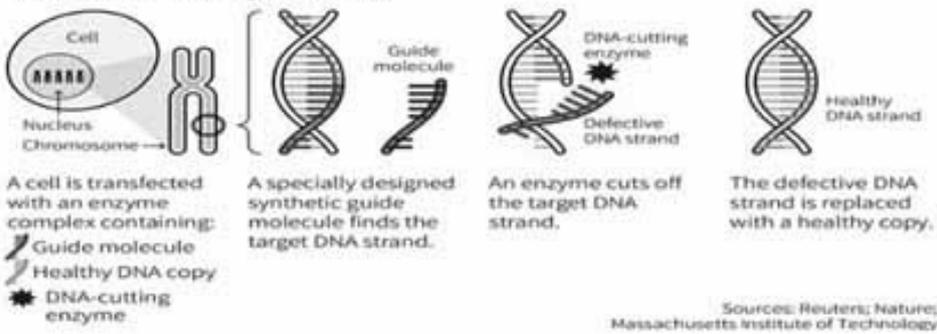
<b>The main objectives of MASUKA</b>	(1) To define act of Lynching (2) To legally define an angry Mob (3) Make lynching or mob violence non bailable offence. (4) Compensation & rehabilitation for victim (5) Time bound judicial enquiry (6) To fix liability of local police & administration (7) Speedy trial etc..
<b>Rationale behind it</b>	● The Indian Penal Code (IPC) has no mention of the word 'lynching', and any such case is covered under Section 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (causing voluntary hurt) 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting armed with deadly weapons) and 149 (unlawful assembly).
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Hindustan times, live law, Indian express, financial express



## 8

## Gene Editing and Bioethics

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<p><b>GS 4: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions; dimensions of ethics; ethics in private and public relationships.</li> <li>● Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	India should allow genetic modifications to address incurable diseases. Critically Analyze.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A <b>Chinese scientist He Jiankui</b> said to have made the world's first "gene-edited" babies. He is alleged to have intentionally evaded oversight and broke national guidelines in a quest for fame and fortune.</li> <li>● He said that he had altered the embryos of seven couples during fertility treatment.</li> <li>● The twin girls born apparently had their genes edited to prevent future possible infection from HIV.</li> <li>● Such claims are being considered as a serious violation of academic ethics.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Although gene "editing" capabilities now exist but scientists in the field, have for long been calling for a <b>"global pause"</b> on clinical applications of the technology in human beings, till such time as internationally accepted protocols are developed.</li> </ul>
<b>Concepts</b>	<p><b>The Gene editing :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Genes contain the bio-information that <b>defines any individual's physical features, vulnerability to diseases and even behavioural traits.</b></li> <li>● An ability to alter this information gives scientists the <b>power to control some of these features.</b></li> <li>● Gene "editing"- sometimes expressed in related, but not always equivalent, terms like <b>genetic modification</b> or <b>genetic engineering.</b></li> <li>● Although widely practised in agriculture, to increase productivity or resistance to diseases, etc. these are a subject of major debate, especially in developing countries, including India.</li> </ul> <p><b>CRISPR-Cas9 technology :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● CRISPR (short for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) technology is a tool for gene "editing" developed in the last one decade.</li> <li>● The technology replicates a <b>natural defence mechanism</b> in bacteria to fight virus attacks, using a special protein called <b>Cas9.</b></li> <li>● CRISPR-Cas9 technology behaves like a <b>cut-and-paste mechanism</b> on DNA strands that contain genetic information.</li> <li>● The specific location of the genetic codes that need to be changed, or "edited", is identified on the DNA strand, and then, using the Cas9 protein, which acts like a pair of scissors, that location is cut off from the strand.</li> <li>● A DNA strand, when broken, has a natural tendency to repair itself.</li> </ul>

	<p>A DNA editing technique, called CRISPR/Cas9, works like a biological version of a word-processing programme's "find and replace" function.</p> <p><b>HOW THE TECHNIQUE WORKS</b></p>  <p>Sources: Reuters; Nature; Massachusetts Institute of Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Gene therapy</b> seeks to alter genes to correct genetic defects and thus prevent or cure genetic diseases.</li> <li>● <b>Gene editing</b> on the other hand, aims to modify the genes to enhance the capabilities of the organism beyond what is normal.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Significance of Gene Editing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Prevention of diseases</b> : It can help prevent parents from passing debilitating diseases to their children.</li> <li>● <b>Better Life:</b> Intelligence, beauty, strength, endurance can be enhanced them to make life better.</li> <li>● <b>Alternative:</b> Already people are trying to enhance themselves through diet, exercise, education, cosmetics, plastic surgery. Doing the same through genetics, could be considered as an alternative.</li> <li>● Enhancement is a matter of basic reproductive freedom.</li> <li>● <b>CRISPER:</b> From the point of view of scientists, CRISPR-Cas9 is a simple, effective, and incredibly precise technology.</li> <li>● It is already being talked about as the technology that will revolutionise human existence in future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Issues/ Concerns with the Editing Technology</b></p>	<p><b>Unknown Consequences :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tampering with the genetic material, which can have unintended, and as yet unknown, consequences.</li> <li>● The germline is the sequence of cells that develop into eggs and sperm, and any changes made in it are likely to be passed down to future generations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethical Issue :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Genetic engineering is against the natural or supernatural order.</li> <li>● It discriminates or invites discrimination against persons with disabilities, and that it may be becoming increasingly irrelevant in some cases.</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Due to the possibility of off-target effects (edits in the wrong place) and mosaicism (when some cells carry the edit but others do not), safety is of primary concern.</li> <li>● Researchers and ethicists who have dealt with genome editing, mostly agree that until germline genome editing is deemed safe through research, it should not be used for clinical reproductive purposes</li> </ul> <p><b>Precision :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The technology is extremely precise, but not 100% precise every time.</li> <li>● There is a possibility that some other genes also get targeted. In such scenarios, unintended impacts cannot be ruled out</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Social Inequality :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the gene editing becomes successful, there are concerns it may open new forms social inequality and discrimination, creating classes of genetic haves and have-nots in society.</li> </ul>
<b>Legal Scenario</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In most countries of the world such experiments are banned and some even consider it punishable.</li> <li>● It is formally prohibited in more than 40 countries.</li> <li>● India does not have a comprehensive gene editing policy in place, though germline gene editing is banned in line with international norms.</li> </ul>
<b>What could be done?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Implications:</b> More research is needed to detect potential adverse effects of the technology as well as a broader discussion of the ethical and societal implications.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Change in Attitude:</b> A scientific project of this sort must be undertaken only after the health and ethical contours of it are fully understood.</li> <li>● <b>Oversight:</b> There is need for strict oversight over gene editing research that should be bolstered by stringent international guidelines and norms.</li> <li>● A comprehensive <b>regulatory framework</b> is needed in this regard.</li> <li>● <b>Exchange and Spread of Information:</b> It is important to exchange decision relevant information including scientific, ethical, regulatory and political considerations of GE advancements to society.</li> <li>● Communication should not be confined to the educated segment of the population but reach a wider section of society.</li> <li>● <b>Independent advisory groups</b> and consultation committees can and should be engaged to ensure legitimacy of the public engagement effort.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	Indian Express, The Hindu, Tol, LiveMint.



## 9

## Rat Hole Mining

<b>Syllabus</b>	<b>GS 3:</b> Disaster and disaster management.
<b>Question</b>	Q. What is Rat hole mining? What are reasons for its prevalence in India? Give suggestions to end Rat hole mining.
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The collapse of a coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills, trapping at least 15 workers who are feared dead, has thrown the spotlight on a procedure known as "rat-hole mining".</li> </ul>
<b>What is rat-hole mining?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It involves digging of very small tunnels usually only 3-4 feet high, which workers (often children) enter and extract coal.</li> <li><b>Rat-hole mining is broadly of two types :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Side cutting :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow tunnels are dug on the hill slopes and workers go inside until they find the coal seam.</li> <li>The coal seam in hills of Meghalaya is very thin less than 2 m in most cases.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Box-cutting,</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rectangular opening is made, varying from 10 to 100 sq m and through that is dug a vertical pit, 100 to 400 feet deep.</li> <li>Once the coal seam is found, rat-hole-sized tunnels are dug horizontally through which workers can extract the coal.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>When was it banned, and why?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned it in 2014.</li> <li>It banned on grounds of it being unscientific and unsafe for workers.</li> <li>The state government has appealed the order in the Supreme Court.</li> </ul>
<b>How does the ban affect local people?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mining has provided jobs to local people.</li> <li>Following the ban, there are demands for rehabilitation or alternative employment. It was a major issue in the Assembly polls.</li> <li>The new state government challenged the ban in the Supreme Court in November that allowed the transportation of already extracted coal till 31 January.</li> <li>A citizens' report filed in the apex court names several state legislators who have stakes in the largely unregulated coal mining and transportation industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Why Rat hole mining is prevalent in Meghalaya despite NGT ban?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Development of industries:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the early 1970s, as the steel and chemical industries developed outside Guwahati wealthier farming families began to dig mine seams of coal beneath their land.</li> <li>By the 1980s many more large and deep mines formed three distinct coal mining districts — the Jaintia Hills east of Shillong, and the Garo and Khasi Hills west and south of Meghalaya's capital</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Thin layer of coal bed :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Chotanagpur plateau, the coal layer is extremely thick, where opencast mining can be done.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(2) But no other method would be economically viable in Meghalaya where the coal seam is extremely thin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Cheap method</b> : Removal of rocks from the hilly terrain and putting up pillars inside the mine to prevent collapse would be costlier.</li> <li>● <b>Income</b>: Due to extreme level of poverty in Meghalaya this is the only source of livelihood for locals.</li> <li>● <b>Decline in Agriculture</b> : Due to frequent flooding fertility of soil has reduced in Assam forcing them to work in rat hole mines.</li> <li>● <b>Profits to Mine owners</b> : enormous earnings by export, private contracts.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental impact of rat hole mining?</b>	<p>(1) <b>Increase in acidity level of Rivers</b> : It had caused the water in the Kopili river (flows through Meghalaya and Assam) to turn acidic.</p> <p>(2) <b>Pollution</b>: The entire roadsides in and around mining areas are used for piling of coal which is getting to be a major source of air, water and soil pollution.</p> <p>(3) <b>Ecological damage</b> : Off road movement of trucks and other vehicles in the area causes further damage to the ecology of the area.</p> <p>(4) <b>Contamination of the natural environment</b> : Poisonous gases can be released into rivers making rivers and soil polluted.</p> <p>(5) <b>Increase in landslides</b> : Mining could lead to loosening of soil resulting in landslides.</p>
<b>Health impacts</b>	<p>(1) <b>Toxicity</b> : Toxic elements such as sulfur, pyrite generated by the process of coal mining causes temporary or permanent harm or death to human and other animals as well as plants.</p> <p>(2) <b>Mutation</b> : Some of these elements act as mutagens that cause mutations or changes in the DNA molecules. These toxic elements may also act as teratogens that cause harm or birth defects to the fetus or embryo.</p> <p>(3) <b>Cancer</b> : Air pollution caused by coal combustion act on the respiratory system, contributing to serious health effects which include asthma, lung disease and lung cancer.</p>
<b>Social issue involved</b>	<p>(1) <b>Loss of lives for mining workers</b> : during the rainy season, water flood into the mining areas resulting in death of many.</p> <p>(2) <b>Violation of Fundamental rights</b> : Violation of Fundamental rights as Children are used to extract coal inside rat holes.</p> <p>(3) <b>Controversy due to Schedule area activity</b> :</p> <p>(1) The 6th Schedule of the Constitution intends to protect the community's ownership over its land and the community's autonomy and consent over its nature of use.</p> <p>(2) Coal mining currently underway in Meghalaya was a corruption of this Constitutional Provision</p> <p>(3) Private individuals having private interests in earning monetary benefits from minerals vested under the land are engaging in coal mining and are attempting to legitimize it.</p>
<b>Way Forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Formation of policy</b> : NGT ruled that the ban could be lifted if the state government formulated a policy for safe and regulated mining.</li> <li>● <b>Strict enforcement</b> : Strict enforcement of the existing rules is the way to secure life and jobs in the state.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Development of alternate employment:</b> Meghalaya is endowed with immense natural beauty. So, development of Tourism as well as Footloose industries in region could benefit youths.</li><li>● <b>Use of technology:</b> Proper use of statistical method and data analytics to detect corruption and use of drones for surveillance.</li><li>● State disaster management forces should be trained to handle these type of disasters.</li><li>● <b>Inclusion of NGOs and Local communities in awareness campaign</b></li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Live mint, Indian Express



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## 10

## Prevalence of Devadasi In India

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<b>GS 2 : Social Justice:</b> Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection of vulnerable sections.
<b>Question</b>	The practice of "Devadasi" needs to be removed from the core and denounced publicly. Comment.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More than thirty-six years after the <b>Karnataka Devadasi (Prohibition of Dedication) Act of 1982</b> was passed, the State government is yet to issue the rules for administering the law.</li> <li>● The new studies paint a grim picture of the apathetic approach of the legislature and enforcement agencies to crack down on the practice.</li> <li>● The recent studies on <b>devadasi</b> is prepared by the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru, and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS).</li> </ul>
<b>Findings of the new studies</b>	<p>(1) It continues to receive <b>customary sanction</b> from families and communities.</p> <p>(2) Girls from <b>socio-economically marginalised</b> communities continued to be victims of the custom, and thereafter were forced into the <b>commercial sex racket</b>.</p> <p>(3) The special children, with <b>physical or mental disabilities</b>, are more vulnerable to be dedicated as devadasis.</p>
<b>What is Devadasi?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Devadasi means "<b>servant of god.</b>" Young girls are "married" to an idol, deity, or temple.</li> <li>● These girls are often from the <b>lowest castes</b> in India- their parents have given them to temples as human offerings in order <b>to appease the gods</b>.</li> <li>● In reality, they are <b>sexual slaves</b>, and devadasi girls are <b>forbidden from marrying</b>.</li> <li>● She serves or rather <b>sexually satisfies the priests and inmates</b> of the temple, and the Zamindars and other men of money and power.</li> </ul>
<b>History</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Between <b>13th and 16th centuries</b> often they were <b>high caste, educated and sometimes, royal women</b>.</li> <li>● Along with marrying to deity, they used to act as <b>temple care-takers</b> and performed <b>rituals, dancing and music</b> in the honour of the deity.</li> <li>● But the system degenerated by the end of the 16th century turning Devadasis into <b>mistresses of the local royal or noblemen</b>. The children born of such union would be dedicated to the temples.</li> </ul>
<b>Causes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Poverty:</b> Poverty is the root cause of the evil that compels parents to give their girls as Devadasis.</li> <li>● <b>Culture:</b> Socio-cultural sanctions glorified and deified the practice.</li> <li>● <b>Caste:</b> Dalit girls suffer disproportionately on account of their social status and also due to lack of education.</li> <li>● <b>Government's failure:</b> The State's failure to enhance livelihood sources for weaker sections of society fuels the continuation of the practice.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Concerns</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Persistence:</b> The abhorrent practice has continued in this day and age despite increasing literacy and awareness.</li> <li>● <b>Poor reproductive health:</b> Repeated conceiving and abortions at relatively young age lead to poor reproductive health.</li> <li>● <b>Malnutrition:</b> Many devadasis face the problems of malnutrition and a lack of sufficient food and clean water for them and their children.</li> <li>● <b>Alcoholism:</b> A huge percentage of devadasis are addicted to alcohol and also suffer from severe mental stress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Problem/Challenges</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>No major movement:</b> Despite the persistence of the devadasi cult, no mass movement has as yet emerged against it.</li> <li>● <b>Low reporting:</b> Reporting of cases pertaining to the custom under the Karnataka law is very low, with only four cases filed between 2011 and 2017.</li> <li>● <b>No Rehabilitation:</b> The law is used sparingly, and focuses on prosecution (including of the victims themselves) with no framework for rehabilitation.</li> <li>● <b>Social Stigma:</b> The stigma attached to the Devadasi and to her family does not allow them rehabilitation.</li> <li>● <b>Limited Legal coverage:</b> Despite sufficient evidence of the prevalence of the practice and its link to sexual exploitation, recent legislations such as <b>POCSO Act 2012, and Juvenile Justice Act of 2015</b> have not made any reference to it as a form of sexual exploitation of children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What could be done?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Identification and Intervention:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There is need of extensive research to bring in a more nuanced and data centric understanding of the economic and social dimensions of the lives of Devadasis.</li> <li>(2) This must be followed by focused interventions in the areas of health, education, gainful employment and trafficking.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Spreading Awareness:</b> To propagate, publish literature, books and papers and canvass against the system of devadasi and its manifold forms.</li> <li>● <b>Improve the Social Status of women:</b> The upliftment of the Women in their Social, economic and cultural status.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To work for the benefit of Devadasis and their children in particular in the area.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>To provide livelihood:</b> Vocational training is being imparted to identified and willing devadasis to enable them, to earn a respectable livelihood.</li> <li>● <b>Role of Governments:</b> States and UTs to strictly implement the directives to check such unethical practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, Indian Express.</p>



## 11

# The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019

<b>Syllabus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 2:</b> Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers &amp; privileges and issues arising out of these</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	Examine the citizenship amendment bill 2019. Discuss key issues involved in Bill.
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Citizenship Amendment Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha has led to political backlash in Assam and disturbance in the rest of the North-east with protests by ethnic Assamese groups.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Citizenship act?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Citizenship Act, 1955 provides various ways in which citizenship may be acquired.</li> <li>● It provides for citizenship by birth, descent, registration, naturalisation and by incorporation of territory into India.</li> </ul>
<b>Major provisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Definition of illegal migrants:</b> The Act prohibits illegal migrants from acquiring Indian citizenship.</li> <li>● <b>It defines an illegal migrant as a foreigner:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Who enters India without a valid passport or travel documents</li> <li>(2) Stays beyond the permitted time.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Citizenship by naturalisation:</b> The Act allows a person to apply for citizenship by naturalisation if the person meets certain qualifications such as the person must have resided in India or been in service of the central government for at least 11 years before applying for citizenship.</li> <li>● <b>Changes proposed:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill creates an exception for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, with regard to this qualification.</li> <li>(2) For these groups of persons, the 11 years requirement will be reduced to six years.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Government views</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Unsuccessful attempts by Indian origin persons :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Government says many persons of Indian origin including persons belonging to six minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been unsuccessfully applying for citizenship under the Citizenship Act of 1955.</li> <li>(2) They are not able to produce their proof of Indian origin.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>11-year requirement</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) They are forced to apply for citizenship by naturalization which prescribes 11 years residency as qualification.</li> <li>(2) In the process, they are losing many opportunities and advantages that may accrue only to the citizens of India.</li> <li>(3) The amendment shortens the period of residency from 11 to 6 years for gaining citizenship by naturalization.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<p><b>What are Issues with the bill?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Violation of article 14</b> : The Bill makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees right to equality which applies equally to both citizens and foreigners.</li> <li>● <b>NRC</b>: The Bill would hamper, what the Assam National Register of Citizens seeks to achieve in the State. NRC does not distinguish on the basis of religion/faith.</li> <li>● <b>Opposite to Secularism</b> : The proposed bill's provisions apply only to six communities from three countries. It excludes the Muslims, Jews and others communities.</li> <li>● <b>Against international refugee law</b>: India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, according to which granting refuge based on humanitarian considerations is arguably a norm of the customary international law.</li> <li>● <b>Confusion between migrants and refugee</b>: The bill seems to term minority religious people as migrants. A significant of these people are refugees not migrants.</li> <li>● <b>Refugee policy</b>: The proposed act violates India's refugee policy which mentioned that refugees should return to their homeland, once things turned normal again.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Why North eastern states are opposing bill?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Resource burden</b>: The indigenous Assamese people feel the immigrants could eat limited resources and rights.</li> <li>● <b>Demographic changes</b>: Huge influx of people from Bangladesh, States North East have seen demographic inversion since independence while population share of indigenous communities has come down in other states.</li> <li>● <b>Against linguistic identity</b>: It considers the Bill to work against the cultural and linguistic identity of the indigenous people of the State.</li> <li>● <b>NRC</b>: It will nullify the updated National Registration of Citizenship (NRC). The process of updating the NRC is currently underway in Assam.</li> <li>● <b>Contradiction to Assam Accord</b>: The bill contradicts the 1985 Assam Accord which states that illegal immigrants coming from Bangladesh after 25 March 1971 would be deported.</li> <li>● <b>Polarization</b>: The Amendment might lead to polarisation of people on ethnic, regional and communal lines.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Report of joint parliamentary committee (Source: PRS)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>On violation of article 14 and 25</b>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Committee stated that the Bill does not violate Article 14 since it creates a valid distinction between the communities based on the object of the law.</li> <li>(2) The Bill does not violate <b>Article 25 since it does not affect the right of any person to practice any religion in the country.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Conflict with Assam Accord</b>:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Committee noted that the proposed amendment may be in conflict with the Assam Accord.</li> <li>(2) Therefore, the Committee recommended that an additional provision should be added to state that any proceedings under the Accord against a person belonging to the minority communities should be withdrawn.</li> <li>(3) Further, such persons should be eligible to apply for naturalisation.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Cancellation of registration of OCIs</b>: The Committee stated that the scope of this additional ground should be restricted as it may lead to harassment of OCI cardholders for very minor violations of law.</li> </ul>

<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The Bill upholds India's commitment for protection of refugees. But it should be neutral in terms of religion of the illegal migrant.</li><li>● The concerns regarding change in demography of many North Eastern states must be addressed.</li><li>● Just granting citizenship is not enough, provisions for their overall development like education and health should be made.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, PIB, PRS, The wire



## 12

## ASER Survey

<b>Syllabus</b>	<b>GS1:</b> Social empowerment. <b>GS2:</b> Issues related to education
<b>Question</b>	According to Supreme Court and Constitutional provisions, Right to Education is fundamental right. However, recent ASER study shows different story. Examine the causes for low educational outcomes despite of various schemes by government and suggest measure to improve it.
<b>What is ASER?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ASER stands for Annual Status of Education Report.</li> <li>● This is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable estimates of children's enrolment and basic learning levels for each district and state in India.</li> <li>● ASER has been conducted every year since 2005 in all rural districts of India.</li> <li>● <b>It is the largest citizen-led survey in India.</b></li> <li>● Unlike most other large-scale learning assessments, <b>ASER is a household-based rather than school-based survey.</b></li> </ul>
<b>About ASER 2018</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The report was based on annual household survey which covered about 5.5 lakh students in 596 rural districts.</li> <li>● <b>3 Pillars of 2018 survey :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) School enrolments and attendance.</li> <li>(2) Basic reading and math abilities (5 to 16 age group).</li> <li>(3) School facilities and sports infrastructure.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>The ABCs of the report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Only <b>50.3%</b> of all Class V students can read texts meant for Class II</li> <li>▶ Reading ability among such students has <b>jumped 10 percentage points</b> in Kerala, 8 percentage points in Himachal Pradesh and 7 percentage points in Chhattisgarh and Odisha since 2016</li> <li>▶ The learning deficit is prevalent across <b>government and private schools</b></li> <li>▶ The percentage of private school enrolment in 6-14 age group has been around <b>30%</b> in the last five years</li> <li>▶ The dependence on private schools is much higher than the national average in states such as <b>Manipur (70.4%)</b> and <b>Haryana (55.3%)</b></li> <li>▶ Over 180 million students are in elementary schools; adding secondary levels, the figure is <b>240 million</b></li> </ul>  </div>
<b>Pillar 1: Enrollment and Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Overall enrollment (age 6-14):</b> The proportion of <b>children (age 6-14) who are not enrolled in school</b> has fallen below 3% for the first time and stands at <b>2.8% in 2018.</b></li> <li>● <b>Girls out of school:</b> The overall proportion of girls in the 11 to 14 age group <b>out of school has fallen to 4.1%.</b> This figure is more than 5% in only 4 states.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Private school enrollment:</b> The percentage of children (age 6-14) enrolled in private school was 30.6% in 2016 and is almost unchanged at <b>30.9% in 2018.</b></li> <li>● The national average hides changes in private school figures across states. There has been a decline in private school enrollment of more than 2 percentage points over 2016 levels in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pillar 2</b></p> <p><b>Basic reading and math abilities (5 to 16 age group)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Class V students:</b> only half (50.3%) of all students in Class V can read texts meant for Class II students.</li> <li>● <b>Improvements in some states:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There is gradual improvement in some segments and in some states.</li> <li>(2) The reading ability among Class V students in Kerala jumped 10 percentage points in 2018 from that in 2016.</li> <li>(3) In Himachal Pradesh, the growth is nearly 8 percentage points and in Chhattisgarh and Odisha it is around 7 percentage points between 2016 and 2018.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Pillar 3</b></p> <p><b>School facilities and sports infrastructure</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Infrastructure:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Usable girls' toilets:</b> The fraction of schools with usable girls toilets doubled, reaching <b>66.4% in 2018.</b></li> <li>(2) <b>Schools with boundary walls:</b> The proportion of schools with boundary walls increased by 13.4 percentage points, standing at 64.4% in 2018.</li> <li>(3) <b>Schools with a kitchen shed:</b> The percentage of schools with a kitchen shed increased from 82.1% to <b>91%.</b></li> <li>(4) <b>Regional Variations:</b> The national averages hide major variations across states. Deficiencies are particularly marked in <b>Jammu and Kashmir and most of the north-eastern states.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Sports facilities</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) In <b>2018, about 8 out of 10 schools had a playground available for students,</b> either within the school premises or close by.</li> <li>(2) A playground was accessible in more than 90% of schools in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Maharashtra.</li> <li>(3) But more than a quarter of all schools in Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Odisha, and Jharkhand did not have access to a playground.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What are problems of education in India?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Lowest expenditure on education:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ As per UNESCO data, India has one of the lowest public expenditure rates on education per student, especially compared to other Asian countries like China.</li> <li>➤ India spends \$264 per student per year compared to \$1,800 spent by China.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Quality teachers:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Quality teachers are the missing link in the Indian education system.</li> <li>➤ The quality of teaching especially in government schools does not meet the standards.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Excessive focus on marks:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Education in most schools is one dimensional, with an obsessive focus on marks.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Infrastructure :</b> Common amenities like safe drinking water, toilets are not available in various schools.</li> <li>● <b>Gap between education and industry requirement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The curriculum by boards and colleges is pretty outdated and the industry requirements have changed considerably.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>No emphasis on personality, innovation or creativity</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The sole emphasis in education is on getting high scores and clearing exams.</li> <li>➤ In all this creativity and personality development takes a back seat.</li> <li>➤ There is a serious lack of support for innovation which is shown in the absence of interest for research and students primarily look for getting a job.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b><u>Access:</u></b> Having infrastructural constraints and social issues, it becomes harder to make education accessible to all segments of the society (women, minorities, poor).</li> <li>● <b><u>Cost:</u></b> The cost of education is very high even for the people and places where it is accessible. E.g. the competitive pressure on students &amp; parents forces them to opt for private tuitions &amp; trainings to supplement the school education.</li> <li>● <b><u>Other problems :</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Inadequate public funding in the sector.</li> <li>● Disproportionate focus on school infrastructure as opposed to learning outcomes.</li> <li>● Challenges in governance and monitoring mechanisms for learning outcomes.</li> <li>● Accountability systems in government schools.</li> <li>● Inadequate teacher training, large number of teaching vacancies and rampant absenteeism.</li> <li>● Limited options for vocational education in the school system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What is way forward?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Spending on education:</u></b> Education sector funding by government spending on education as a whole (not just school education) should be increased to at least 6 per cent of GDP by 2022.</li> <li>● <b><u>Governance system of education:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Revamped governance system to improve monitoring and accountability State governments should develop and formulate robust mechanisms to enforce regulations on</li> <li>(2) Teacher qualifications, teacher absenteeism and learning outcomes.</li> <li>(3) Learning outcomes should be regularly assessed by bodies independent of the line ministries.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Flexibility in education stream and vocational education:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Develop a system of awarding credits for every subject and grade passed, specifying the minimum credits required to appear in the final exam for any grade.</li> <li>(2) This system of credits may remain valid forever and be seamlessly integrated across different levels of education, providing an opportunity for life-long tracking of learning outcomes in the electronic national educational registry.</li> <li>(3) This will enable bright children to amass more credits in the subjects of their interest, once the system attains maturity.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Curriculum/syllabus:</u></b> Pre-primary and primary syllabus should be designed on a skill/competency-based continuum.</li> <li>● <b><u>Reducing mental stress:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Life skills, including coping with failure/crises and stress management, should be included as part of the school curriculum.</li> <li>2. Easy and safe access to mental health support should be strengthened. Child helplines should feed into easy and safe access to counselling in schools, especially for children at risk.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>



## 13

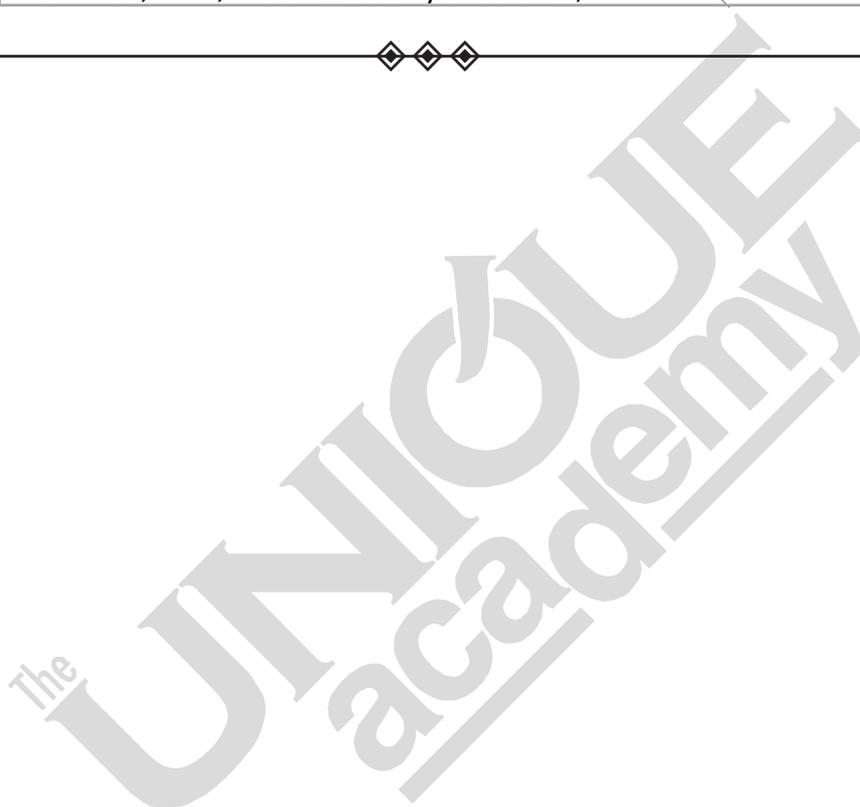
## Nuclear Energy &amp; Energy Security

<b>Syllabus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 3:</b> Infrastructure: Energy</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India aims to provide 24*7 electricity supply for all by 2022. Critically analyse potential of nuclear energy to help achieve this aim.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, French company EDF has submitted a techno-commercial proposal to the government for the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant (JNPP).</li> </ul>
<b>Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant (JNPP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>No. of reactors:</b> 6 reactors.</li> <li>● <b>Capacity:</b> 6×1650 MW.</li> <li>● <b>Location:</b> Ratnagiri, Maharashtra.</li> <li>● <b>Largest nuclear park:</b> The JNPP is proposed to be the largest nuclear park in the country.</li> <li>● <b>Background of agreement:</b> The Indo-French deal was signed in September 2008.</li> </ul>
<b>Factors hindering the JNPP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Opposition from the locals:</b> There are 2,033 families who would be directly affected by the project.</li> <li>● <b>Concerns about radioactivity:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The nuclear project at Jaitapur is about 10 times the size of the Chernobyl Power Plant.</li> <li>(2) The huge radioactive accumulations at the plant site are the principal causes of concern among people.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Terrorist attack risks factor not considered:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Unlike USA which made required amendments in nuclear plant design against terrorist attack risks, Indian legislation didn't make any amendments for it.</li> <li>(2) DAE has been criticized for not factoring in a 2009 report "Nuclear Power Plant Security and Vulnerabilities".</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Biodiversity reports:</b> The area was surveyed during the monsoon by BNHS, which found 134 species of plants on the plateau which will face threat from nuclear power plant.</li> <li>● <b>Safety aspects:</b> US regulators and European regulatory authorities from three countries, Finland, France and UK have jointly written to AREVA and raised certain serious objections to the current design of control and instrumentation for vital safety aspects of Evolutionary Pressurized Reactors plant.</li> <li>● <b>Viability of the Project:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The cost of electricity generated from JNPP would be in excess of Rs 9 per unit which is more than current cost of electricity of Rs 4 per unit.</li> <li>(2) This does not include the costs of managing radioactive waste and decommissioning.</li> <li>(3) Cost difference between hydro, thermal and all the available options vis-à-vis nuclear electricity is 1:3.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Medical facilities post nuclear disaster:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Hospitals near the plant are not well-equipped with trained doctors and arrangements to tackle any nuclear mishap.</li> <li>(2) It has provision only about payment of compensation due to health impacts of such radiation.</li> <li>(3) No single clause is there for taking care of health during radiological emergencies.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Absence of a specific plan for decommissioning:</u></b> There is no specific plan drawn to take care of decommissioned reactors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Brief timeline of nuclear energy development in India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>1944:</b> Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Bombay established.</li> <li>● <b>1948:</b> Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), under the Atomic Energy Act to establish the atomic energy programme.</li> <li>● <b>1954:</b> Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was established.</li> <li>● <b>1956:</b> Development of “APSARA” nuclear reactor. India became the first Asian country outside the erstwhile Soviet Union, to have designed and built its own nuclear reactor.</li> <li>● <b>1960:</b> Development of CIRUS, a high power (40 MW) research reactor built in collaboration with Canada.</li> <li>● <b>1985:</b> “DHRUVA” indigenously developed research reactor attained critical stage.</li> <li>● <b>1990s until present:</b> Significant expertise in the entire range of nuclear fuel cycle activities has been achieved.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nuclear Power in India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 5th largest source of electricity in India.</li> <li>● As of 2017, India has <b>22 nuclear reactors</b> in operation at seven sites, having an <b>installed capacity of 6780 MW</b> and producing a total of 30,292.91 GWh of electricity.</li> <li>● <b>11 more reactors</b> are under construction to generate an additional 8,100 MW.</li> <li>● Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL)-a government-owned corporation of India is responsible for the generation of nuclear power for electricity.</li> <li>● NPCIL is administered by the Department of Atomic Energy, Govt. of India.</li> <li>● Tarapur is the largest nuclear power station in India.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Criticism on Jaitapur plant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The long delay and further expected gestation time has caused huge cost over run.</li> <li>● The 6 reactors are expected to cost 65 bn euros which is way higher than expected earlier</li> <li>● High power tariff - Rs 15 per unit will be the cost while solar power tariff stands at Rs 2.44 per unit.</li> <li>● Cost cutting- Any effort at cost cutting would result in cutting corners with safety.</li> <li>● Long gestation period would further add to the cost burden as the project has consistently missed its deadlines.</li> <li>● French nuclear regulator - found design flaws with the reactors.</li> <li>● Entry of several foreign entities has created a spectre of lack of accountability in case of a unfortunate accident.</li> <li>● Recent discovery of earthquake faultline in the region has been overlooked.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Arguments for nuclear power plant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Expense:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Less uranium is needed to produce the same amount of energy as coal or oil, which lowers the cost of producing the same amount of energy.</li> <li>(2) Uranium is also less expensive to procure and transport, which further lowers the cost.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Environment-friendly:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Nuclear power is clean source of power as compared to coal or oil-based power plants.</li> <li>(2) The power sector contributes significantly to 40 to 50% of total emissions of Green House Gases.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>High Efficiency Level:</u></b> The nuclear power has high density of the energy produced which increases its efficiency.</li> <li>● <b><u>Low Maintenance:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Nuclear power plants do not need regular maintenance as well as operation can last between 40-60 years.</li> <li>(2) Consequently, there is no need to shut down the plants any time soon once they have been built.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Land requirement:</u></b> The land needed for setting up a nuclear power station is also less when compared to thermal coal-fired power stations and hydroelectric stations which involve large submergence of land.</li> <li>● <b><u>Reliable and Steady supply of electricity:</u></b> Nuclear plants can operate when there is no sun or wind and are not affected by fluctuations in water availability like hydroelectric plants.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arguments against nuclear power plant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Raw Material:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Uranium is used in the process of fission is unstable element.</li> <li>(2) IT needs special precautions during the mining, transporting and storing of the uranium, as well as the storing of any waste product to prevent it from giving off harmful levels of radiation.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Water Pollutant:</u></b> Warm water and other pollutants released by nuclear plants are heavy metals and toxic pollutants that harm plant and animal life in aquatic bodies.</li> <li>● <b><u>Leaks:</u></b> When they are not maintained, have structural flaws or were improperly installed, a nuclear reactor could release harmful amounts of radiation into the environment during the process of regular use. Sudden rupture could be catastrophic.</li> <li>● <b><u>Shutdown Reactors:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) There have been several nuclear reactors that have failed and been shut down because of various concerns.</li> <li>(2) These abandoned reactors are taking up valuable land space and could be contaminating the areas surrounding them.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>India's stand on Nuclear energy in UN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India argued that Nuclear power remains an important option to meet the challenges of increased energy demand, address concerns about climate change, redress volatile fossil fuel prices and ensure security of the energy supply.</li> <li>● <b><u>Contradiction in India's stand on nuclear energy as compared to world:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India has declared nuclear energy is vital for meeting the challenge of climate change and suggested supporting efforts to promote its public acceptance.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(1) On the other hand, there is growing opposition to nuclear power and plans by some countries to phase out their atomic generation plants.</p> <p>(2) For instance, Germany is committed to phasing out all nuclear power plants by 2022 and Belgium, Italy and Switzerland also plan to shut theirs down.</p>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b><u>Need of faster evolution:</u></b> The Indian nuclear power sector and industry needs to evolve faster to meet the associated challenges.</li><li>● <b><u>Reducing capital costs and construction time:</u></b> Nuclear energy is economically competitive with alternate sources of energy; however, efforts must be made to further improve it by reducing capital costs and construction time.</li><li>● <b><u>Systematic approach in design and operation:</u></b> There is need for developing a systematic approach in design and operation for radioactive waste management and prevention of nuclear accidents.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, IAEA, Indian academy of science, NDTV



## 14

## New H1B Visa Proposal

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS -2:</b> Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is H1B visa? Discuss new H1B visa proposal with its overall benefits and implications on India.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently US President proposed changes to H-1B visas, which are issued temporarily to highly educated immigrants so they can work in speciality occupations.</li> <li>● He said it would create simplicity, certainty and a possibility that the workers could become American citizens.</li> <li>● Recently, in December 2018, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released details of a proposed brand new H1B visa application process for speciality workers.</li> </ul>
<b>What is H1B visa?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Definition:</b> H1B visa is a non-immigrant visa, which allows the US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.</li> <li>● The employer, not the worker, files the application and, if successful, the H-1B visa is tied to that sponsoring employer.</li> <li>● It allows the visa holder to bring his dependents to USA i.e. spouse and kids below 21 years</li> <li>● If the H-1B worker quits, is laid off, or otherwise loses the connection to the sponsoring employer, the worker must find a new H-1B sponsoring employer, change to a different visa or get a green card, or leave the United States.</li> <li>● The H-1B visa holder must, at the least, have a bachelor's degree and must working a "specialty occupation," defined as an occupation requiring at least a Bachelor's Degree.</li> <li>● <b>Duration:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) 3 years and is extendable up to 6 years.</li> <li>(2) Maximum extension of 10 years allowed if the work is related to project under the U.S. Department of Defence.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Renewal process:</b> Person wishes to stay in the U.S. after the expiry of this visa need to apply for another H1B visa by remaining outside U.S. for a year before reapplying.</li> </ul>
<b>What are the restrictions on H1B Visa</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is a 65,000 quota cap on the number of H1B visas with a special exemption for 20,000 people with a master's degree or higher from an American university (i.e, a total of 85,000). There are other minor exceptions that result in the raising the numbers</li> </ul>
<b>Why has H1B been under criticism in recent years?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It was supposed to be a system <b>to supplement US labour</b>. Instead it has believed to be <b>used to avoid US labour</b>.</li> <li>● The companies are not supposed to prove that they tried to fill vacancies with US nationals and only in their unavailability went for foreigners.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This has indirectly given a boost to outsourcing as H1B visas are used by companies which take outsourcing contracts.</li> <li>● The cheaper wages in which the H1B visa holders work, gives rise to a <b>wage depression</b>.</li> </ul>
What is the new H1B visa proposal?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Online registration:</b> Companies employing foreign workers on the H-1B visa would first have to electronically register with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) during a designated registration period.</li> <li>● <b>Change in current process of selection order:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Advanced degree registrations will be selected first up to a cap of 20,000.</li> <li>(2) After this, from all the unselected registrations, the regular H1Bs up to a cap of 65,000 will be selected.</li> <li>(3) The unselected registrations will also include those advanced degree registrations that did not get selected in the exclusive advanced degree lottery.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Reduction in waiting time:</b> The proposed rule would help to reduce waiting time for cap selection notifications.</li> </ul>
New process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It requires an employer to first file an online form during a registration period.</li> <li>● USCIS will then randomly select the required number of applications to meet the 85,000-visa cap.</li> <li>● 60 days window for employers to submit a full H1B visa application for candidates they have registered online.</li> <li>● From the full application submissions, USCIS would process petitions until it reaches the regular visa cap of 65,000.</li> </ul>
What are benefits of it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Greater chance to most-skilled and highest-paid beneficiaries:</b> Proposed change would increase the chances of beneficiaries with a master's or higher degree from a US institution of higher education to be selected under the H-1B cap by 16 per cent (or 5,340 workers) in the number.</li> <li>● <b>Reduction in overall cost of hiring H1B workers:</b> The new application process will help US employers to reduce the overall cost of hiring H1B workers because of free online registration process.</li> <li>● <b>Reducing administrative strain:</b> New process is expected to ease the administrative strain on United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which continues to struggle with a backlog of US visa applications.</li> </ul>
Implications of new H1B proposal on India	<p><b>Positive Implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>More Indians to get visa:</b> As per study, 74% of H1B petitions were on behalf of India-born workers in the fiscal year 2018. Indian students and academicians likely to get edge in it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative Implications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Loss to IT companies:</b> Proposed changes would hit Indian IT firms in US as academicians and students are likely to get more visas in whole 74% traffic of application by Indians.</li> </ul>
How has India been benefitted from H1B visa scheme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>High profile job opportunities to Indians:</b> H1B visa programmes are widely used by Indian IT companies to place skilled workers in US to serve their American clients.</li> <li>● <b>Increase in IT revenue:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hiring Indian IT professional than American IT professional helped a number of IT companies in India to increase their revenues by allowing high quality job to be delivered at much cheaper costs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Overseas growth opportunity to Indian companies:</b> Service export has enabled many Indian IT companies grow their US business including Indian IT majors such as TCS, Infosys, Wipro, etc.</li> <li>● <b>U.S. permanent residency:</b> H-1B visa holders are allowed to apply for U.S. permanent residency after five years.</li> <li>● <b>Benefits to Indian Economy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Support to exchange rate:</b> The US accounts for nearly 60% of all technology exports from India. The boom in IT exports also provided support to the exchange rate with the rupee remaining stable.</li> <li>➤ <b>Foreign Exchange Reserve:</b> IT companies are biggest foreign exchange earners followed by pharmaceuticals exporters and traditional exporters such as textiles, garments and gems and jewellery companies from USA.</li> <li>➤ <b>Remittances:</b> H1B visa workers who later applied for US citizenship became Indian diaspora and contribute significantly to Indian economy through remittances.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Why does US want to tighten the regulation for H1B visa?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Reducing job opportunities to US citizens:</b> Many US legislators are of the opinion that H1B visa regime is taking away job opportunities from the Americans.</li> <li>● <b>Trump election promise:</b> President Donald Trump in his election campaign promoted “Hire American, Buy American”.</li> <li>● <b>Use for outsourcing:</b> In some cases, rather than being used to hire talented workers not available in the American labour market, the program is being used for outsourcing.</li> <li>● <b>Misuse of H1B by firms in US:</b> according to US government, IT companies are misusing H1B norms for their benefit which have original intent of filling STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medical) gap in US.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Diplomatic solution:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ India through its strong diplomatic asset can convince USA to get beneficial H1B policy without hampering its core national interests as many reports indicate that H1B has been net positive for US economy and for US jobs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Diversification of IT exports:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ India exports 60% of software technology to US which made it highly dependent on US for it.</li> <li>➤ Thus, there is need to diversify our software exports and need to look for alternatives like south Asia, Africa, Latin America.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, RSTV



15

## BREXIT

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<p><b>GS 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.</li> <li>● Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explain why Brexit is taking place and How Brexit will impact on Britain, EU, and India?</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The British Parliament has rejected the Brexit deal proposed by the Prime Minister Theresa May.</li> <li>● The British House of Commons voted 432 -202 against the deal struck between Britain's government and the EU in November.</li> </ul>
<b>Brexit timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2015: UK got royal assent for The European Union Referendum Act for a referendum.</li> <li>● 2016: UK holds a referendum and UK population voted for Brexit.</li> <li>● 2017: UK got royal assent for European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act.</li> <li>● 2017: UK Prime Minister Theresa May invokes Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union and UK-EU exit negotiations started.</li> <li>● 2018: European Parliament votes on "Withdrawal Agreement".</li> <li>● Nov. 2018: British Parliament has rejected the Brexit deal.</li> </ul>
<b>Basic terminologies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Britain</b> = England+Scotland+Wales</li> <li>● <b>UK</b> = Britain + Northern Islands</li> <li>● <b>European Union:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It's a political, economic and trade union of 28 countries.</li> <li>(2) It is founded in 1957 as European Economic Community which later grew into the European Union. Britain joined the EU in 1973.</li> <li>(3) EU has its own currency-the Euro (€), which is used by 19 of the member countries.</li> <li>(4) <b>Capital:</b> Brussels, Belgium.</li> <li>(5) The EU treaty provided for a European Parliament and European Council which consisted of representatives of the member-states.</li> <li>(6) It is the largest trading bloc in the world surpassing the US.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>What is Backstop provision?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per the Backstop provisions, Britain would leave the EU in March 2019, single market in December 2020, but stay in the customs union for longer.</li> <li>● Supporters of Brexit voted against the deal because of the "backstop" provisions fearing that it would keep the UK too closely bound by EU regulations.</li> <li>● The Backstop provisions would keep trade rules between the EU and UK almost unchanged for a transition period of 2020.</li> </ul>
<b>Why Plan B?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Alternations to backstop provision:</b> Britain PM seek to propose an alternative to an insurance policy known as the "backstop" that is intended to guarantee that there are no customs checks along the Irish border.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>EU's position:</b> EU insists that it will not renegotiate the withdrawal agreement.</li> <li>● <b>Differences on terms of exit:</b> there are deep differences between the Conservative and Labour parties on the terms of exit they must obtain from EU.</li> </ul>
<b>Irish border</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Irish Republic (separate country) is an EU member.</li> <li>● It has a porous border with UK which pro-exit group wants to convert in hard border.</li> <li>● Thus, it is agreed that there will be no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, at least in the short term and which become issue for renegotiation suggestions.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is there demand for Brexit?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Sovereignty Issue:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) EU results in weakening of national sovereignty.</li> <li>(2) EU's push for creation of a Closer Union which would accord greater decision-making powers to European Parliament, while, limiting the authority of British Parliament.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Economic issues:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Supporters argued that Britain loses more than what it gains from EU membership.</li> <li>(2) Britain had to pay millions of pounds for membership as membership fees.</li> <li>(3) Protectionist policies of EU hampering British economy by not favouring competitiveness.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Interference in laws:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Around 17% of the UK's laws are the result of its membership in the EU.</li> <li>(2) Much of this has to do with agriculture, fishing, environmental policies, trade etc. which brought various limitations on UK's parliament and people.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Immigration issues:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Half of British legal migrants come from EU which making negative impact on UK born workers since 3/4<sup>th</sup> of jobs created are taken up by EU immigrants.</li> <li>(2) It also puts a severe strain on national resources and add on to welfare expenditure.</li> <li>(3) Perception among citizens that immigrants pose a threat to national security.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Security:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) People against Brexit argue that in the era of international terrorism and criminality, cooperating with the EU will make the U.K. safer.</li> <li>(2) While Brexit supporters argued that the security risk will in fact increase if the U.K. does not have control over its borders.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Constitutional Provision of Brexit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Lisbon Treaty (Article 50):</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It provides for exit of member countries from European Union.</li> <li>(2) Any country wanted to exit from European Union has to negotiate a deal with EU.</li> <li>(3) The deal will provide for a settlement between EU and UK.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Procedure:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Member state wishing to leave the EU should first notify the European Council its decision, triggering Article 50.</li> <li>(2) This would set in motion a process by which the member and the EU leadership will negotiate the terms of the departure and reach an agreement in two years.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<b>Impacts of Brexit</b>
<b>On Britain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Import and Export:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The pound expected to fall by around 20 percent.</li> <li>(2) This would mean that exports to the UK will suffer and imports from the UK will gain.</li> <li>(3) As 45% of British exports are directed towards EU, absence of it will result in negative trade (More import over export) and may result in BoP crisis situation.</li> <li>(4) Export companies operating in the UK will gain, while import companies will lose.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>New trade deals:</u></b> Britain will need to negotiate a new trade deal with each country separately.</li> <li>● <b><u>Economic size:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) As per International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, Brexit will result in 5% reduction in Britain's current economy.</li> <li>(2) Brexit could cause the country's economy to be between 3.8 and 7.5 percent smaller by 2030.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Increase in foreign students' inflow:</u></b> More foreign students may prefer Britain for higher education as the fees may seem cheaper.</li> <li>● <b><u>Increase in tourist's inflow:</u></b> Because of fall in currency value, more foreign tourists will visit Britain.</li> <li>● <b><u>Immigration status:</u></b> EU citizens in Britain and Britain's citizens living in other EU nations would have to update their immigration statuses.</li> <li>● <b><u>Challenge in maintaining homogenous Britain:</u></b> It could encourage England, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland to appeal for quitting the United Kingdom.</li> </ul>
<b>On EU</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Idea of EU:</u></b> whole idea of EU being role model and transformative idea in international relations for other countries will be challenged as other member countries like Greece may demand for exit following Britain's suite.</li> <li>● <b><u>Future challenges:</u></b> It will be difficult for both (Britain and EU) to handle regional and global challenges independently in future such as Russian assertions, Immigration and refugee issues, global slowdown, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>On India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Possibility of Bilateral Free Trade Agreement:</u></b> There is possibility that long negotiated and much awaited EU- India FTA will be concluded.</li> <li>● <b><u>Chance for Indian Labours:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Britain's economy and companies got benefitted from the large number of immigrants it receives due to EU refugee policy.</li> <li>(2) On Brexit, UK will face labour shortage which could provide greater opportunity for skilled Indian labour market.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Impact on Indian IT companies:</u></b> Recent Nasscom report argued that IT and ITes industries will have a negative impact of close to \$108bn. Companies situated in UK need to get additional permissions to get access in European market.</li> <li>● <b><u>Trade war between EU and UK:</u></b> Possible EU-UK trade war will hamper interests of Indian companies based in UK such as Tata motors, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>On world</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Impact on Asian economies:</u></b> It will not impact Asian economies significantly because it has approximately 2% exports to the UK. But countries like India, Japan which have major investments in UK will get impacted.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Impact on USA:</b> USA being major trading partner of UK will have great impact on its trade relations.</li> <li>● <b>Political and financial uncertainty, decline in business Growth:</b> It will result in financial and political uncertainty-Divide in business and consumer confidence and Lower growth scenario across the world.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Following Norway model:</b> Some experts have suggested Britain could follow Norway model in the wake of a Brexit vote is the Norway model where UK can opt out from EU but remain member of EEA.</li> <li>● <b>Three options:</b> The UK has now three options since UK is bound to leave EU by March. These options are:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Reach to EU to further modify the agreement:</b> Unlikely because EU leaders have made it clear that it was the best compromise available.</li> <li>(2) <b>Exit without any deal:</b> This would be a end of world scenario which would trigger a massive recession in Britain and will slow the European Union's economic growth. This option will become inevitable if British parliament votes against the deal.</li> <li>(3) <b>Holding another referendum:</b> Demands for another referendum is also gaining momentum since the previous one favoured the Brexit with very narrow margin of 52 to 48 %.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Sources</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, the Wire, firstpost



## 16

## Bank Consolidation in India

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<b>GS 3:</b> Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.
<b>Question</b>	Discuss the various implications of banking consolidation in India. Also analyse the aspect of financial inclusion in this regard.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Cabinet approved amalgamation of <b>Dena Bank</b> and <b>Vijaya Bank</b> with <b>Bank of Baroda</b> paving the way for the first ever-three-way merger of public sector lenders.</li> <li>● With the merger, BoB will become the third largest bank after State Bank of India and ICICI Bank.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The government approved the merger in order to make the bank a <b>globally competitive lender</b>.</li> <li>● Post this merger, the <b>number of PSU banks will come down to 19</b>.</li> <li>● In September last year, the '<b>Alternative Mechanism' (AM)</b> headed by Finance Minister had decided to merge Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with Bank of Baroda.</li> <li>● The decision was in a bid to create a stronger and sustainable global-sized lender.</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>Narasimham Committee (1994)</b> had recommended creation of <b>six large globally competitive banks</b> and preferred closing the weak banks to merging them with strong ones.</li> <li>● Banking sector's gross NPAs had risen to <b>11.6% of total assets</b> from in March 2018 calling for a serious thought on mergers and consolidation.</li> <li>● Earlier in 2017, India's largest lender, SBI, merged with five associate banks and the Bhartiya Mahila Bank to enter the league of the world's top 50.</li> </ul>
<b>Benefits of Bank Mergers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Economies of scale:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Enables to scale up quickly and gain a large number of new customers instantly, reduce risk and improve returns.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Efficiency:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Acquisitions also scale the bank more efficiently, not just in terms of efficiency ratio, but also in terms of banking operations.</li> <li>(2) Mergers of weak banks also mean fewer, better-capitalised banks and improved regulatory oversight</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Capital adequacy:</b> Merging stressed, weaker banks with larger, stronger banks will enable effective management of NPA and allow for greater credit availability.</li> <li>● <b>Other Benefits of Merger :</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India does not have big banks unlike other developed countries including China. Mergers will help create such banks.</li> <li>(2) It will help create a</li> <li>(3) Substantial rise in customer base.</li> <li>(4) Market reach.</li> <li>(5) Operational efficiency.</li> <li>(6) Wider bouquet of products and services.</li> <li>(7) Leveraging of networks.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<b>Issues with mergers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Job Loss and Poor Culture Fit</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Gross NPA ratio of Dena Bank is among the highest at 22%. The merger will just transfer Dena Bank's NPAs to the merged entity.</li> <li>(2) The merged entity will have NPAs of about 13%, worse than Bank of Baroda's present 12.4%. That's why the merger is being seen as nothing more than two good banks bailing out a bad bank.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>NPA Burden:</b></li> <li>● <b>Harmonisation and integration</b> of technology is a challenge as various banks are currently operating on different technology platforms.</li> <li>● It is also desirable to guard against the possible monopolistic and anti-competitive tendencies which might accrue from consolidation.</li> <li>● It may result in lowering of competition which is not good for Indian customers.</li> <li>● India still has a long way to go in Financial Inclusion and hence needs a variety of banks with different regional focus and core competencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Clean up the balance sheets:</b> The endeavour should be to first clean up the balance-sheets of PSBs.</li> <li>● <b>Reforms:</b> The government should seriously consider banking reforms : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Improving governance standards.</li> <li>(2) Strengthening of bank boards as well as top management.</li> <li>(3) Providing greater autonomy.</li> <li>(4) Strengthening the institutional framework of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Government's Role:</b> Government should improving governance in PSBs and refrain from intervening in loan sanctions.</li> <li>● <b>Selective privatising PSBs would help</b> alleviate the challenges associated with public ownership of banks.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consolidation should be a well thought out strategy, by looking at synergies and assessing the likely costs and benefits, so that post- merger, there is a distinct improvement in the balance sheet of banks.</li> <li>● RBI should continue to give licences to more small banks as well as universal banks even while carrying out the consolidation of existing.</li> <li>● This would also be in line with the Narasimhan committee which was in favour of a large number of regional and local banks at the lowest tier of banking structure.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian Express, Financial Express, ET.



## 17

## Global Slowdown &amp; India

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<b>GS 2: International relations:</b> Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries, Indian diaspora. Important International institutions, agencies and fora their structure, mandate.
<b>Question</b>	How the trade war and protectionist policies contributing to global slowdown? What role India may play to avoid its impact?
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>International Monetary Fund</b> expects global growth to <b>slow to 2.5% in 2019</b> from 2.9% this year.</li> <li>● Experts <b>fear that global economic growth</b> could come to a grinding halt in the near future.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>China's</b> manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (<b>PMI</b>) number <b>dropped below 50 for the first time since mid-2016.</b></li> <li>● Also, the new data revealed <b>weaker consumption growth</b>, subdued confidence and <b>disappointing credit growth in China.</b></li> <li>● Other major economies such as <b>Europe and Japan have also shown signs of a potential slowdown</b> in growth.</li> <li>● <b>Germany's economy shrank for the first time since 2015</b> in the third quarter.</li> </ul>
<b>Concepts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Economic Cycle:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Economic or Business cycle implies the economy-wide ups and downs in the economic activity, like savings, investment, income and employment over a certain period.</li> <li>(2) There are several stages of the economic cycle, namely, boom/inflation, slowdown, recession, depression, and recovery.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Recession:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) A recession is defined as two or more consecutive quarters of negative economic growth, which is most commonly measured using real gross domestic product (GDP).</li> <li>(2) It appears in the slowdown of economic activity in the economy for a few months.</li> <li>(3) It may result in the fall in employment, industrial production, corporate profits, GDP, etc.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Depression:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) When recession, turns out to be more severe and continues for a long term, in one or more economies, the situation is known as Depression.</li> <li>(2) Depression may result in price deflation, bankruptcies, bank failures, unemployment, financial crisis, business failures, etc.</li> <li>(3) It may lead to the shutdown of the economy.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Possible causes of recent slowdown</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Oil Prices:</b> The steep fall in the price of oil is an indicator of faltering demand for commodities.</li> <li>● <b>The trade war:</b> The Trump administration's trade disputes with China, Europe, Mexico, Canada have stifled growth.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Protectionism:</b> Tariffs for protectionist moves by countries have slowed down demand.</li> <li>● <b>Europe:</b> Monetary-policy tightening and trade frictions in Europe have further impacted growth.</li> <li>● <b>Populism:</b> Pre election populist policies may lead to an unsustainable debt dynamic within the eurozone.</li> </ul>
<b>Multiple Risks ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>IMF Forecast:</b> The trade war concerns have led the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to cut its global growth forecast in October to 3.7% for both 2018 and 2019, down from 3.9% projected in July.</li> <li>● <b>Policy Rates:</b> Besides the risks from Brexit, the Fed aggressively hiking rates, several other risks linger on the side-lines for the world economy.</li> <li>● <b>Geopolitics:</b> Geopolitical risks could also resurface, including an escalation of tensions in the middle east.</li> <li>● A sudden surge or sudden drop in the price of crude could pose problems for the world economy.</li> <li>● <b>Debt Burden:</b> It is unlikely that any fiscal stimulus will fully compensate for the absence of an accommodative monetary policy, particularly when most governments are already deeply mired in debt.</li> </ul>
<b>Slowdown and India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India cannot stay immune to this in these times of global economic integration.</li> <li>● Slowdown in other parts of the world would <b>lower the demands for Indian products.</b></li> <li>● The lower demand in turn will <b>hamper the Indian industries</b> which further deteriorate the <b>growth and employment scenario</b> in the country.</li> <li>● India's economic growth has accelerated this year, hitting 8.2% in the first quarter of 2018-19.</li> <li>● But as one of the world's biggest energy importers, it has felt the pain of higher oil prices this year.</li> <li>● The rupee is one of the world's worst performing currencies in 2018, and that has further stoked inflation.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Role of Central Banks:</b> The central banks may be required to adopt more unconventional methods to stimulate their economies.</li> <li>● <b>Reforms:</b> In order to tackle the next recession, policymakers will have to come up with reforms to boost economic productivity, instead of just relying on an ultra-easy monetary policy to boost their economies.</li> <li>● <b>Government's Role:</b> Governments are expected to ramp up spending to stoke demand.</li> <li>● In a credit crunch, government intervention to guarantee bank deposits and major financial institutions can maintain credibility in the banking system.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, LiveMint, CNN, The Guardian.



## 18

## Agglomeration Economies

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<b>GS 3: Economic Development</b> Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
<b>Question</b>	What do you understand by "Agglomeration Economies"? Explain it with reference to India's service sector.
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In India the spatial development trends are very different when compared with China and the US.</li> <li>● India's growth is characterised by clusters of economic activity concentrated in a few highly dense megacities.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Such engines of growth have <b>failed to spread to less dense secondary cities</b>.</li> <li>● Since majority of the population in India still lives outside megacities, this has created <b>huge spatial disparities</b>.</li> <li>● While this is common to many countries, but it is much more pronounced in India.</li> <li>● Unlike in developed countries, in India <b>medium-sized cities remain mired in joblessness and poverty</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Concept</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Agglomeration economies</b> refers to the benefits that come when firms and people locate near one another together in cities and industrial clusters.</li> <li>● These benefits all ultimately come from <b>transport costs savings</b>.</li> <li>● Concentration gives advantages to firms when they cluster as a consequence of the presence of externalities, among others, with <b>spillover of knowledge or labour</b>.</li> <li>● Agglomeration economies in the US are concentrated in locations with employment density below 150 employees per sq. km.</li> <li>● In India, agglomeration economies are found in locations with densities above this threshold, with employment densities reaching thousands.</li> </ul>
<b>Effects of Agglomeration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Concentration:</b> It leads to concentration of social and economic activities that allow existence of economies of scale.</li> <li>● <b>Transaction cost:</b> They enhance productivity and facilitate exchange of goods and services thus reducing transaction costs.</li> <li>● <b>Urban Development:</b> They lead to further urban development.</li> <li>● <b>Productivity:</b> It enhances the level of productivity.</li> <li>● <b>Employment:</b> It leads to higher demand of employees creating employment.</li> <li>● <b>Specialisation of cities:</b> It impacts the level of economic specialisation, or economic profile, of each city.</li> </ul>
<b>Agglomeration of Service Sector in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India's services sector, a <b>bigger engine of growth</b> and job creation, has experienced different spatial evolution trends.</li> <li>● High-density service clusters have continued to grow at a much faster pace than less dense areas and more dense locations have become more concentrated over time.</li> <li>● This stands in contrast with the US, where in the last decades services have tended to grow fastest in medium density locations, such as Silicon Valley.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Megacities suffer from severe congestion costs, but they also benefit from huge agglomeration economies and <b>knowledge spill overs</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>About Manufacturing Sector</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India's manufacturing sector is spatially <b>spreading at a much faster pace</b> than the services sector.</li> <li>● This dispersion of the manufacturing sector from dense to less dense districts has contributed to the following:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Accelerated structural transformation.</li> <li>(2) Improved allocation of resources.</li> <li>(3) Promoted growth of more efficient enterprises.</li> <li>(4) Reduced spatial mismatch of enterprises.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>However</b>, the manufacturing sector has not spread to all districts.</li> <li>● Only those districts that have improved their physical and human infrastructure have attracted manufacturing enterprises.</li> <li>● Further this is not happening at a faster pace to create more jobs.</li> </ul>
<b>The other side</b>	<p><b>Agglomeration diseconomies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Along with its positive effects, agglomeration also has certain negative aspects. Such as:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The increased density influences costs such as land value.</li> <li>(2) Due to the increased demand for transportation, the region faces congestion and pollution problem.</li> <li>(3) Agglomeration also give rise to different kinds of crimes.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● The firms' profitability is increased until the utility is on its maxima.</li> <li>● As a matter of fact, factors such as high prices of land as a consequence of scarcity, congestion, pollution and an insufficient amount of urban utilities impact negatively on productivity of cities.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Need of Spatial spread:</b> Engines of growth and job creation are not tied to big cities. Services can spread spatially at a much faster pace than the manufacturing sector and contribute to more inclusive growth.</li> <li>● <b>Developing resources in other cities:</b> Policymakers will need to improve access to telecommunication and post-secondary education in secondary cities.</li> <li>● <b>Assessment criteria:</b> There is need of India specific assessment mechanism to evaluate the effects of agglomeration in India for better policy making.</li> <li>● <b>Sustainable urban development:</b> While developing the further infrastructure to accommodate the growing needs of the city, policy makers must consider the environmental consequences of it.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	LiveMint, NBER.



## 19

# Universal Basic Income (UBI)

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 2-</b> Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In recent years UBI has gained traction as an alternative to welfare schemes. Critically analyse UBI and challenges in its implementation in India.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has decided to include UBI in its manifesto ahead of the Assembly elections this year and aims to implement the scheme by 2022.</li> <li>● The <b>2017 Economic Survey</b> had flagged the UBI scheme as “a conceptually appealing idea” and a possible alternative to social welfare programmes targeted at bringing down poverty.</li> </ul>
<b>What UBI?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Definition:</b> Universal basic income is a regular, periodic cash payment delivered unconditionally to all citizens on an individual basis, without requirement of work or willingness to work.</li> </ul>
<b>Features of UBI</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Payments at periodic regular intervals (not onetime grant).</li> <li>(2) Payments in cash (not food vouchers or service coupons).</li> <li>(3) Payments to individuals</li> <li>(4) Universality</li> <li>(5) Unconditionality.</li> </ol>
<b>Basis on which UBI models mostly differs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The differences among the several models tried out across geographies lies mainly in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>The scale of the project:</b> It decides a scope and expansion of UBI. For instance, UBI implementation in Finland and India- Indian UBI scope will be larger considering population and economy of scale.</li> <li>(2) <b>Quantum of income:</b> It is basically how much amount being transfer under UBI? Or how much part of income UBI is going to cover?</li> <li>(3) <b>Source of funding:</b> It depends on Is it fully funded by government with or without extra tax on exchequer.</li> <li>(4) <b>Cuts in other transfers:</b> It depends on whether some or all existing benefits subsumed under UBI.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Global precedents/ examples</b>	<p><b>Several governments have tried out UBI policies :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Finland:</b> Recently it concluded a two-year experiment on its effects on unemployed citizens, which commenced in January 2017.</li> <li>● <b>Ontario, Canada:</b> It had announced a plan to test a kind of unconditional income guarantee, and enrolled participants in three areas of the province for a guaranteed income for up to three years.</li> <li>● <b>Netherland:</b> Some cities in the Netherlands have launched municipal-level trials.</li> <li>● <b>Spain:</b> Barcelona in Spain has tested several potential changes to its anti-poverty programmes, including unconditional cash payments.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Madhya Pradesh UBI pilot project:</u></b> India also tried UBI on a limited scale in some districts of Madhya Pradesh on pilot basis which also got recognition from WEF (World Economic Forum).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arguments in Favour of UBI</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Poverty and vulnerability reduction:</u></b> Poverty and vulnerability will be reduced in one stroke.</li> <li>● <b><u>Choice:</u></b> A UBI treats beneficiaries as agents and entrusts citizens with the responsibility of using welfare spending as they see best.</li> <li>● <b><u>No exclusion error:</u></b> As all individuals are targeted, there is no need to identify the beneficiaries and exclusion error (poor being left out) is zero though inclusion error (rich gaining access to the scheme) is 60 percent.</li> <li>● <b><u>Insurance against shocks:</u></b> This income floor will provide a safety net against health, income and other shocks.</li> <li>● <b><u>Improvement in financial inclusion:</u></b> Payment transfers will encourage greater usage of bank accounts ensuring financial inclusion and leading to higher profits for banking correspondents (BC).</li> <li>● <b><u>Psychological benefits:</u></b> A guaranteed income will reduce the pressures of finding a basic living on a daily basis.</li> <li>● <b><u>Administrative efficiency:</u></b> A UBI in place of a plethora of separate government schemes will reduce the administrative burden on the state.</li> <li>● <b><u>Bargaining power:</u></b> UBI will provide bargaining power to individual especially to poor who earlier agree to do any menial work available to them in any working conditions.</li> <li>● <b><u>Job losses:</u></b> In these times of AI and Industry 4.0 job losses are set to increase and UBI could provide the necessary cushion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Arguments Against UBI</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Conspicuous spending:</u></b> Households, especially male members, may spend this additional income on wasteful activities.</li> <li>● <b><u>Moral hazard (reduction in labour supply):</u></b> A minimum guaranteed income might make people lazy and opt out of the labour market.</li> <li>● <b><u>Gender disparity induced by cash: Gender norms may regulate the sharing of UBI within a household – men are likely to exercise control over spending of the UBI.</u></b></li> <li>● <b><u>Implementation:</u></b> Given the current status of financial access among the poor, a UBI may put too much stress on the banking system.</li> <li>● <b><u>Fiscal cost given political economy of exit:</u></b> Once introduced, it may become difficult for the government to wind up a UBI in case of failure.</li> <li>● <b><u>Exposure to market risks (cash vs. food):</u></b> Unlike food subsidies that are not subject to fluctuating market prices, a cash transfer's purchasing power may severely be curtailed by market fluctuations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What are challenges for UBI?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Basic reforms precondition:</u></b> Before UBI implementation, there is need to do basic reforms in fields of market, education, health, etc. to achieve success in it.</li> <li>● <b><u>Food security issue:</u></b> Before subsuming existing food subsidies in UBI, proper study about its implications is needed given high hunger and malnutrition deaths in India.</li> <li>● <b><u>Inflation, competitiveness and growth:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Because of increase in money supply market, UBI is likely to increase wages which earlier experienced in MGNREGA scheme.</li> <li>(2) Thus, higher wages without proportional increase in productivity will affect India's competitiveness.</li> <li>(3) It will also result in inflation and lower growth in Indian economy.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Federal challenge:</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) For UBI to succeed there should be cooperation and coordination between states and central government is needed.</li><li>(2) Unlike Sikkim, other states are not in good position in terms of fiscal and debt liabilities.</li></ol></li><li>● <b>One shoe fits all approach:</b> Each state is at different position and stages in terms of development and social condition of its people, thus their requirements will be different.</li><li>● <b>Resource challenges:</b><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) As economic survey <b>did not propose any new resource mobilisation</b> or taxation to meet the goal of UBI like welfare schemes in which rich taxed higher for poor, it will be difficult to raise resources for UBI.</li><li>(2) It is expected to cost Rs. 510,000 crore, more than 9 times the allocation in Budget for MGNREGA.</li></ol></li></ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● While the idea of UBI may appear attractive on paper, in a huge and underdeveloped country like India with a peculiar political economy, it would be very challenging to implement it successfully.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, Economic survey-2017-18



20

## Startup India Review

<b>Syllabus Relation</b>	<b>GS 3:</b> Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment.
<b>Question</b>	Critically Analyze the performance of "Startup India" program
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per recent data, In the first 30 months since its launch, only 88 startups of the 11,422 recognized by the government were certified for tax exemption under the flagship Startup India scheme.</li> <li>● Until July 24, 2018, the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) was able to grant tax exemption only to 4% of applicants under the scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under the Startup India scheme, <b>tax exemption</b> is available to startups for two aspects- income and investment raised.</li> <li>● The second aspect of tax breaks under the scheme- <b>startups and their angel investors</b> are allowed exemption under the <b>Income Tax Act</b>.</li> <li>● In order to avail both these tax exemptions, DIPP-recognised Startups had to undergo <b>the screening mechanism of Inter-Ministerial Board (IMB)</b>.</li> <li>● This mechanism has been cited as being <b>rigorous</b> and thereby <b>contributed to the delays</b>.</li> <li>● As per new <b>changes moved by the DIPP</b>, startups <b>need not go through the IMB</b> to claim breaks under of the Income Tax Act and, instead, new applications will be directly evaluated by the <b>Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Concept</b>	<p><b><u>A Startup means an entity:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incorporated or registered in India <b>not prior to five years</b>, with an annual turnover <b>not exceeding INR 25 crore</b> in any preceding financial year</li> <li>● Working towards <b>innovation, development, deployment or commercialization</b> of new products, processes or services driven by technology or intellectual property.</li> <li>● Further, the Startup shall be eligible for tax benefits <b>only after it has obtained certification</b> from the <b>Inter-Ministerial Board</b>, set up for such purpose.</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Startup India</b> is a Government of India <b>flagship initiative</b> to build Startups and <b>nurture innovation</b>.</li> <li>● Through this initiative, the Government plans to empower Startup ventures <b>to boost entrepreneurship, economic growth, and employment across India</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Key Features of Startup India scheme:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A 'fund of funds' of INR 10,000 crores to support innovation driven Startups has been established which is being managed by SIDBI.</li> <li>● There will be 'Single Window Clearance'.</li> <li>● 80% reduction in patent registration fee.</li> <li>● Provision for easier exit for failed ventures (Modified and more friendly Bankruptcy Code to ensure 90-day exit window).</li> <li>● Freedom from mystifying inspections for 3 years.</li> <li>● Freedom from Capital Gain Tax for 3 years.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Freedom from tax in profits for 3 years.</li> <li>● In order to meet the objectives of the initiative, Government of India is announced the <b>Action Plan</b> that addresses all aspects of the Startup ecosystem.</li> <li>● With this Action Plan the Government hopes to accelerate spreading of the Startup movement.</li> </ul>
<b>Key points of Action Plan</b>	<p><b>Startup India Hub :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● With Startup India Hub, Government wants to create a single point of contact for the entire Startup ecosystem and enable knowledge exchange and access to funding.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Self-certification:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government wants to reduce the regulatory burden on Startups thereby allowing them to focus on their core business and keep compliance cost low.</li> <li>● Startups are allowed to self-certify compliance (through the Startup mobile app) with 9 labour and environment laws (refer below).</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Patent Examination:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To promote awareness and adoption of IPRs by Startups , Government is taking various steps that includes fast-track examination of patent applications and rebate in fees.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Harnessing Private Sector Expertise for Incubator Setup:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Government intends to create a policy and framework for setting-up of incubators across the country in public private partnership.</li> <li>● 35 new incubators in existing institutions will be setup along with funding support of 40% shall be provided by Central Government.</li> </ul>
<b>Issues/ Problems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Stringent Rules:</b> The country's stringent tax regime has been one of the key reasons for not starting operations in India.</li> <li>● <b>Red Tapism:</b> The Companies that want to avail of the benefits in the programme have to follow a stringent set of criteria to even register as a startup, with only a third qualifying as one.</li> <li>● <b>Administrative Issues:</b> Startups also face the challenge of systematic inefficiencies and corruption-related complications.</li> <li>● <b>Minimum Alternative Tax(MAT):</b> Start-ups usually don't make profits in their early period. However, the minimum alternative tax is still applicable.</li> <li>● Under MAT, all companies having book profits under Companies Act are required to pay taxes at the rate of 18.5%.</li> </ul>
<b>Critical Appraisal of the Startup program</b>	<p><b><u>Hits:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Tax incentives:</b> In the first two years of the program, the DIPP has extended income tax exemptions to 78 startups which will be able to avail tax holiday for any three consecutive years.</li> <li>● <b>Protecting patents:</b> Leaving behind cumbersome procedure of securing intellectual property rights, startups' applications get expedited and more than 1000 beneficiaries have received an 80% rebate from the government on their patent applications in first two years.</li> <li>● <b>Startup India Hub:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The virtual platform connecting entrepreneurs, investors and mentors now has more than 22,000 registered users and it has so far resolved more than 80,000 queries.</li> <li>(2) The Hub provides learning free entrepreneurship courses, and it has been used by over 1,91,000 individuals so far.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Student networks:</b> Startup India's network includes over 941 tinkering labs in schools, eight research parks, 11 technology business incubators, 15 startupcenters, and 50 bio-incubators.</li> <li>● <b>Misses:</b></li> <li>● <b>Low Disbursement of Funds:</b> Almost half-way into plan tenure, just over 10% of the total fund has been released, falling short on the very essence of the program.</li> <li>● <b>Tax Exemption to very few:</b> Until July 24, 2018, the DIPP was able to grant tax exemption only to 4% of applicants under the scheme.</li> <li>● <b>Low level of Compliance:</b> So far, only 12 states have confirmed compliance with the advisory issued by the government to facilitate ease of doing business.</li> <li>● <b>IPR Regime:</b> A fast-track, low-cost intellectual property regime that was promised is yet to be fully delivered.</li> <li>● <b>Not so easy Exit via IBC:</b></li> <li>● The rules for voluntary liquidation are still in the works and permitting start-ups to wind up business within 90 days could be delayed.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Ahead</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The government's initiative has had an impact on only a small section of start-ups and a lot <b>more needs to be done to provide a strong fillip</b> to the start-up world.</li> <li>● However, much of its efforts have been restricted by what we can term <b>bureaucratic impediments</b>, so progress has been limited.</li> <li>● The government <b>needs to review the policy soon, remove impediments</b> and give a <b>stronger impetus</b> to start-ups.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	Indian Express, The Hindu, LiveMint, ET.



## 21

## India-Bangladesh Relations

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<b>GS-2: India and its neighbourhood relations.</b>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India have witnessed unprecedented heights over the last few years. In the context of the above statements analyze the India-Bangladesh relations.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently the coalition led by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League posted a landslide victory in the nation's parliamentary polls.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact of recent win on India</b>	<p><b><u>How does her win impact India?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Stable and trustworthy ally:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Hasina's victory is a positive development for India, which has been a stable ally.</li> <li>(2) Bangladesh is key to India's plans to connect with South-East Asia, as well as developing the landlocked Northeast.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Help in containing terrorism:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Bangladesh under Hasina has been committed to fight terrorism.</li> <li>(2) Stringent action against anti India elements has reduced terror incidences in India's Northeast.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Why Bangladesh is important for India?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Political dimension:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Consensus among top leadership:</b> Consensus among leaders in areas of development, security cooperation, fights against terrorism, etc.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Economic dimension:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Bangladesh was the second fastest-growing economy in the world in 2016 with more than 7 percent growth.</li> <li>(2) The current volume of bilateral trade is about \$6.6 billion and estimated potential is about four times the present level.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Policy dimension:</u></b> Given Bangladesh's strategic location, it is important for India to have its cooperation to have success in its policies like Make in India, Act East policy, Neighbourhood first policy, connectivity with ASEAN, North East developmental programs, etc.</li> <li>● <b><u>Border Management:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Both shares 4096.7 km. of the border, <b>longest land boundary</b> that India shares with any of its neighbours.</li> <li>(2) It is governed by the India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), 2015.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Security dimension:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Securing sea lanes of communication:</b> In increasing piracy incidents in South East Indian ocean, Bangladesh can play significant role in containing it.</li> <li>(2) <b>Fighting terrorism and deradicalization:</b> Both India and Bangladesh prone to religion based radical outfits thus they could cooperate in deradicalization efforts by sharing intelligence, and other counter-terrorism efforts.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>(1) <b>Containing insurgency in North-East:</b> A friendly Bangladesh can ensure that no anti-India terror or insurgent activities can be carried out from its soil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Social sector development:</u></b> <p>(1) Bangladesh achieved significant success in poverty reduction, achieving success in health and education and fighting climate change, etc.</p> <p>(2) Sharing, cooperation and adoption of best practices by both will help in social development. (Example: SHG model)</p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Regional and sub-regional arrangements, groupings:</u></b> <p>(1) Both states are members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as well as BIMSTEC.</p> <p>(2) The nature of relations could contribute to the success or failure of these regional and sub-regional arrangements.</p> </li> </ul>
Areas of cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Diplomatic cooperation:</u></b> <p>(1) <b>High-Level Visits and Exchanges:</b> Regular high-level visits and exchanges at Ministerial level as well as between senior officials on a regular basis.</p> <p>(2) <b>Bilateral institutional mechanisms:</b> More than 50 bilateral institutional mechanisms between the two in the areas of security, trade &amp; commerce, power &amp; energy, transport &amp; connectivity, science and technology, defense, rivers &amp; maritime affairs etc.</p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Trade and Investment cooperation:</u></b> <p>(1) Bangladesh ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in export list of India with <b>5.5 US \$ billion and 2.1% Share of overall exports.</b></p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Development cooperation:</u></b> <p>(1) Bangladesh is largest recipient of Line Of Credit funds from India till date.</p> <p>(2) In addition, India also provides grant assistance to Bangladesh for projects under '<b>Aid to Bangladesh</b>'.</p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Defence cooperation:</u></b> <p>(1) <b>SundarbanMoitry-</b> joint exercise between Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).</p> <p>(2) <b>Sampriti-</b> annual joint military exercise.</p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Recent Power and Energy Sector Cooperation:</u></b> <p>(1) Bangladesh is currently importing about 660 MW of power from India.</p> <p>(2) Rooppur nuclear power plant- Tripartite MoU between India, Russia and Bangladesh for Bangladesh's first atomic energy project.(2018)</p> </li> <li>● <b><u>Recent Connectivity and people to people ties initiatives:</u></b> <p>(1) Kolkata-Khulna "Bandhan" passenger train service (2018)</p> <p>(2) Akhaura-Agartala railway link (2018)</p> <p>(3) Start of border Haats on India-Bangladesh Border.</p> </li> </ul>
Areas of concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>NRC issue in Assam:</u></b> Since creation the state of Bangladesh, millions of Bangladeshi immigrants have entered into India illegally leading to social unrest.</li> <li>● <b><u>Security concerns:</u></b> Bangladesh has been the object of three main Indian security concerns since independence- Bangladeshi internal stability, its strategic position in relation to China, and Dhaka's alleged involvement with Indian tribal insurgents.</li> <li>● <b><u>Rohingya crisis:</u></b></li> </ul>

	<p>(1) Nearly 11 lakh Rohingyas refugees living in Bangladesh. India sent humanitarian aid to Bangladesh under 'Operation Insaniyat'.</p> <p>(2) But Bangladesh expects India to put pressure on Myanmar for repatriation of over a million of Rohingyas from which India refrained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Border Management:</b> Porous nature of border between India-Bangladesh provides entry gate for smuggling drugs, fake currency, cattle, trafficking in arms, terrorist infiltration, etc.</li> <li>● <b>River disputes:</b> <p>(1) Both have 54 rivers in common.</p> <p>(2) <b>Prominent issues-</b> Ganga River Dispute- concerns in Farakka barrage, Teesta River Dispute, Barak River –Tipaimukh Hydro Electric Project Dispute etc.</p> </li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Infrastructure and capacity building:</b> Both need to have cooperation in Infrastructure and capacity building via road, rail, shipping to integrate region.</li> <li>● <b>Border security and market:</b> Cooperation in upgrading some customs posts, as well as establishing border markets for vendors along the 4,000+ km boundary can help both countries.</li> <li>● <b>Defence cooperation:</b> In the fields such as in military hardware, space technology, technical assistance, exchange of experience, and development of sea infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>(1) As close neighbours, both countries should take note of each other's sensitivities and vulnerabilities and demonstrate a greater political will to establish mutually cooperative ties.</p> <p>(2) As India further strengthens its ties with BIMSTEC and Southeast Asian nations, India-Bangladesh bilateral relations will assume even greater importance.</p>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, MEA, The diplomat, IDSA, Live Mint, ORF



## 22

## India's role in Afghanistan

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GS-2: India and its neighbourhood relations.</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discuss India's role in Afghanistan and possible impacts of US announcement on withdrawal of 7000 US troops from Afghanistan on India.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, US President Donald Trump belittled India's role in Afghanistan's reconstruction and called on India to do more in fighting the Taliban.</li> <li>● India refrained from committing any troops and said that it is committed to long-term developmental aid.</li> </ul>
<b>India's stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>India supports Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled development.</u></b></li> <li>● <b><u>Partnering on specific needs and requirements:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India plays a significant role as a development partner based on the specific needs and requirements of the Afghan government.</li> <li>(2) India is largest donor in the region with <b>development assistance</b> exceeding <b>\$3 billion.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Belief in transforming human lives:</u></b> India firmly believes in the critical role that developmental assistance can play in transforming human lives.</li> <li>● <b><u>Specific mandate criteria:</u></b> India said it does not send its armed forces abroad except under the specific mandate of UN Peacekeeping Operations.</li> <li>● <b><u>Bilateral arrangement emphasis:</u></b> As per India, its assistance to Afghanistan is part of a bilateral arrangement with the Government of President Ashraf Ghani.</li> </ul>
<b>USA's stand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Shift in U.S.'s South Asia Strategy for Afghanistan:</u></b> There is shift in U.S.'s South Asia Strategy for Afghanistan which was announced by Mr. Trump in August 2017.</li> <li>● <b><u>More than just Aid:</u></b> Trump indicated that building of facilities like libraries do not add to resolving the security crisis in Afghanistan.</li> <li>● <b><u>More role expectations from India, Pakistan and Russia:</u></b> He sought regional cooperation from the three to resolve the crisis.</li> </ul>
<b>Bilateral relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Historical and cultural ties:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Both countries have century old relation rooted back to Indus Valley Civilisation.</li> <li>(2) Both share old rich heritage in various field of arts, culture, architecture, cuisine and language.</li> <li>(3) Bollywood movies, songs, TV shows are popular among Afghans.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Diplomatic Relations :</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) 1980s: India- only South Asian country to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.</li> <li>(2) 2005: Afghanistan as member in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).</li> <li>(3) 2011: Strategic Partnership Agreement signed.</li> <li>(4) 2016: Afghanistan support in boycott of SAARC summit hosted by Pakistan.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Economic and Commercial Relations:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India- largest market in the region for Afghan products.</li> <li>(2) Major Indian companies doing business in Afghanistan c.</li> <li>(3) 2017: Dedicated Air Cargo Corridor between Kabul-Delhi and Kandahar-Delhi boosted trade.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Security relations:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Both have strategic and military cooperation against Islamic militants to enhance their mutual efforts in the fight against terrorism, money laundering, organised crime, narcotics trafficking, etc.</li> <li>(2) <b>Example-</b> Police Training, <b>India's</b> gift of four Mi-25 Attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>People to People contacts:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India is most favoured destination for most Afghan tourists, especially for medical tourism.</li> <li>(2) Presently, there are estimated to be about 2500 Indians in Afghanistan.</li> <li>(3) Most of the Indian Diaspora are engaged as professionals.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>India's assistance to Afghanistan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is largely in <b>five fields – infrastructure projects, capacity building, economic development, connectivity and humanitarian assistance.</b></li> <li>● <b><u>Infrastructure and connectivity projects:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Construction of the 218-km road from Zaranj to Delaram for movement of goods to the Iranian border</li> <li>(2) 42MW India-Afghanistan Friendship Dam or Salma dam that supplies water for irrigating 75,000 hectares.</li> <li>(3) Afghan Parliament building</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Capacity Building:</u></b> More than 3,500 Afghans are undergoing training programmes in India and there is a special scheme of 1,000 scholarships a year for Afghan nationals.</li> <li>● <b><u>Humanitarian assistance:</u></b> India has supplied 1.1 million tonne of wheat to Afghanistan and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, a 400-bed hospital, is the main medical facility in Afghanistan that treats about 300,000 children every year.</li> <li>● <b><u>Economic development efforts:</u></b> India has taken up 116 “high impact community development projects” in 31 provinces of Afghanistan in areas such as education, health care, agriculture, renewable energy and flood control, as well as 94 small development projects.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges for India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Limited Geographical contiguity and access:</u></b> It hamper most of the India's efforts to provide assistance to Afghanistan.</li> <li>● <b><u>Security:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Taliban Attacks.</li> <li>(2) USA's withdrawal of forces.</li> <li>(3) Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan through proxies.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Drug trafficking, organized crime:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Afghanistan is part of Golden Crescent- Illicit opium-producing areas.</li> <li>(2) It has linkages in Indian states like Punjab which thus, affected youth and also promoted terrorism and organized crime.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>China Factor:</u></b> Growing Chinese influence in Afghanistan has also creating a diplomatic challenge for India.</li> </ul>

<b>Impact of US withdrawal from Afghanistan on India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Security in Afghanistan and region:</u></b> Given current condition of Afghanistan govt. in tackling Taliban and proposed US troop's withdrawal will allow militant groups such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda, ISIS to increase their influence in region.</li> <li>● <b><u>Regional instability:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) As Afghanistan at present has many stakeholders like Russia, china, Pak., etc., sudden US withdrawal may create a civil war like situation.</li> <li>(2) It will, thus, hamper India's efforts of development, capacity building of Afghanistan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Pakistan and China Factor:</u></b> Both Pakistan and China would get opportunity to increase their influence in Afghanistan and this will pose challenge to India's position in South Asia.</li> <li>● <b><u>Connectivity and economic concerns:</u></b> India's huge investments in Zaranj-Delaram highway, development of Chabahar port may get hampered if Taliban gained control over Afghanistan.</li> </ul>
<b>Way forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Engagement with Taliban:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India's stand on Taliban is for legacy reasons which have less significance with changing times.</li> <li>(2) Thus, India should exercise realpolitik to open channels for talks with Taliban and get its due space in reconciliation process in Afghanistan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>2+1 approach:</u></b> India should engage with any country in this case Afghanistan along with China for stabilising and developing the region.</li> <li>● <b><u>Initiating a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan:</u></b> India need to come up with regional solutions for regional problems recognizing the fact that Pakistan holds a strategic location in the region.</li> <li>● <b><u>Maintaining policy independence:</u></b> India's best course with Afghanistan must be its own regional strategy and should not become a part of any other country's strategy.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India and Afghanistan continue to enjoy close friendship shared since time immemorial. But in the evolving geo-political calculus India will have to step up its role by actively engaging all stakeholders to ensure it remains an important player in the process and its efforts in the last decade and a half are not undone.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, Live mint, MEA



## 23

## Look West Policy

<b>Syllabus relation</b>	<b>GS 2:</b> Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is India's look west policy? Discuss challenges in its implementation and future prospects for India in region.</li> </ul>
<b>Aim of Look West Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It aims at <b>increased interaction, enhanced trade and economic relations</b> and launch of negotiations towards free trade agreement (FTA) with the <b>West Asian countries</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Brief timeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1945-1991 (Cold war phase):</b> India kept close economic cooperation with both Saudi Arabia and Iran (rivals).</li> <li><b>Post 1991:</b> India changed its bi-directional approach to tri directional foreign policy to accommodate three key pillars of West Asia- <b>Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel</b>.</li> <li><b>2005:</b> Look West policy adopted.</li> <li><b>2006:</b> India invited the King of Saudi Arabia to be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade.</li> <li><b>2014:</b> India-Saudi defence cooperation agreement signed.</li> <li><b>2015:</b> PM Modi UAE visit (First by an Indian prime minister in 34 years).</li> <li><b>2017:</b> Crown prince of Saudi was the chief guest for republic day celebrations.</li> </ul>
<b>Why to look west?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Developing closer ties with western neighbours:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With an aim to come closer to our western neighbours in the Gulf, India launched "Look West Policy".</li> <li>This new initiative towards the GCC member countries will bring the economies of the Persian Gulf closer to India.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Countering China:</b> China through its OBOR trying to increase its influence in West Asian region. So, to counter China cooperation with West Asian countries is essential.</li> <li><b>Remittances:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>India has largest diaspora presence in west Asia with total 11 million Indians working in West Asia.</li> <li>Thus, it also receives large amount of remittance from West Asia.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Huge scope of influence:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Look East policy, India has limited scope of influence because of strong competition from China, USA.</li> <li>But in case of West Asia, India has a huge scope of influence because of its geopolitical location.</li> </ol> </li> <li><b>Developing Afghanistan:</b> It helped India to have greater cooperation to develop Afghanistan through Iran by Chabahar and Zaranj-Delaram highway.</li> <li><b>Energy security:</b> In terms of India's energy import, 70 percent come from West Asia and projected to increase with increase in India's economic growth.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>To counter radicalization, terrorism:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India because of its huge Hindu population projected as Hindu nation in world.</li> <li>(2) So, to counter anti-sectarian, pro-religion groups, and global forces like ISIS, Al-Qaeda close cooperation is essential between these countries.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Gate way to central Asia:</u></b> West Asia is gate way to land locked and energy rich central Asia.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Factors behind fundamental shift in West Asian strategic thinking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Structural change in the global energy market:</u></b> West Asian oil and gas increasingly heading to South and East Asian markets rather than to the Trans-Atlantic markets.</li> <li>● <b><u>Fiscal stress faced by the trans-Atlantic economies:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Because of it, West Asia is looking to India and other Asian powers to step in and offer security guarantees to the region.</li> <li>(2) Many GCC states have welcomed defence cooperation agreements with India.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Arab Spring:</u></b> In the wake of the Arab Spring and the chaos in Egypt and Iraq, the Gulf States find India and China to be more reliable interlocutors than many western states.</li> <li>● <b><u>Securing regional stability:</u></b> Under pressure from radical and extremist political forces within West Asia, most states in the region have come to value the Indian principle of seeking and securing regional stability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges in implementing look west policy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Systemic challenges:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India has systemic challenges like bureaucratic mode of running Indian foreign policy, understaffing and multiple centres of decision making.</li> <li>(2) These challenges often resulted in inefficient or inadequate implementation of bilateral and international treaties and agreements.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Red tapism, corruption, and lack of transparency:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India has not been able to attract substantial Arab investment despite of India's growing stature in the Gulf.</li> <li>(2) These factors hampered inflow of FDI in Indian market.</li> <li>(3) For instance, FDI from the G.C.C. countries between 2000 and 2014 has remained stagnant at \$3.2 billion.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>"Trust deficit" with Pakistan:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India's "trust deficit" with Pakistan has taken away India from advancing its commercial interests.</li> <li>(2) For instance, delays in Iran-India-Pakistan (IPI) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline projects.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>China factor:</u></b> China has made rapid developments in the Gulf region by acquiring equity stakes in the region's upstream oil and gas sector and penetrating in Arab markets.</li> <li>● <b><u>India's tensed relations with neighbours:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) For instance, <b>Sri Lanka-</b> India's interference in national politics, fishing issues, etc. <b>Nepal-</b> Unofficial blockade, Madhesi issue, Demonetisation, etc. <b>Bangladesh-</b> Rohingya issue, river water distribution, etc.</li> <li>(2) All these projected India's challenge to manage issues in neighbourhood and have made Gulf Arabs more inclined to seek China as a better security partner.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Domestic factors in West Asia:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Regional conflicts like Tensions in GCC, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Iran role in Yemen, Syria, tensions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Shia-Sunni conflicts, Saudi Wahhabism etc.</li> <li>(2) Findings and start of production of Shale gas in Western countries like USA, Canada created instability in oil and gas market which earlier had monopoly of GCC countries and led to slowdown in Arab economies.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Future Prospects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Role to India:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) US pull out from TPP (Trans-pacific partnership), planned troops or security pull out from Afghanistan signalling US withdrawal from Indian Ocean region and west Asia which creating space for other countries.</li> <li>(2) West Asian countries are looking east towards India to fill this space.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Energy Security:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Given India's rapid growth in the region and world, there will be increase in energy dependence by India on West Asia has rich reserves of fossil fuels.</li> <li>(2) It thus provides unique opportunity for Gulf countries to engage with India on energy front.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Friendly relations with Major regional power:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India has very relations with all the major powers in the region like Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia which is a unique of its kind in the whole world.</li> <li>(2) It will thus provide good opportunity for India and its national interests.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Soft power:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India has perception of soft power in the region due to its large presence in terms of Diaspora, Bollywood, and Indian Cuisines.</li> <li>(2) It will eventually help India in emerging as a strong player in the region.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Role of Net security provider:</u></b> Given India's ambition to project itself as "Net security provider" in the Indian Ocean region, look west policy could provide unique opportunity for it to India.</li> <li>● <b><u>Fight against Terrorism:</u></b> Indi's strong stand on terrorism and serious security challenges in west Asia in terms of ISIS, Al Qaeda provide opportunity for India to have coalition against terrorism with gulf countries.</li> </ul>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Proximity, history, cultural affinity, strong links between people, natural synergies, shared aspirations and common challenges</b> create boundless potential for a natural strategic partnership between India and West Asian countries.</li> <li>● Stepping away from <b>religious extremism and accepting pluralism and multiculturalism</b> as the defining principles of a modern state is the only way forward for each of the countries of Asia- from West to East.</li> <li>● India's appeal to Asia as a whole is built on these foundational principles of its Constitution.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, Indian express, PIB, IDSA and Financial express



24

## The Aadhar & Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018

<b>Syllabus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>GS 2 :</b> Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government</li> </ul>
<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to government data, Aadhar based verification has a potential plug various leakage. Discuss and analyse Aadhar Amendment Bill, 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was Passed in Lok Sabha.</li> <li>● The Bill comply with a Supreme Court judgement pronounced on September 26 last year in which it upheld the constitutional validity of unique identification project with certain restrictions and changes.</li> <li>● <b>The Bill amends:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.</li> <li>(2) The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.</li> <li>(3) The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Major Provisions of the bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Offline verification of Aadhaar number holder:</b> The Bill allows 'offline verification' of an individual's identity.</li> <li>● <b>Voluntary use of Aadhaar to verify identity:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill states that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity by authentication or offline verification.</li> <li>(2) The Bill states that authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory <b>only by a law of Parliament.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Entities using Aadhaar:</b> An entity may be allowed to perform authentication through Aadhaar, if the UIDAI is satisfied that it is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) compliant with certain standards of privacy and security</li> <li>(2) permitted by law,</li> <li>(3) seeking authentication for a purpose specified by the central government in the interest of the State.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Disclosure of information in certain cases:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) For directions for disclosing information in the interest of national security.</li> <li>(2) The Bill amends allow disclosure only for orders by High Courts (or above).</li> <li>(3) The Bill amends to allow disclosure on directions of officers not below the rank of a Secretary.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>UIDAI Fund:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill creates the Unique Identification Authority of India Fund.</li> <li>(2) All fees, grants and charges received by the UIDAI shall be credited to this fund.</li> <li>(3) The fund shall be used for expenses of the UIDAI, including salaries and allowances of its employees.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Complaints:</b> The Bill allow the individual to register complaints in certain cases, including impersonation or disclosure of their identity.</li> </ul>				
What is offline method of verification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is an <b>offline</b> method for identity <b>verification</b> wherein <b>verification</b> can be done without sharing biometrics or even <b>Aadhaar</b> number <b>offline</b>.</li> <li>● The Paperless local e-KYC involves generation of a digitally signed XML which can be stored in laptop and phone.</li> </ul>				
SC Judgment on Aadhar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Where Aadhaar required?</b></li> <li>● <b>Section 7:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It states Aadhar is mandatory for any government scheme that draws out of the consolidated fund of India.</li> <li>(2) <b>So, required at:</b> Ration, LPG subsidy, MGNREGA, Filing Income Tax returns.</li> <li>(3) <b>Section 139AA of Income Tax act:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It has made Aadhaar-PAN card linking mandatory as well as the requirement of Aadhaar when applying for PAN card.</li> <li>(b) This is an indirect link to banks, where PAN card number is mandatory.</li> <li>(c) It is this part that, in a way, makes it <b>mandatory</b> for you to obtain an Aadhaar number.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul> <div data-bbox="454 851 1284 1393" data-label="Image"> <p><b>Aadhaar of the case against Aadhaar</b></p> <p>The main thrust of the case brought by petitioners was that Aadhaar encroached on the privacy of citizens as it entailed collection of fingerprints, Iris scans and other details with/without people's consent. A ready reckoner on the controversy.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p><b>WHAT IS AADHAAR?</b> A 12-digit unique identification number given to an individual which is linked to both his/her demographic and biometric details, including fingerprints and Iris scan</p> </td> <td> <p><b>WHAT IS THE CONTROVERSY?</b> Petitioners in the case alleged that it violates citizens' privacy Petitioners said that collecting biometric information will enable 360-degree profiling of individuals and the creation of surveillance state They also alleged leakages of Aadhaar data They also questioned whether the government could be permitted to exclude those without Aadhaar from its welfare delivery network</p> </td> <td> <p><b>GOVT WANTS TO MAKE AADHAAR MANDATORY FOR THESE:</b> Welfare measures (ration under PDS, pension, LPG, MGNREGA, direct beneficiary transfer etc.), bank accounts, PAN cards, mobile phone services, passports, driving licences etc.</p> </td> <td> <p><b>GOVERNMENT DENIES ANY WRONGDOING</b> Govt says as per Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016, if a person does not have an Aadhaar number, they are not being denied benefits, but viable, alternate means of identity proof is accepted like voter ID, ration card, passport, driving licence, etc.</p> </td> </tr> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Section struck down</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Section 33(1):</b> It allows disclosure of information, including identity and authentication records, if ordered by a court not inferior to that of a <b>District Judge</b>.</li> <li>(2) <b>Section 33(2):</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) It allows identity and authentication data to be disclosed in the interest of national security.</li> <li>(b) It is also on direction of an officer not <b>below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India</b>.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Section 47:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It referred to cognizance of offences.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Section 57:</b> It refers to the use of Aadhaar data by any <b>“body corporate or person”</b> to establish the identity of an individual.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WHAT IS AADHAAR?</b> A 12-digit unique identification number given to an individual which is linked to both his/her demographic and biometric details, including fingerprints and Iris scan</p>	<p><b>WHAT IS THE CONTROVERSY?</b> Petitioners in the case alleged that it violates citizens' privacy Petitioners said that collecting biometric information will enable 360-degree profiling of individuals and the creation of surveillance state They also alleged leakages of Aadhaar data They also questioned whether the government could be permitted to exclude those without Aadhaar from its welfare delivery network</p>	<p><b>GOVT WANTS TO MAKE AADHAAR MANDATORY FOR THESE:</b> Welfare measures (ration under PDS, pension, LPG, MGNREGA, direct beneficiary transfer etc.), bank accounts, PAN cards, mobile phone services, passports, driving licences etc.</p>	<p><b>GOVERNMENT DENIES ANY WRONGDOING</b> Govt says as per Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016, if a person does not have an Aadhaar number, they are not being denied benefits, but viable, alternate means of identity proof is accepted like voter ID, ration card, passport, driving licence, etc.</p>
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<p><b>How the amendment's violate SC order on Aadhar?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Giving Aadhar details to private organisations:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Private organisations to get Aadhaar details which is in violation of the Supreme Court judgment.</li> <li>(2) It is also failed to protect the right to privacy.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Voluntary aadhar usage:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) 'Voluntary' Aadhaar usage can often and easily mean that furnishing an Aadhaar number is the quickest way of getting aadhar.</li> <li>(2) This means that banks and telecom operators can now continue to link Aadhaar to bank accounts and mobile SIM cards (and use Aadhaar authentication).</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Section 57</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The bill seeks to amend the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, to provide for the voluntary use of Aadhaar authentication.</li> <li>(2) This is a violation of SC order to strike down Section 57.</li> <li>(3) It means no private entity could carry out Aadhaar authentication.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Section 33(2):</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Supreme Court declared the clause unconstitutional.</li> <li>(2) It said disclosure in the interest of national security may be important but that should spring out of the request of a higher-ranking officer.</li> <li>(3) The Bill seeks to substitute the Joint Secretary with Secretary</li> <li>(4) This completely disregards the Supreme Court's order <b>demanding inquiry by a judge.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Allowing children to delete their Aadhaar number:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The bill has made provisions to allow children to opt out of Aadhaar once they are adults.</li> <li>(2) But it does not consider the fact that Aadhaar is <i>de facto</i> mandatory for all adults as it still required to be linked to one's PAN card.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Before making any amendment to Adhar act. First we need enactment of data protection law.</li> <li>● Then only it is possible to balance privacy on one side and Aadhar act on the other.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu,PRS, The Wire</p>



25

## Consumer Protection Bill 2018

<b>Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are provisions of Consumer Protection Bill, 2018? Explain how the bill helps to defend "<b>Consumer Rights</b>"?</li> </ul>
<b>Why it is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 is passed in Lok Sabha</li> <li>A Consumer Protection Bill to replace the Act was introduced in 2015, but has been withdrawn post the introduction of the 2018 Bill.</li> </ul>
<b>Constitutional provision of the bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Article 38:</b> (1) As per Article 38, State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people.</li> </ul>
<b>Need of consumer protection law</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapidly increasing variety of goods and services which modern technology has made available.</li> <li>Growing size and complexity of production and distribution system.</li> <li>High level of sophistication in marketing and selling practices, in advertising and other forms of production.</li> <li>Removal of personal relationship of buyer and seller as a result of mass marketing methods.</li> <li>Consumers' increased mobility.</li> </ul>
<b>Highlights of the bill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Redressal mechanism:</b> (1) The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. (2) The Bill enforces consumer rights and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.</li> <li><b>Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions:</b> (1) Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions will be set up at the District, State and National levels for adjudicating consumer complaints. (2) Appeals from the District and State Commissions will be heard at the next level and from the National Commission by the Supreme Court.</li> <li><b>Central Consumer Protection Authority:</b> (1) The Bill sets up a Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class. (2) It can issue safety notices for goods and services, order refunds, recall goods and rule against misleading advertisements.</li> <li><b>Liability:</b> (1) If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.</li> <li><b>Definition of Unfair Practices:</b> The Bill defines contracts as 'unfair' if they significantly affect the rights of consumers. It also defines unfair and restrictive trade practices.</li> <li><b>Consumer Protection Councils:</b> The Bill establishes Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state and national levels to render advise on consumer protection.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Hassle free grievance redressal:</b> Mechanism to file complaint electronically.</li> <li>● <b>E-Commerce:</b> It empowers the Centre to make rules for preventing unfair trade practices in online trade.</li> <li>● <b>Extensive definition of Consumers rights:</b> Such as right to safety, information, choose, to be heard etc.</li> <li>● Mediation as an Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanism.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How is the 2018 Bill different from the 1986 Act?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Bill adds various provisions for consumer protection that were absent in the 1986 Act.</li> <li>● <b>Key among them are:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>The provisions on product liability and unfair contracts:</b> The Bill outlines cases in which the product manufacturer, service provider and seller will be held guilty under product liability.</li> <li>(2) <b>An unfair contract:</b> Unfair contracts cover six terms, such as payment of excessive security deposits in an arrangement, disproportionate penalty for a breach, and unilateral termination without cause.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>What are Provisions that seeks to protect consumer?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Institutional structure:</b> Central Consumer Protection Authority fills an institutional void in the regulatory regime extant.</li> <li>● <b>Online complaint:</b> Consumer can file complaint in their city and online</li> <li>● <b>Punishment to endorser:</b> Endorser will also be punished</li> <li>● <b>Punishment to misleading ads point</b></li> <li>● <b>Right to be protected against the marketing of hazardous goods, products or services.</b></li> <li>● <b>Right to be informed:</b> about the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods, products or services</li> <li>● <b>Right to be assured</b> of access to a variety of goods, products or services at competitive prices.</li> <li>● <b>Right to seek redressal</b> against unfair or restrictive trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of consumers</li> <li>● <b>Right to consumer awareness</b></li> <li>● <b>Product liability:</b> it provides safety of consumer and creates deterrence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is criticism?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Powers to central government:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill empowers the central government to appoint, remove and prescribe conditions of service for members of the District, State and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.</li> <li>(2) This give enormous powers to central government's.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>About online trading:</b> No provision about the volume of online trading which is increasing every year.</li> <li>● <b>Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (CDRC):</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill does not specify that the Commissions will comprise a judicial member.</li> <li>(2) If the Commissions were to have members only from the executive, the principal of separation of powers may be violated.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>No clarification on advisory jurisdiction:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Bill does not specify whom the Councils will advise.</li> <li>(2) If the Councils advise the government, it is unclear in what capacity such advice will be given.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

<b>World Consumer Rights Day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>March 15:</b> The consumer movement marks March 15 with World Consumer Rights Day every year, as a means of raising global awareness about consumer rights and needs.</li><li>● The <b>theme</b> of <b>2018 World Consumer Rights Day</b> is 'Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer'.</li></ul>
<b>National Consumer Day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>24 December:</b> It is celebrated on 24 December every year.</li><li>● The <b>2018 theme</b> is 'Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer'.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	PRS website , Yojana magazine, The Hindu



**UPSC**

# **Current Affairs January 2019**

**By Jawwad Kazi**

The  
**UNIQUE**  
academy

## 1

## Polity

## 123rd amendment bill

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Union Cabinet cleared a 10 per cent job and education quota for “economically weaker” sections.</li> </ul>
Note	This issue has been covered holistically in contemporary issues section.
Source	The Hindu

## Aadhaar amendment Bill

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government has introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha.</li> </ul>
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This issue has been covered holistically in contemporary issues section.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Chardham projects

Chardham project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Supreme Court lifted its stay on certain stalled projects under the government’s ambitious Chardham development plan.</li> <li>The four towns of the hilly State to be connected by all-weather roads are Yamnotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.</li> <li>The court said the stay will however continue on those projects which are yet to begin under the plan till the environment clearance is taken by the authorities.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Specific names on Arunachal ST list

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Union Cabinet approved the Home Ministry’s proposal to replace the generic term ‘any Naga tribes’ with the <b>specific names of the tribes</b> that would <b>qualify for recognition as Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh</b>.</li> </ul>
What are changes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018:</b> for revision of the list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh was cleared and the names of some communities would be deleted.</li> <li>An official statement said ‘Khampti’ would be replaced with ‘Tai Khamti’ in the list.</li> <li>‘Abor’ would be deleted and ‘Mishmi-Kaman, Idu and Taraon’ would be included.</li> <li>‘Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong’ would be included in lieu of ‘Momba’ in the ST list of Arunachal Pradesh.</li> <li>The Home Ministry will have to move the Bill in Parliament before the winter session concludes on January 8 for the changes to come into effect.</li> </ul>
Greater nagalim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NSCN-IM and other Naga groups have been campaigning for a Greater Nagalim or a contiguous land for the Nagas across Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Myanmar.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Assam Accord Clause 6

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Centre has set up a <b>high-level committee headed by former IAS officer M.P. Bezbaruah</b>.</li> <li>Committee is to assess the appropriate level of reservation of seats in the <b>Assam</b> Assembly and local bodies for the Assamese people, besides providing employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
Cabinet decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a notification, the Home Ministry said the committee will examine the effectiveness of actions taken since 1985 to implement Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.</li> </ul>
Mandate of Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will suggest measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam.</li> <li>The committee can also suggest any other measures, as may be necessary, to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.</li> <li>It will submit its report within six months from the date of notification (January 5).</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## New entries of STs in Assam

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home Minister said that a Bill to declare six communities in Assam as Scheduled Tribes (ST) would be introduced in the current session of Parliament.</li> <li>Centre proposes to give the status to are <b>Koch Rajbongshi, Tai Ahom, Chutia, Matak, Moran and Tea Tribes</b>.</li> <li>The legislation will change the demographic status of Assam, making it a tribal-majority State.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## MNREGA

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The National Rural <b>Employment</b> Guarantee (NREGA) scheme has been given an additional allocation of ₹6,084 crore to tide over the next three months.</li> <li>This lifts the total allocation to MGNREGA for 2018-19 to ₹61,084 crore.</li> <li>It is the highest ever allocation.</li> </ul>
What are consequences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>No money for fresh employment:</b> If this additional allocation is used to pay off these pending payments there will be much less money left for fresh employment generation over the next three months.</li> <li><b>Delay in payment:</b> If this money is not used to pay off these committed liabilities. It will delay wage payments beyond the stipulated 15-day period and further disincentivize people from seeking employment under the scheme.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## MISA pension

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The newly formed Government in Madhya Pradesh has instructed District Collectors to conduct physical verification of 'LoktantraSenanis'.</li> <li>These people who went to jail under Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) during Emergency (1975-1977) before making any payment of their monthly pension.</li> </ul>
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<b>MISA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA)</b> was a controversial law passed by the Indian parliament in 1971.</li> <li>● It gave the administration of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Indian law enforcement agencies super powers - indefinite preventive detention of individuals, search and seizure of property without warrants, and wiretapping - in the quelling of civil and political disorder in India.</li> <li>● The law was amended several times during national emergency (1975-1977) and used for quelling political dissent.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

## Judiciary

### No plan to up judge retirement age: Law Ministry

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Law Ministry said there was no proposal as of now to increase the <b>retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 65 to 67 and of High Court judges from 62 to 65.</b></li> <li>● <b>Recommendation of a Parliamentary Standing Committee:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Ministry was responding to the recommendation of a Parliamentary Standing Committee that raising the retirement age of judges would help retain the existing judges.</li> <li>(2) It which in turn would help in reducing both vacancy and pendency of cases in short run</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Constitution (114th Amendment) Bill, 2010:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) In August 2010, then Union Law Minister M. VeerappaMoily introduced the Constitution (114th Amendment) Bill, 2010 in the Lok Sabha.</li> <li>(2) The Bill, which sought to increase the retirement age of High Court judges to 65, could not be taken up for consideration in Parliament and lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>What are concern of panel?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Large number of vacancies:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Concern over the large number of vacancies of judges in High Courts.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Collaborative process:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Ministry countered that the appointment of judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts is a continuous and collaborative process of the Judiciary and Executive.</li> <li>(2) While every effort is made to fill vacancies expeditiously, vacancies keep on arising on account of retirement, resignation or elevation of judges and increase in <b>judge</b> strength.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● It further stated that the time line for initiation of the proposals for filling up of vacancies is rarely adhered to by the High Courts.</li> <li>● As of now, out of a total approved strength of 1,079 judges in 24 High Courts across the country, only 695 posts are filled.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### Quota for women judges not under consideration

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Law Ministry said there was no proposal to introduce reservation for women in the appointment of judges in the higher judiciary.</li> </ul>
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<b>What ministry said?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In the report tabled in Parliament, the Committee recommended that the Ministry should make suitable measures to include more women judges in both higher and subordinate judiciary.</li> <li>● The Ministry said judges were appointed in the Supreme Court and High Courts as per Articles 125 and 217 of the Constitution, which did not provide for reservation for any caste, class or gender.</li> <li>● The government has, however, been requesting the Chief Justices of the High Courts that while sending proposals for the appointment of judges, due consideration be given to suitable candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities and women.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### DGP appointment by states

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>Supreme Court</b> rejected the pleas made by five States to implement their own local laws for selection and appointment of their police chiefs.</li> </ul>
<b>What the court said?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The court said its directions were issued in larger public interest and to protect the police officials from political interference.</li> </ul>
<b>Earlier order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In July 2018, the Supreme Court had refrained State governments from appointing DGPs without first consulting the Union Public Service Commission.</li> <li>● The State governments concerned have to send UPSC the names of the probable three months before the incumbent DGPs are to retire.</li> <li>● The UPSC will prepare a panel of three officers fit to be DGP and send it back.</li> <li>● The UPSC shall as far as practicable, choose the people within the zone of consideration who have got a clear two years of service and must give due weightage to merit and seniority.</li> <li>● The State, in turn, shall “immediately” appoint one of the persons shortlisted by the UPSC.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

## Constitutional & Statutory Bodies

### Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERAs)

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Several <b>Real Estate</b> Regulatory Authorities (RERAs) are pushing for more enforcement power, similar to what is enjoyed by consumer forums, including the authority to issue arrest warrants.</li> <li>● <b>The Consumer Protection Act, 1986:</b> Allows consumer forums to assume the powers of a first-class judicial magistrate for the trial of offences under the Act (Section 27.2).</li> <li>● <b>What RERA Wants?</b></li> <li>● RERAs are asking that the RERA Act be amended to give them similar powers. Currently, real estate regulators must depend on outside magistrates to implement their orders.</li> </ul>
<b>What is RERA?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RERA, 2016 is a central legislation which aims to regulate the real estate sector. It seeks to empower and protect property consumers and make transactions fair and transparent.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The RERA Act was enacted under Entry 6 and 7 (dealing with contracts and the transfer of property) of the Concurrent List of the Constitution of India</li> <li>● Enacted in March 2016, RERA came into effect from May 2017</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Lokpal search panel

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The government informed the Supreme Court that a eight-member search committee has been constituted in September 2018 for zeroing in on eligible candidates for Lokpal and the anti-corruption authority will frame its own rules of functioning.</li> <li>● The panel is led by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai with 7 other members.</li> </ul>
Lokpal Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Composition:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Lokpal to consist of a Chairperson and a maximum of eight Members, of which fifty percent shall be judicial Members.</li> <li>(2) Fifty per cent of members of Lokpal shall be from amongst SC, ST, OBCs, Minorities and Women</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Selection:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The selection of Chairperson and Members of Lokpal shall be through a Selection Committee consisting of –                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Prime Minister;</li> <li>(b) Speaker of Lok Sabha;</li> <li>(c) Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha</li> <li>(d) Chief Justice of India or a sitting Supreme Court Judge nominated by CJI;</li> <li>(e) An eminent jurist to be nominated by the President of India</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Jurisdiction:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Lokpal's jurisdiction will cover all categories of public servants including Group 'A', 'B', 'C' &amp; 'D' officers and employees of Government.</li> <li>(2) On complaints referred to CVC by Lokpal, CVC will send its report of Preliminary enquiry in respect of Group 'A' and 'B' officers back to Lokpal for further decision.</li> <li>(3) With respect to Group 'C' and 'D' employees, CVC will proceed further in exercise of its own powers under the CVC Act subject to reporting and review by Lokpal.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>FCRA:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) All entities receiving donations from foreign source in the context of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) in excess of Rs. 10 lakhs per year are brought under the jurisdiction of Lokpal.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Panel concerned at CBI vacancies

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A parliamentary standing committee (PSC) has raised concern over non-filling of vacancies in the <b>Central Bureau of Investigation.</b></li> </ul>
What are concern by PSC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Number of cases are increasing:</b> Increasing number of cases are now being referred to the CBI pertaining to areas like internal security, cybercrimes, corruption, financial irregularities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Vacancies:</b> The level of vacant positions in executive rank, law officers and technical officers are about 16, 28 and 56% respectively.</li> <li>● At the top level, out of four posts of Special Director or Additional Director, three are lying vacant.</li> </ul>
<b>Simplify rules</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Simplify rules:</b> The committee recommended that the government simplify recruitment rules to overcome the procedural bottlenecks.</li> <li>● <b>Making deputation more rewarding:</b> The government may also consider making terms of deputation to the CBI more rewarding in order to retain capable officers and to attract best officers from the State police forces, Central paramilitary forces, Intelligence Bureau, etc.</li> <li>● The Department of Personnel and Training said efforts were on to fill the vacant CBI posts by fine-tuning the recruitment rules.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### SC on CBI director

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Supreme Court reinstated Alok Kumar Verma as the director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).</li> <li>● But, barred him from taking fresh policy decisions for the remaining three weeks of his term.</li> </ul>
<b>What was issue in front of court?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highlighting the legislative intent behind certain provisions of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946. The court held that it was to ensure “<b>complete insulation of the office of the Director, CBI from all kinds of extraneous influences and uphold the integrity and independence of the institution of the CBI as a whole</b>”.</li> <li>● The main issue for consideration before the apex court was whether the government should have consulted the high-powered committee before sending Verma on leave.</li> </ul>
<b>What was issue?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On 23 October, the centre sent both special director Rakesh Asthana and Verma on leave, divesting them of their powers.</li> <li>● The centre intervened after the battle between the two top cops spun out of control with both levelling bribery and graft charges against each other.</li> </ul>
<b>Vineet Narain case</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The government’s decision to divest Verma of powers was opposed by his lawyer and eminent jurist Fali Nariman, who relied on a 1997 judgment (Vineet Narain versus Union of India) that laid down guidelines on the functioning of the CVC and the CBI.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

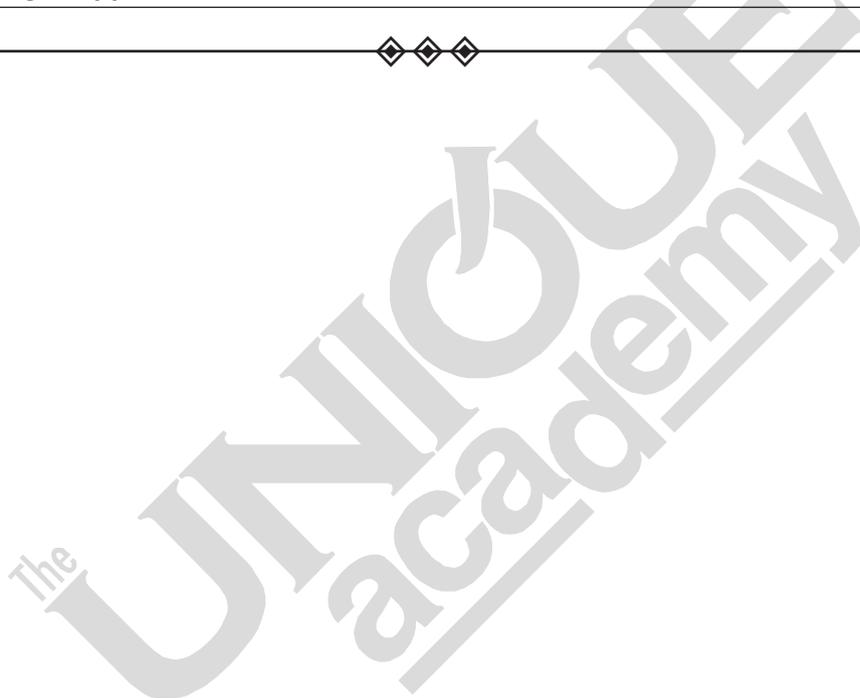
### Irrigation projects delay led to jump in costs: CAG

<b>What CAG report says?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tardy implementation of projects under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) between 2008-2017 led to an almost threefold jump in the cost of these projects to Rs. 1.20 lakh crore</li> </ul>
<b>AIBP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The AIBP was initiated in 1996 as a Central scheme to speed up the implementation of large irrigation projects, including dams and canals, especially those which were beyond the resource capability of the States.</li> <li>● The Union Ministry of Water Resources is responsible for framing policy guidelines for implementation while State Governments are associated with planning and implementing irrigation projects and schemes.</li> </ul>

Source	The Hindu
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## Northeast Autonomous Councils

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● The Union Cabinet approved a constitutional amendment to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 autonomous councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeast.</li></ul>
<b>Autonomous District Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram contain the Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas.</li><li>● Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.</li><li>● Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification. Currently, there are ten such Councils in the region as listed below</li></ul>
Source	The Hindu



## 2

# Environment

## Oceans are heating up at a quickening pace

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New report on ocean heating.</li> </ul>
<b>What report says?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Accelerating pace heating:</b> The world's oceans are heating up at an accelerating pace as global warming threatens a diverse range of marine life and a major food supply for the planet.</li> <li>● Ocean heating is a very important indicator of climate change.</li> <li>● About 93% of excess heat trapped around the Earth by greenhouse gases that come from the burning of fossil fuels accumulates in the world's oceans.</li> <li>● The latest report relied on four studies published between 2014 and 2017 that gave more precise estimates of past trends in ocean heat allowing scientists to update past research and hone predictions for the future. .</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

## Parliamentary committee on Western Ghats

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Parliamentary committee report on Western Ghats.</li> </ul>
<b>What committee has observed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>NO GO ZONES:</b> Western Ghats could not be earmarked as 'no-go' zones due to State governments' 'insensitivity'.</li> <li>● <b>Local people grievances:</b> The panel has urged the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to constitute a committee to address the issues and grievances of local people.</li> <li>● <b>Monsoon floods:</b> The recent monsoon floods in Kerala and parts of Karnataka should serve as alarm bells for the administrations in the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.</li> <li>● <b>Categorisation of the Western Ghats:</b> The panel had examined issues regarding the categorisation of the Western Ghats as ESA as per the recommendations of two committees led by Madhav Gadgil and K. Kasturirangan.</li> <li>● The committee has observed that despite three draft notifications issued over four years for earmarking ESA, the six States could not be brought on board for action.</li> </ul>
<b>Western Ghats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The mountain chain of the Western Ghats represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes.</li> <li>● The site's high montane forest ecosystems influence the Indian monsoon weather pattern.</li> <li>● Moderating the tropical climate of the region, the site presents one of the best examples of the monsoon system on the planet.</li> </ul>



## Cinereous vulture

<p><b>Why is it in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cinereous vulture spotted in Jharkhand.</li> <li>● It is usually during the winter that a distinctly dark large bird – the Cinereous vulture, with a blacked-tipped pink beak – migrates from the mountainous regions of Europe and Asia to warmer places, including India.</li> <li>● While earlier records of this migratory bird have revealed that it comes to northern parts of India up to Rajasthan, bird watchers and researchers were baffled to find it in Hazaribagh in <b>Jharkhand</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cinereous - vulture (Aegypius-monachus)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The cinereous vulture is one of the heaviest and largest raptors in the world.</li> <li>● It is a dark brown and broad-winged species with a slightly wedge-shaped tail.</li> <li>● The bald head and neck are a bluish gray, with a fluffy collar which is lighter in older birds. I</li> <li>● <b>In many countries, this bird is called ‘monk vulture’, because of it’s upright standing neck feathers that resemble the hood of a monk.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p><b>The Hindu</b></p>

## Morocco ranks high in climate action

<p><b>Why is it in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Morocco has been named the second-best performing country after Sweden in the <b>Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)</b>.</li> <li>● The North African country significantly increased <b>the share of renewables over the past five years and increased new renewable energy capacity.</b></li> <li>● Sweden is in top position, followed by Morocco and Lithuania in the CCPI 2019.</li> <li>● The bottom five in the list are Saudi Arabia, U.S., Iran, South Korea and Taiwan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Published annually</b></li> <li>● By Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Europe.</li> <li>● It evaluates the climate protection performance of 58 countries, responsible for over 90% of global energy-related CO2 emissions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) compares countries in the areas of emissions trends and levels, expansion and use of renewable energies, energy efficiency and climate policies.</li> <li>● The CCPI is a tool designed to enhance <b>transparency</b> in international climate politics.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### Exotic trees eating up Western Ghat’s grasslands

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exotic species attack on western ghats.</li> </ul>
<b>What are impacts?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over four decade the country lost almost one-fourth of grasslands and exotic invasive trees are primarily to blame</li> <li>● Though grassland afforestation <b>using pine, acacia and eucalyptus</b> ceased in 1996, the exotics still invade these ecosystems</li> <li>● The satellite images they accessed reveal that 60% of the shola-grassland landscape has changed; almost 40% (516 km<sup>2</sup>) of native high-elevation grasslands have disappeared.</li> <li>● Most of this loss occurred on the mountain tops of the Nilgiri, Palani and Anamalai hill ranges, which comprise more than half of the Ghat’s shola-grassland ecosystems, primarily due to the expansion of exotic trees (pine, acacia and eucalyptus).</li> </ul>
<b>What are shola forests?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Shola forests are tropical Montane forests found in the valleys separated by rolling grasslands only in the higher elevations.</li> <li>● They are found only in South India in the Southern Western Ghats.</li> <li>● The shola forests are patches of forests that occur only in the valleys where there is least reach of the fog and mist.</li> <li>● Other parts of the mountains are covered in grasslands</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### Fine on Meghalaya govt for failing to curb illegal mining

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The NGT imposed a cost of ₹100 crore on the Meghalaya government following a report submitted by an independent committee on mining in the State.</li> </ul>
<b>What the report indicates?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The report indicates that the April 2014 order banning rat hole mining has been blatantly violated.</li> <li>● The Acid Mine Discharge (AMD) has been continuing and consequently water bodies, including rivers and lakes, have been polluted to an extent that it [the water] is not suitable for human consumption.</li> <li>● The compensation has been levied based on the environmental loss owing to this.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

### Desalination plants harm environment: UN

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A UN backed study says that Almost 16,000 desalination plants worldwide produce bigger-than-expected flows of highly salty waste water and toxic chemicals that are damaging the environment.</li> </ul>
<b>News</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Desalination plants pump out 142 million cubic meters of salty brine every day, 50% more than previous estimates, to produce 95 million cubic meters of fresh water, the study said.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brine, water comprising about 5% salt, often includes toxins such as chlorine and copper used in desalination.</li> <li>● Brine can cut levels of oxygen in seawater near desalination plants with “profound impacts” on shellfish, crabs and other creatures on the seabed, leading to “ecological effects observable throughout the food chain.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>

## Ganga water quality

<b>Why is in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The water quality of the Ganga in 2018 has “improved over last year”, according to a written statement in the Rajya Sabha.</li> <li>● “Dissolved oxygen” levels had improved at 39 locations and “biological oxygen demand” (BOD) levels and faecal coliform had decreased at 42 and 47 locations respectively.</li> <li>● These three parameters are a proxy for both the presence of aquatic life as well as microbes that may be harmful to these biota, and are conventionally used to assess the quality of the river.</li> </ul>
<b>Biological Oxygen Demand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Biochemical Oxygen Demand or, is a measurement of the amount of dissolved oxygen (DO) that is used by aerobic microorganisms when decomposing organic matter in water.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Dissolved Oxygen?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dissolved Oxygen is the amount of gaseous oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) dissolved in the water.</li> <li>● Oxygen enters the water by direct absorption from the atmosphere, by rapid movement, or as a waste product of plant photosynthesis.</li> <li>● Water temperature and the volume of moving water can affect dissolved oxygen levels. Oxygen dissolves easier in cooler water than warmer water.</li> <li>● Adequate dissolved oxygen is important for good water quality and necessary to all forms of life.</li> <li>● Dissolved oxygen levels that drop below 5.0 mg/L cause stress to aquatic life.</li> <li>● Lower concentrations cause greater stress.</li> <li>● Oxygen levels that go below 1-2 mg/L for a few hours may result in large fish kills.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu</b>



## 3

## International Relation

## India-South Africa relations

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India and South Africa agreed on a three-year strategic partnership agreement to boost relations.</li> <li>● The agreement, signed during the visit of President Cyril Ramaphosa, will cover defence and security, blue economy cooperation and sustainable development.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Compatible world views:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Both have strong partnership in platforms such as the BRICS, the G-20, the Indian Ocean Region Association and the IBSA Dialogue Forum.</li> <li>(2) Both can work together for the reform of the UN Security Council.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>ISA:</b> India invited South Africa to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and congratulated it on securing the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for 2019-20.</li> <li>● <b>A joint statement:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It acknowledged the growing interaction between the Navies of the two countries, and the Indian leader welcomed the South African participation in the India-Africa Field Training Exercise planned in March 2019.</li> <li>(2) The statement reiterated the role of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) that ensures freedom of navigation by keeping sea lanes free and secure.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Gilgit-Baltistan region

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India summoned a Pakistani diplomat and protested against a recent order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan that brought the region of Gilgit-Baltistan within its ambit.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>What is the issue?</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Pakistani SC said that Gilgit-Baltistan came within its domain.</li> <li>(2) It was delivering its comments after the Government of Pakistan ordered constitutional safeguards for the region which previously was not given these safeguards explicitly.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Islamabad's move:</b> Pakistan in recent months had taken a series of steps to ensure full constitutional and legal guarantees to the region which was strategically important for the country especially in view of the passage of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor through the region.</li> <li>● <b>India's stand:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) India rejected such continued attempts by Pakistan to bring material change in these occupied territories and to camouflage grave human rights violations, exploitation and sufferings of the people living there.</li> <li>(2) Pakistan was asked to immediately vacate all areas under its illegal occupation.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Authorised immigration check post designation to Andamans

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Foreign tourists can now directly fly to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the government has designated Port Blair airport as an authorised immigration check post for entry into and exit point from India.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Andaman is most sought-after tourist destination in the country receiving an average four lakh tourists, including several thousand foreigners, annually.</li> <li>● The Superintendent of Police (CID) of the Island has been designated as the “civil authority” for the immigration check post at Port Blair airport.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## India to buy U.S. oil and gas

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India has committed to purchase \$5 billion worth of oil and gas from the U.S. annually, and \$18 billion worth of defence equipment that are under implementation.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Data points:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The United States is India largest trading partner and India is among top 10 of US’s trading partners.</li> <li>(2) U.S. export to India has gone up by at least 30%.</li> <li>(3) Bilateral trade between the countries — goods and services — rose from \$119 billion two years ago to end the year in 2018 at \$140 billion.</li> <li>(4) Indian students in the United States — 227,000 now — contribute an estimated \$6.5 billion to the American academic sector.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Scaling up imports from US:</b> India plans to scale up its buys — which stood at \$3.8 billion in 2018, including bitumen substitute and mineral wax.</li> <li>● <b>Solution to trade deficit:</b> Indian purchases of US oil and gas and the aircraft are expected to cut the deficit US having over the years.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, Hindustan times

## India’s stand on Taliban

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In the midst of confusion over the Army Chief’s comments on India joining talks with the Taliban, the government made it clear that India would not engage the Afghan insurgents directly, and had not changed its position on the issue.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● On the sidelines of the annual Raisina Dialogue, Minister of State for External Affairs Gen (Retd) V.K. Singh said India’s position on direct talks with the Taliban remained the same.</li> <li>● <b>Government stand:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Recent attendance of two former diplomats at a conference in Moscow which included Taliban representatives was purely “non-official”.</li> <li>(2) India’s traditional position on a purely “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned” dialogue had not altered.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Rupee pact with Iran

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, India-Iran concluded rupee payment mechanism which will give opportunity to the Indian pharma industries to increase exports to Iran.</li> </ul>
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More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How agreement works?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Under the agreement, Indian refiners make payments in rupee for oil imports from Iran, to designated accounts maintained with UCO Bank.</li> <li>(2) A portion thus received is to be used by Iran to pay for imports from India, including pharmaceuticals.</li> <li>(3) Indian pharma exports to Iran were at \$124.05 million in 2018.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Status of Iranian pharma industry:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Iran has a well-established pharma industry that meets 80% of the country's requirement.</li> <li>(2) The remaining 20% is met predominantly through imports from Europe.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Declining Indian pharma exports to Iran:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Constituting mostly APIs (bulk drugs), Indian pharma exports to Iran have been declining in recent years.</li> <li>(2) From \$180.50 million in 2015-16, pharma exports to Iran fell to \$160.33 million in 2016-17.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>Opportunity to Indian pharmaceuticals:</u></b> With a cloud of uncertainty over continued pharmaceutical supplies from Europe in the wake of the U.S. sanctions against Iran, the Indian pharma industry could explore opportunities to step up exports.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Raisina Dialogue

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, 3 day conference of Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) annual "Raisina Dialogue" organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) started in New Delhi.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg inaugurated event.</li> <li>● In her address she said that :             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The loss of faith in the international order and institutions is one of the big challenges the world faces.</li> <li>(2) Many people feel left out by globalisation.</li> <li>(3) It can undermine confidence in international institutions and cooperation.</li> <li>(4) Eventually, it could weaken respect for international law, human rights and even our security architecture.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Her remarks aimed at U.S. where President Trump has threatened to walk out of the WTO, and at China for violating the international rules-based order in maritime disputes.</li> </ul>
Raisina Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 day conference of Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA).</li> <li>● It is organised by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF)- a think tank.</li> <li>● It will include more than 600 delegates from 93 countries.</li> <li>● <b>Theme for the 2019 edition-</b> "A World Reorder: New Geometries, Fluid Partnerships, and Uncertain Outcomes".</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

# International events

## U.S., Israel quit UNESCO

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The U.S. announced its withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), accusing it of “<b>continuing anti-Israel bias.</b>”</li> <li>● Israel has also decided to pull out of UNESCO.</li> <li>● UNESCO is the first UN agency to have admitted Palestine as a full member in 2011.</li> <li>● As required by law, the U.S. has stopped funding UNESCO since then.</li> <li>● The U.S. withdrawal will take effect on December 31, 2018. Until then, it will remain a full member.</li> </ul>
<p>UNESCO</p>	<p><b>What is UNESCO?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.</li> <li>● It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture.</li> <li>● UNESCO's programmes contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.</li> </ul> <p><b>Vision :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a world war that was marked by racist and anti-Semitic violence.</li> <li>● Developing educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance.</li> <li>● Access to quality education to each child and citizen.</li> <li>● Promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures.</li> <li>● Fostering scientific programmes and policies as platforms for development and cooperation.</li> <li>● UNESCO stands up for freedom of expression, as a fundamental right and a key condition for democracy and development.</li> <li>● Serving as a laboratory of ideas to help countries to adopt international standards and manages programmes that foster the free flow of ideas and knowledge sharing.</li> <li>● <b>Member States</b> : The Organization has 195 Members and 11 Associate Members.</li> <li>● <b>Headquarters</b> : Paris</li> </ul>
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

## Taiwan’s reunification with China

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President Xi Jinping said that Taiwan's unification with the mainland is “inevitable”.</li> <li>● He was warning against any efforts to promote the island's independence and said that China would not renounce the option of using military force to bring it into the fold.</li> </ul>
<p>More in news</p>	<p><b>China’s Stand:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China sees democratic Taiwan as part of its territory to be reunified, despite the two sides being ruled separately since the end of a civil war on the mainland in 1949.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Xi described unification under a “one country, two systems” approach that would “safeguard the interests and well-being of Taiwanese compatriots”.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Taiwan’s stand:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan considers itself a sovereign state, with its own currency, political and judicial systems, but has never declared formal independence from the mainland.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Strained relations:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relations have been strained for the past two years since the election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who has refused to acknowledge Beijing's stance that the island is part of “one China”.</li> <li>● Some experts said that the erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong sets a negative precedent for Taiwan.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>One country, two systems:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To accommodate differences in Taiwan's political system and civil society, China has proposed adopting the “one country, two systems” policy, which was implemented in Hong Kong after the British handed the city back to China in 1997.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Multi-pronged approach by China:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Beijing has adopted a multi-pronged approach to diminish Taiwan's presence on the international stage in recent years, including blocking it from global forums and poaching its dwindling number of official diplomatic allies.</li> <li>● China has also successfully pressured global firms to list Taiwan as part of China on their company websites.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

### China tests its Mother of All Bombs (MOAB)

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China has tested its most powerful non-nuclear weapon, dubbed the "Mother Of All Bombs" by official media in a reference to a US munition used in Afghanistan.</li> <li>● In a short video published on the website of state arms manufacturer Norinco, the massive bomb drops on to a plain and produces a gigantic ball of fire and black smoke.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The bomb, whose strength is only second to that of a nuclear weapon was dropped by a Chinese H-6K bomber.</li> <li>● No details on the date, location or range of the bomb blast were provided.</li> <li>● <b><u>US MOAB:</u></b> In 2017 the US dropped the most powerful conventional bomb in its arsenal, <b><u>GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB)</u></b>, dubbed the "MOAB" -- the "Mother of All Bombs" - in an attempt to destroy a tunnel network being used by the Islamic State group in the east of Afghanistan.</li> <li>● <b><u>Comparison with US’s MOAB:</u></b> The Chinese bomb is 16 to 20 feet long, but weighs less than the American version.</li> <li>● This is the first time the new bomb’s destructive powers have been shown in public.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

### New post-Brexit immigration system

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● British officials are to test India’s reaction to proposals for a new post-Brexit immigration system unveiled in December 2018.</li> <li>● Home Office officials are to meet with counterparts in India for discussions on the ‘Immigration White Paper’ unveiled by Home Secretary Sajid Javid.</li> </ul>
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More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It aims to create a level playing field for EU and non-EU workers, basing opportunities on skills levels rather than which part of the world workers have come from.</li> <li>● The government has positioned the new planned immigration system as a positive one for partners such as India.</li> <li>● <b>For example:</b> With it, any doctor seeking to work in the U.K will have no problem of nationality.</li> <li>● <b>Proposed changes:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Removal of the current annual cap on the number of Tier 2 visas for skilled workers.</li> <li>(2) Removal of the requirement that employers demonstrate that they attempted to fill the role domestically before bringing in a person from abroad (the resident labour market test).</li> <li>(3) Allowing international students six months after they graduate to find permanent skilled work and work temporarily during that period, while PhD graduates will have a whole year to do so.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Salary threshold for the skilled visas is in discussion yet.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

### China-backed port city in Colombo

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over 650 acres of land off Colombo’s seafront has been reclaimed for a China-backed \$1.4 billion port city development.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Part of ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative in Sri-Lanka:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Colombo Port City Project is an important project of the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative in Sri-Lanka, which is one of the key countries along the maritime silk route.</li> <li>(2) It is also an important project to implement the consensus of China and Sri Lanka.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Total investment:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The total investment is expected to go up to \$15 billion when the project is completed.</li> <li>(2) It likely to draw about \$15 billion in investment after completion.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Galle Face(mega port city):</b> The plan for mega port city — adjoining Colombo’s iconic sea front called the <b>Galle Face</b> — envisages plush offices, residential units, education and hospital facilities and a “central park”, to make it a “financial hub”, linking markets and investors across Asia.</li> <li>● <b>Trading hub:</b> The Sri Lankan government has pledged its support to China’s ambitious OBOR initiative, with the hope of promoting the island as a trading hub in the Indian Ocean region.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

### PravasiBharatiya Divas

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At the annual PravasiBharatiya Divas in Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted India’s potential to lead the world in sustainable development.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India is planning a pilgrimage scheme for people living abroad.</li> </ul>
PravasiBharatiya Divas (PBD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>PravasiBharatiya Divas (PBD):</b> It is celebrated <b>once in every two years</b> to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>PravasiBharatiyaSamman Award:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It is the highest honour conferred on overseas Indians.</li> <li>(2) PBSA is conferred by the President of India as a part of the PravasiBharatiya Divas (PBD) Conventions organized since 2003 on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin or an organization or institution established and run by the Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin, who has made significant contribution.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b><u>15th PBD Convention:</u></b> It is being held on 21-23 January 2019 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.</li> <li>● <b><u>Theme 15th PBD Convention 2019:</u></b> "Role of Indian Diaspora in building New India".</li> <li>● Special arrangements are also being made for participation in Kumbh Mela and Republic day parade.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, pbdindia.gov

### Venezuelan crisis

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela faced the most direct challenge to his hold on power.</li> <li>● His leadership is challenged by an opposition leader Mr. Guaidó who stood in the streets of the capital and declared himself the legitimate president.</li> <li>● He is supported by USA, France and others.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Venezuela, a once-prosperous country that has been devastated by years of political repression, economic mismanagement and corruption.</li> <li>● <b><u>Response by Mr. Maduro:</u></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) He responded to this situation furiously by cutting diplomatic ties with the United States.</li> <li>(2) He gave American diplomats 72 hours to leave the country and accused the Trump administration for a plot to overthrow him.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Venezuela, a once-prosperous country that has been devastated by years of political repression, economic mismanagement and corruption.</li> <li>● Trump administration has warned of a "military option" for Venezuela.</li> <li>● <b><u>Countries who recognised Mr. Guaidó's claim:</u></b> Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala and the Organization of American States recognized Mr. Guaidó as the country's leader.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, Newyork times

### UN to declare climate change an international security issue

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India has questioned the rush at the UN to declare climate change an international security issue, potentially giving the Security Council the right to take action on it, and pointed to the pitfalls in the approach.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>India's stand:</u></b> India said, a "mere decision of the Council" to take over enforcement of climate change action will disrupt the Paris Agreement and multilateral efforts to find solutions.</li> <li>● <b><u>An inclusive framework:</u></b> India questioned composition of the Council that does not reflect the contemporary world and asked for inclusive framework.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>UN stand:</b> Trends of heat waves, heavier rains, higher sea levels and severe damage to agriculture “represent a security risk for the entire world”.</li><li>● <b>Decision by Security Council:</b> UN by declaring climate change an international security issue would give the Security Council the right to take action on it.</li></ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Taliban peace talk

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● American and Taliban officials have agreed to the framework of a peace deal.</li></ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Framework of a peace deal:</b> In it, the insurgents guarantee to prevent Afghanistan from being used by terrorists and in return U.S. will pull-out its troops for a ceasefire and Taliban talks with the Afghan government.</li><li>● <b>Long efforts:</b> After nine years of halting efforts to reach a peace deal with the Taliban, the draft framework, though preliminary, is the biggest tangible step toward ending the two-decade war.</li><li>● <b>Appointment of Baradar:</b> Taliban signalled its seriousness by appointing one of its most powerful officials from the original movement, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, as their chief peace negotiator.</li></ul>
Source	The Hindu

# Miscellaneous

## Republic day awards

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● President Ramnath Kovind conferred the Bharat Ratna, the nation’s highest civilian honour on former president Pranab Mukherjee, alongwith social activist Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous), and Assamese musician Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous).</li></ul>
Source	The Hindu, Indian honours system



## 4

## Social Issues

## Child care homes Study

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Government has conducted a pan-India survey of childcare institutions (CCI).</li> <li>● The survey has highlighted the poor safety and security measures, inadequate monitoring of these facilities, and a lack of effort to trace parents of missing children sent to these homes.</li> </ul>				
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The full report of the survey titled '<b>Mapping and Review Exercise of Child Care Institutions</b>', has recently made public by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD).</li> <li>● Some of the findings of this exercise were shared last year before the Supreme Court, which took suo motu cognisance of rampant child abuse at a shelter in Muzaffarpur in Bihar.</li> <li>● The detailed report shows that only 28.7% centres were able to tend to inmates showing signs of hunger or illness and 65.9% of homes were able to actively supervise children under trauma.</li> <li>● Lack of infrastructure facilities is "glaring" and finds that more than 1,000 homes did not have a dormitory for children, raising questions about sleeping arrangements made for them.</li> <li>● Also, several mechanisms for monitoring, regular inspections of these shelters were not being carried out.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="395 1176 1268 1627" style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>In safe hands?</b> A look at the state of child care homes in the country</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Adequate care givers per child <b>46.7%</b></td> <td>FIR filed by homes on missing children <b>18.32%</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Efforts to trace children's parents <b>19.31%</b></td> <td>Homes reporting restoration of children <b>37.2%</b></td> </tr> </table> <p><small>FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSE</small> <span style="float: right;"><small>SOURCE: WCD MINISTRY</small></span></p> </div>	Adequate care givers per child <b>46.7%</b>	FIR filed by homes on missing children <b>18.32%</b>	Efforts to trace children's parents <b>19.31%</b>	Homes reporting restoration of children <b>37.2%</b>
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<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>				

## Bill to remove leprosy as ground for divorce

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Lok Sabha passed a Bill seeking to remove leprosy as ground for divorce stating that this was a "discriminatory" provision for a disease that is now curable.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The bill seeks to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce in five personal laws: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hindu Marriage Act.</li> <li>2. Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act.</li> <li>3. Divorce Act (for Christians).</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>4. Special Marriage Act. 5. The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Each of these Acts prescribe leprosy as a ground for seeking divorce or separation from the spouse.</li> <li>● The Bill cleared on Monday removes this as a ground for divorce or separation.</li> <li>● The Human Rights Commission and judgements of various courts had also underlined the need to amend the laws to remove this discrimination.</li> </ul>
<b>Leprosy in India</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Leprosy is a chronic infection caused by the <b>bacillus Mycobacterium leprae</b>.</li> <li>● It affects the skin, the peripheral nerves and the upper part of the airway, or the testes.</li> <li>● It is transmitted by prolonged contact, usually through aerosols containing the nasal secretions, or droplets from these fluids.</li> <li>● India was officially declared to have <b>eliminated leprosy in 2005</b> when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000.</li> <li>● However, India still accounts for the largest number of leprosy affected people in the world (Around <b>58%</b>).</li> <li>● Lack of awareness, myths, socio-cultural beliefs, and the stigma attached to leprosy are perhaps the most pressing problems before public health activists today.</li> <li>● In India, the <b>National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP)</b> is the centrally sponsored health scheme of the <b>Ministry of Health and Family Welfare</b>.</li> <li>● While the NLEP strategies and plans are formulated centrally, the programme is implemented by states and union territories (UTs).</li> <li>● The programme is also supported by WHO, ILEP, and few other.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

### Guinness record with sanitary napkins

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The gynaecologists attempted a Guinness world record by creating the 'longest line of sanitary pads' at the 62nd All India Congress of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AICOG) that began in Bengaluru.</li> <li>● It is to promote menstrual hygiene, especially among adolescents.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Over 1,500 gynaecologists, led by the organising chairperson Hema Divakar, created a line of 1,078 metres using 10,105 sanitary pads.</li> <li>● Depicting women's health, the sanitary pads were designed in the shape of a uterus and carried the tagline 'Nothing's more cuter than your uterus'.</li> <li>● The Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI), which is organising AICOG 2019, collaborated with a pharma company for the attempt.</li> <li>● The Guinness record certificate will be presented to the organising chairperson of AICOG 2019.</li> <li>● According to the organisers, the pads will be donated to four city-based schools for distribution among their students.</li> <li>● According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report published in December 2017, <b>only 58% of women</b> in the country in the age group of 15 to 24 use a hygienic method of menstrual protection.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The latest Annual Status of Education (ASER) report 2018 has been released on January 15, 2019.</li> <li>● The report is released by NGO Pratham. It is a result of its annual survey.</li> </ul>
<b>Note</b>	<b>This issue has been covered holistically in contemporary issues section.</b>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Centre proposed hike in pensions for weaker sections

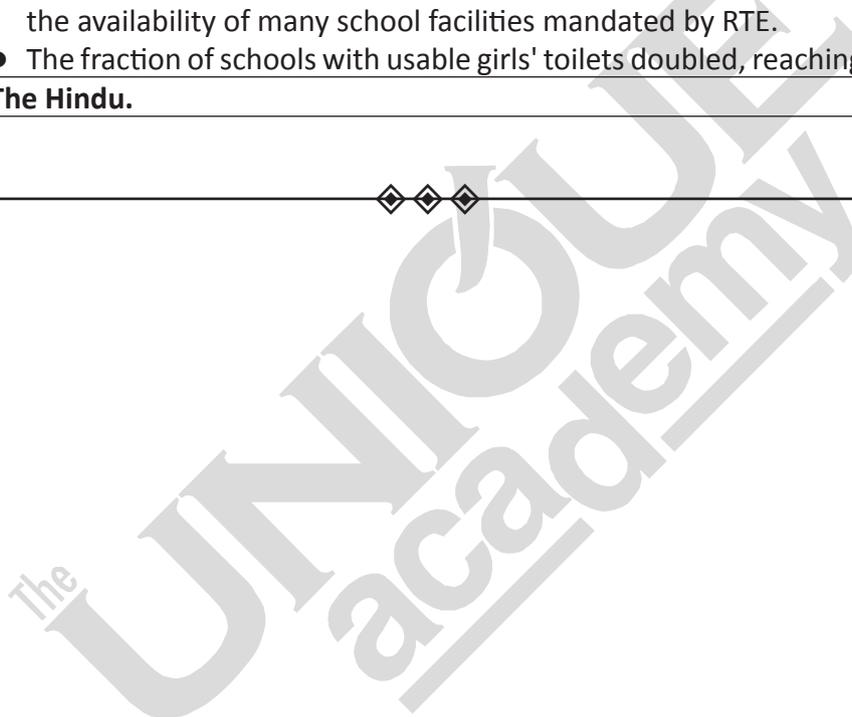
<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Rural Development Ministry has proposed that the monthly pensions of the elderly poor, disabled and widows be increased from the current Rs.200 to Rs.800.</li> <li>● For those above the age of 80, the proposal is to increase the pension from Rs.500 to Rs.1,200 a month.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The proposed hike would have an additional annual cost implication of Rs.18,000 crore, to the Finance Ministry to be considered for inclusion in the interim Budget to be presented on February 1.</li> <li>● If the proposal is announced, the Ministry will then move the Cabinet to approve the increase in pensions.</li> <li>● Separately, a study has been launched to consider doubling the number of people covered by the scheme, a promise originally made in last year's Budget.</li> <li>● Discussions are also being held with the State governments on a proposal to merge the Central and State pension schemes.</li> <li>● The Centre has been considering various welfare measures to benefit rural Indians and farming communities.</li> <li>● Senior government officials have mentioned income support, interest waivers and increased access to credit as some of the other measures being considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Roshni App

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Ropar(Punjab), has developed "Roshni" app to help the Visually Impaired using image processing and analytics.</li> </ul>
<b>More about the App</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The App will help the Visually Impaired recognise currency notes.</li> <li>● This App utilises an adaptable deep learning framework, which further uses the patterns and features embedded on the notes to differentiate and determine the currency denomination.</li> <li>● The app can recognise both old and new notes and gives audio information as to which note you are holding in your hands.</li> <li>● The claim is that Roshni is the first Android app to successfully recognise new INR currency notes.</li> <li>● The new currency notes came into effect after demonitization.</li> <li>● We now have Rs 2,000 notes while the old Rs 10, Rs 50, Rs 100, Rs 200 and Rs 500 got a refresh.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Northeastern States lag behind in toilets for schoolgirls

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● As per the ASER Report 2018, An average of 34.96% schools in the eight northeastern states had usable toilets for girls in 2018 compared to 36.66% in 2016.</li><li>● Sikkim performed better than the national average of 66.4%, with 75.7% schools— a marginal increase from 75% in 2016— having usable toilets for girls.</li><li>● But there is less-than-satisfactory performance by seven other states in the region.</li></ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Nagaland is the next best State after Sikkim, with 47%, an increase from 40.9% in 2016, followed by Mizoram with the highest percentile increase from 25.3% to 34.9% in these two years.</li><li>● The other five states performed poorly, the steepest drop for Assam being 38.3% from 54.2% in 2016.</li><li>● Manipur had 9.1% schools having fewer usable toilets for girls, followed by Meghalaya (8.6%), Arunachal Pradesh (7.6%) and Tripura (7.3%).</li><li>● Nationally, substantial improvements are visible over this eight-year period in the availability of many school facilities mandated by RTE.</li><li>● The fraction of schools with usable girls' toilets doubled, reaching 66.4% in 2018.</li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>



## 5

## Economics

## RBI reserves ratio among the highest

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per a report by consultancy firm Quantum Advisors, the RBI's reserves as a percentage of its balance sheet is among the highest.</li> <li>● The data has been computed after the analysis of the balance sheets of central banks of 10 comparable economies.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RBI's reserves were about Rs.10.5 lakh crore -form 26.2% its balance sheet. Only two central banks- those of South Africa and Russia- have a reserve ratio higher than this. (comparing to BRICS nations)</li> <li>● The other two BRICS nations, China and Brazil, have reserve ratios of 1.7% and 0.2%, respectively.</li> <li>● Though the reserves are among the highest, the bulk of these reserves are notional and thus their value can only be unlocked when the underlying assets are sold.</li> <li>● This makes transferring the excess reserves to the government all the more difficult.</li> <li>● The report goes on to say that the RBI has a few options in front of it if the government does insist on the transfer of reserves. The first is for the central bank to sell its foreign bonds or government bonds, depending on how much the Centre asks for.</li> <li>● The other is to simply waive its rights over those bonds, thus reducing its asset holdings and reducing the government's liabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Restructuring of MSME loans

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RBI has relaxed the provisioning norms for lenders for restructuring loans of up to Rs.25 crore.</li> <li>● The move came after a demand from the government for a debt recast package for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RBI has decided to permit a one-time restructuring of existing loans to MSMEs that are in default but 'standard' as on January 1, 2019, without an asset classification downgrade.</li> <li>● The central bank's board on 19 November advised RBI to consider a scheme to recast loans of MSMEs, which have been hurt by the disruption caused by demonetization and GST.</li> <li>● The restructuring has to be implemented by March 31, 2020.</li> <li>● A provision of 5% of the total outstanding loan, in addition to the money already set aside to cover potential losses, will have to be made for such borrowers.</li> </ul>
<b>MSMEs Classification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per this new classification, the MSMEs are categorized in term of business turnover.</li> <li>● This is in place of the previous classification based on the investment made in the plant.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006 is amended to define units producing goods and rendering services in terms of annual turnover as follows:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) A micro-enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover does not exceed Rs 5 crores;</li> <li>(2) A small enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover is more than Rs 5 crore but does not exceed Rs 75 crore;</li> <li>(3) A medium enterprise will be defined as a unit where the annual turnover is more than Rs 75 crore rupees but does not exceed Rs 250 crore.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## RBI's Financial Stability Report

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to the Reserve Bank of India's latest Financial Stability Report, despite concerns, credit growth of the scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) improved across all bank groups between March and September 2018.</li> <li>● Also, the Indian banks have reported a decline in the proportion of bad loans for the half-year ended September 2018.</li> <li>● The Reserve Bank of India releases this report half-yearly, which take stock of the strength and stability of Indian banks.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<p><b><u>NPA's:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The aggregate Gross Non-Performing Asset (GNPA) ratio dipped from 11.5% in March 2018 to 10.8% in September 2018.</li> <li>● Bad loans, however, continued to rise in the micro, small and medium enterprises category.</li> <li>● The GNPA ratio captures the proportion of loans in a bank's books on which borrowers haven't repaid dues for more than 90 days.</li> <li>● The trend started tamely enough, with banks reporting a GNPA ratio of 3.4% in March 2013.</li> <li>● The GNPA ratio more than doubled over the next three years to peak at 11.5% by March 2018.</li> <li>● The bulk of bad loans remains concentrated with public sector banks (GNPA ratio of 14.8%), while private sector banks are much better off (3.8%).</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Frauds:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In the report, the RBI said 5,917 frauds involving an amount of Rs 41,167 crore were reported by the banks in fiscal year 2017-18, as against 4,306 frauds entailing an amount of Rs 10,170 crore in FY14.</li> <li>● The graph of both the frauds as well as the amount involved has been on the rise steadily through the four years till FY18.</li> <li>● The only exception was in fiscal year 2015-16, which saw a dip in the total amount involved as compared to the previous fiscal, even as the number of frauds rose marginally.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Reserve Bank gives the nod to card tokenization

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● He Reserve Bank of India has decided to permit authorized card payment networks to offer card tokenization services to any token requestor- third-party app provider- for debit, credit or prepaid card transactions.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● However, the central bank has made it clear that no charges should be recovered from the customer for availing this service.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Tokenization</b> involves a process in which a unique token masks sensitive card details.</li> <li>● The token is then used to perform card transactions in contact-less mode at Point Of Sale (POS) terminals, Quick Response (QR) code payments.</li> <li>● RBI guidelines permit authorized card payment networks to offer card tokenization services to any token requestor, subject to conditions.</li> <li>● A cardholder can avail of these services by registering the card on the token requestor's app and after giving 'explicit consent'.</li> <li>● For an additional factor of authentication, PIN entry shall be applicable for tokenized card transactions also.</li> <li>● Adequate safeguards shall be put in place to ensure that PAN cannot be found out from the token and vice versa by anyone except the card network</li> <li>● This facility will be offered through mobile phones and tablets only. Its extension to other devices will be examined later based on experience gained.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Government Policies & Taxation

### Bank of Baroda's merger approved by Cabinet

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Cabinet approved amalgamation of <b>Dena Bank</b> and <b>Vijaya Bank</b> with <b>Bank of Baroda</b> paving the way for the first ever-three-way merger of public sector lenders.</li> </ul>
<b>Note</b>	<b>This issue has been covered holistically in contemporary issues sections.</b>
<b>Source</b>	<b>Indian Express.</b>

### Indian economy on track: Finance Ministry

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The finance ministry said the Indian economy is projected to be the fastest-growing major economy in the current and upcoming fiscal 2019-20.</li> <li>● It also said that the government has taken several steps to boost investors confidence.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<p><b>Year End Review by Finance Ministry:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to a recent World Bank report, India has improved its ranking in the Ease of Doing Business to 77th in 2018.</li> <li>● The average growth of the Indian economy between 2014-15 and 2017-18 was 7.3%, fastest among the major economies in the world.</li> <li>● This is borne by GDP growth of 7.6 percent in the first half of 2018-19.</li> <li>● Also, the Indian economy is on track to maintain a high growth rate in the current global environment.</li> <li>● <b>Inflation:</b> The country witnessed moderation during 2017-18 and this progress is a result of a number of initiatives and reforms undertaken by the government which follows in the subsequent pages.</li> <li>● Consumer Price Index-based headline inflation averaged 3.3% during the period which is the lowest in the last six financial years.</li> </ul>

Source	The Hindu.
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## GST burden on small businesses eased

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The GST Council in its 32nd meeting, the last before the Budget took a slew of decisions aimed at reducing the tax and compliance burden on small and medium enterprises.</li> <li>● The council increased the threshold limit below which companies are exempt from GST.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Council has decided to double the exemption threshold to Rs 40 lakh and hike the limit for composition scheme to Rs 1.5 crore from Rs 1 crore with effect from April 1.</li> <li>● The threshold will be Rs 20 lakh for “some hilly/northeastern states”</li> <li>● <b>The Composition Scheme</b> currently allows companies with an annual turnover of up to Rs.1 crore to opt for it, and file returns on a quarterly basis at a nominal rate of 1%.</li> <li>● Now, Council decided to extend the Composition Scheme to small service providers with an annual turnover of up to Rs.50 lakh, at a tax rate of 6%.</li> <li>● So far, only manufacturers and traders were eligible for this scheme.</li> <li>● Now the council extended the Composition Scheme to small service providers, and allowing small companies to file annual returns.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Allowing a quarterly payment and annual return should bring quite a lot of relief and ease of doing business for small service providers.</li> <li>● The Confederation of All India Traders, in a statement, said that increasing the GST threshold limit would allow about 10 lakh traders to be exempt from the compliance burden of GST, and added that increasing the Composition Scheme limit would benefit about 20 lakh small businesses that fall between the annual turnover brackets of Rs.1 crore and Rs.1.5 crore.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## Farm-to-port project

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Commerce Minister announced that the UAE and Saudi Arabia had decided to use India as a base to address their food security concerns.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<p><b>As per the official statement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● India produces 290 million tonnes of foodgrain and 305 to 310 million tonnes of horticulture.</li> <li>● So there is huge potential to export and we will be working with the state governments for this.</li> <li>● Investment in Indian logistics sector is expected from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and 15-20 countries from other parts of the world.</li> <li>● In the export policy, we have decided to remove all restrictions on organic products and processed products.</li> <li>● Both the UAE and Saudi want to invest in both organic as well as food processing industries.</li> <li>● This will be a win-win situation for the UAE, Saudi and other GCC countries but also for us, particularly for our farmers, who want better prices to their produce.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## Technology centres for MSMEs

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) will develop 20 technology centres, along with extension centres across the country in another 3-5 years.</li> <li>● As per the official statement, these centres would come up at an investment of Rs.200 crore each.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● About 100 extension centres, each at an investment of RS.20 crore have been planned.</li> <li>● The aim is to ensure that maximum number of MSME units are benefited from the facilities.</li> <li>● As many as 18 tool rooms are operational in the country and 15 more are in different stages of development or have started functioning.</li> <li>● These tool rooms are specific to electronics, general engineering and high-end engineering sectors.</li> <li>● They have modern technology machinery and testing equipment and the services are offered to industries at a competitive price.</li> <li>● The Ministry is also creating trained manpower in virtual reality through the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).</li> <li>● The Ministry has established about 100 livelihood business incubators at taluk levels to train man power and create new businesses and plans to have more such incubators.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## Global Housing Technology Challenge

<b>Why is it in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To make the construction of houses <b>cost-effective and innovative</b>, the <b>Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs</b> launched the <b>Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)</b>.</li> <li>● Under GHTC, the Centre will offer about Rs.150 crore as a technology innovation grant to build 6,000 homes.</li> <li>● The cheaper, faster and better houses to be built using alternative technologies and materials.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The aim of the GHTC initiative under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U) is to fast-track the construction of affordable housing and meet the target of constructing 1.2 crore houses by 2022.</li> <li>● The challenge will also focus on identifying and mainstreaming proven demonstrable technologies for lighthouse projects.</li> <li>● It will also spot potential future technologies for incubation and acceleration support through ASHA (Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators)- India. <b><u>Pradhan Mantri AwasYojana(PMAY)</u></b></li> <li>● PMAY Scheme is an initiative provided by the Government of India which aims at providing affordable housing to the urban poor.</li> <li>● The mission of this initiative is to provide <b>housing for all by the year 2022</b>.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Home solution</b></p> <p>The Global Housing Technology Challenge is aimed at introducing best technologies to construct houses quickly and at a lower cost</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 winners will design and build projects of 1,000 housing units each</li> <li>• The State and the Centre each will provide assistance of ₹1.5 lakh</li> <li>• The Centre will give an additional technology grant of ₹2.5 lakh for each house</li> <li>• Incubation facilities will be provided to develop building technologies with support from four IITs</li> <li>• The approved technologies will be displayed by Central Public Works Department along with the rates</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## Rural housing reaches only 66% target

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen) scheme to provide housing for the rural poor has achieved only 66% of its target to complete one crore houses.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per the data, about 15 lakh homes have reached the late stages of construction with roofs ready to be added.</li> <li>● Another 11 lakh homes have reached the lintel level and may be completed in the next few months even if they do not meet the March 31 deadline.</li> <li>● The Ministry of Rural Development still hopes to advance further towards the goal by the deadline of March-end.</li> <li>● The scheme has been successful in reducing the average time of construction from 314 days to 114 days, according to an official statement.</li> <li>● However, there has been little headway made with regard to one block of beneficiaries: the landless, who do not possess the land on which to construct the PMAY homes they are entitled to.</li> <li>● <b>The poor performance of states:</b></li> <li>● According to data provided in the letter, some of the most laggard States as of July 2018 were:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Maharashtra</b>, which had provided land for only 890 of 1.39 lakh landless beneficiaries.</li> <li>(2) <b>Assam, which had provided land for 574 of 48,283 landless beneficiaries. 3. Bihar, only 55 out of 5,348 beneficiaries had been allotted land.</b></li> <li>(3) <b>West Bengal had not allotted land for even a single one of its 34,884 landless beneficiaries.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Under the scheme, Government proposes to provide an environmentally safe and secure pucca house to every rural household by 2022.</li> <li>● In its first phase, the target is to complete one crore houses by March 2019.</li> <li>● The unit cost for these houses has been significantly increased and now through convergence minimum support of nearly Rs. 1.5 lakh to Rs. 1.6 lakh to a household is available.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There is also a provision of Bank loan up to Rs. 70,000/-, if the beneficiary so desires.</li> <li>● The selection of beneficiaries has been through a completely transparent process using the Socio-Economic Census 2011 data and validating it through the Gram Sabha.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## No e-way bills for non-filers of GST returns soon

<b>Why is it in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per the official statement, non-filers of GST returns for six consecutive months will soon be barred from generating e-way bills for movement of goods.</li> <li>● The Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) is developing an IT system to ensure non-filers to be barred.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The move, officials believe, would help check Goods and Services Tax (GST) evasion.</li> <li>● Central tax officers have detected 3,626 cases of GST evasion/violations cases, involving Rs.5,278.18 crore in April-December period.</li> <li>● <b>E-way Bill:</b></li> <li>● Touted as an anti-evasion measure, e-way bill system was rolled out on April 1, 2018, for moving goods worth over Rs.50,000 from one state to another.</li> <li>● E-Way Bill is an electronic way bill for movement of goods which can be generated on the e-Way Bill Portal.</li> <li>● The same for intra or within the state movement was rolled out in a phased manner from April 15.</li> <li>● Transporters of goods worth over Rs.50,000 would be required to present e-way bill during transit to a GST inspector, if asked.</li> <li>● <b>Use of FASTag:</b></li> <li>● It has come to the investigative officers' notice that some transporters are doing multiple trips by generating a single e-way bill.</li> <li>● Integration of e-way bill with FASTag would help find the location of the vehicle, and when and how many times it has crossed the NHAI's toll plazas.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

## GST Appellate Tribunal

<b>Why is it in the news ?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Union cabinet approved creation of national bench of Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal.</li> <li>● The National Bench of the Appellate Tribunal to be situated in New Delhi.</li> <li>● It would be a quasi-judicial body that will mediate in indirect tax disputes between states and centre.</li> </ul>
<b>More about the Tribunal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The dispute resolution forum would be crucial in the coming months as several states may end up fighting among themselves and with central government over indirect tax revenues.</li> <li>● <b>Functions:</b></li> <li>● The Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) would serve as the forum of second appeals to do with the applicability of GST.</li> <li>● It will also be the first common forum of dispute resolution between the Centre and the States.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The CGST Act provides for an appeal and review mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST regime.</li> <li>● Centre to constitute, on the recommendation of the GST Council, an appellate tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority.</li> </ul> <p><b>Composition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The tribunal will be presided over by its president.</li> <li>● It will consist of a technical member from the Centre and a representative of the States.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## DIPP renamed

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The <b>Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)</b> has been renamed as the <b>Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade</b>.</li> <li>● It has also enhanced its role with a mandate to deal with matters related to start-ups, facilitating ease of doing business among others.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The notification included four <b>new categories of responsibilities</b> the renamed body will be in charge of. They are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The promotion of internal trade (including retail trade).</li> <li>● The welfare of traders and their employees.</li> <li>● Matters relating to facilitating Ease of Doing Business.</li> <li>● Matters relating to start-ups.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The <b>previous responsibilities</b> of the erstwhile DIPP were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relating to general industrial policy.</li> <li>● Administration of the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951.</li> <li>● Industrial management.</li> <li>● Productivity in industry.</li> <li>● Matters related to e-commerce.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Background:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The DIPP was established in 1995 <b>under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry</b> as a nodal agency for design and facilitation of industrial, trade and commerce policies.</li> <li>● It was reconstituted in 2000 with the merger of the <b>Department of Industrial Development</b>.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

# Miscellaneous

## Project 'Trinitea'

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A MoU was signed between the Indian Tea Association (ITA) the apex body of North Indian tea producers and Solidaridad for jointly implementing project trinitea.</li> <li>● Solidaridad is a network which works to promote sustainable production of 13 commodities across nine regions globally.</li> <li>● The project aims at providing support to small tea growers (STG) in the form of customised farm management as well as access to real time information on climate, soil and markets.</li> </ul>
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<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognising the rising importance of STG in the supply chain, tea estates in North India are testing the project 'Trinitea,' which aims at providing support to the STG at the farm and market level.</li> <li>● The project is already being rolled out in select ITA-member tea gardens who supplement their output through the STG crop.</li> <li>● The project would help monitor green leaf quality, establish traceability mechanisms and set up vendor development for supply of farm inputs.</li> <li>● According to ITA's chairman, the MoUs would create better value and acceptability in the global and domestic market for teas produced across the value-chain encompassing both the sectors.</li> <li>● The STG sector's share in total Indian tea crop has been rising steadily and now constitutes 47% of the total production.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>Indian Express.</b>

### Surge in crude oil can impact macro-economic stability: RBI study

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The RBI study warns that sudden surge in crude prices can upset the nation's key macro-stability parameters.</li> <li>● The surge can sharply spike the current account deficit (CAD), inflation and fiscal numbers, whittling the benefits of higher growth.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Since the country is heavily dependent on oil imports to the tune of over 80 per cent for meeting its domestic demand, it remains susceptible to global crude price shocks.</li> <li>● Besides CAD, rise in crude prices can also impact inflation and fiscal deficit, says the report.</li> <li>● The international crude prices increased by around 12% between April and September 2018.</li> <li>● However, since mid-November 2018, crude prices have declined significantly, but remain volatile.</li> <li>● Further, if the government decides on a zero pass-through to the final consumers, a USD 10/barrel spike in crude prices could increase the fiscal deficit by 43 bps.</li> <li>● This zero pass-through scenario allows us to put an upper band on the amount of fiscal slippage, report adds.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>

### Changes in Gold monetization scheme

<b>Why is it in the news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday made some changes in the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) by including charitable institutions and the central government, among other.</li> </ul>
<b>More in the news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In 2015, the government launched the GMS to mobilise the gold held by households and institutions in the country.</li> <li>● The scheme allows banks' customers to deposit their idle gold holdings for a fixed period in return for interest in the range of 2.25-2.50%.</li> <li>● Joint deposits of two or more eligible depositors are also allowed under the scheme and the deposit in such case shall be credited to the joint deposit account opened in the name of such depositors.</li> <li>● The existing rules regarding joint operation of bank deposit accounts including nominations will be applicable to these gold deposits.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apart from individual and joint depositors, the scheme could now be availed by:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Charitable institutions,</li> <li>(2) <b>The central government,</b></li> <li>(3) <b>The state government,</b></li> <li>(4) <b>Any other entity owned by the central government or the state government.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## Centre's debt-to-GDP falls

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to the Status Paper on Government Debt for 2017-18, the Centre's total debt as a percentage of GDP reduced to 46.5% in 2017-18 from 47.5% as of March 31, 2014.</li> <li>● The total debt of the States, however, has been rising over this period, to 24% in 2017-18, and is estimated to be 24.3% in 2018-19.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>N.K. Singh Committee</b> recommendations on public debt.</li> <li>● The N.K. Singh-headed FRBM Review Committee report had recommended the ratio to be 40% for the Centre and 20% for the States, respectively, by 2023.</li> </ul> <p><b>Significance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per the N.K. Singh committee, 60% consolidated Central and State debt limit is consistent with international best practices.</li> <li>● Also, it is an essential parameter to attract a better rating from the credit ratings agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Trend:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The total outstanding liabilities as a percentage of GDP stood at 24% as at end-March 2018 and is expected to move upward to 24.3% at end-March 2019.</li> <li>● Ratings agencies have predicted that the combined fiscal deficit of the States to be 3.2% of GDP in financial year 2020, higher than the prescribed 3%.</li> <li>● Also it seems unlikely that the States will meet their 20% debt-GDP ratio target by 2023.</li> <li>● The report, however, says that the States do have some fiscal space to reduce their borrowing in the coming years due to the large cash surpluses they hold.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu.

## ILO urges universal labour guarantee

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The World leaders have been urged by an influential United Nations agency to sign up to a universal labour guarantee.</li> <li>● <b>UN agency</b> that sets <b>international labour standards</b> is asking the heads of State and business leaders gather in Davos for the <b>World Economic Forum</b>, to commit to a universal labour guarantee.</li> </ul>
More in the news	<p><b>Demands of ILO:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) 1. Commitment to a universal labour guarantee.</li> <li>(2) <b>Universal social protection from birth to old age.</b></li> <li>(3) <b>An international governance system for the gig economy.</b></li> <li>(4) <b>A human-in-command approach to artificial intelligence.</b></li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The International Labour Organization (ILO) was founded in 1919 <b>to promote social justice</b> and thereby contribute to universal and lasting peace.</li> <li>● The ILO is responsible for drawing up and <b>overseeing international labour standards.</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is <b>the only tripartite United Nations agency</b> that brings together representatives of <b>governments, employers and workers</b> to jointly shape policies and programmes <b>promoting decent work for all.</b></li> </ul>
<b>ILO Findings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The International Labour Organisation (ILO) released its report titled <b>‘Future of Work’</b>, in Geneva to mark its centenary.</li> <li>● It warned that without decisive action we will be sleepwalking into a world that widens inequality, increases uncertainty and reinforces exclusion.</li> <li>● Around the world, 190 million people are unemployed, while 300 million workers live in extreme poverty.</li> <li>● Wage gaps are growing at a time of declining wage growth.</li> <li>● Two-thirds of jobs in the developing world are susceptible to automation, and only 15% of households in emerging countries have Internet access.</li> <li>● Implementing the Paris Climate Agenda could create 24 million new jobs, but it could still be brutal to the 6 million workers expected to lose their jobs in the transition to a greener economy.</li> </ul>
<b>Way Forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The ILO asked all countries to “place people at the centre of economic and social policy”, ensuring that final decisions are taken by human beings.</li> <li>● It suggested that an international governance system be set up to police the gig economy, and ensure that ‘digital labour platforms’ such as Uber and Swiggy respect certain minimum rights and protections.</li> <li>● To reduce inequalities, the ILO recommends that “the development of the rural economy, where the future of many the world’s workers lies, should become a priority”.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu.</b>



# 6

## Science and Technology

### Ultima Thule

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NASA shares detailed images taken by New Horizons of the distant celestial body called Ultima Thule .</li> <li>● The first detailed images from the U.S. agency’s New Horizons mission allowed scientists to confidently determine the body was formed when two spheres, or “lobes,” slowly gravitated towards each other until they stuck together -a major scientific discovery.</li> </ul>
<b>Ultima Thule</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ultima Thule, an icy celestial body, is aptly shaped like a giant snowman.</li> <li>● The New Horizons spacecraft on 31 december 2018 flew past Ultima Thule, which was discovered via telescope in 2014 and is the farthest and potentially oldest cosmic body ever observed by a spacecraft.</li> <li>● Before that flyby, the only image scientists had was a blurry one showing Ultima Thule’s oblong shape, resembling something like a bowling pin or a peanut.</li> <li>● Sun’s rays are 1,600 times fainter on Ultima Thule than on the earth.</li> <li>● The body completes its own rotation in about 15 hours.</li> <li>● NASA dubbed the larger lobe Ultima, and the other, which is about three times smaller, Thule.</li> <li>● 4.5 billion years ago a cloud of frozen pebbles began to join forces, gradually forming two bodies — Ultima and Thule.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu, NASA

### Yutu 2

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China has named the lunar rover, successfully deployed to carry out a string of experiments on the far side of the moon, as ‘Yutu-2’.</li> <li>● Yutu-2 touched the lunar surface leaving a trace on the loose lunar soil.</li> <li>● The rover’s touchdown is part of China Chang’e-4 lunar probe.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<p><b><u>Yutu 2:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Objectives:</u></b></li> <li>● The rover has been programmed to launch ground penetration radar that would help map the moon’s inner structures.</li> <li>● It would also analyse soil and rock samples for minerals, apart from activating a radio telescope to search for possible signals from deep space.</li> <li>● The payload also carried a canister filled with air, soil, water, bacterium, silkworm eggs, the seeds of a small flowering plant and a potato.</li> <li>● <b><u>Homegrown GPS:</u></b>It follows the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System — China’s homegrown Global Positioning System that started worldwide service.</li> <li>● <b><u>Made in China-2025’ project:</u></b> China’s lunar probe is part of its ‘Made in China-2025’ project, which focuses on advanced technology, including space applications.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Next Planned missions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In 2020, China plans to launch its Mars explorer mission.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In 2022, it hopes to complete its own Earth-orbiting space station.</li> <li>● <b>Research base on the moon:</b>After the latest launch, Beijing is moving forward with plans to build a research base on the moon.</li> <li>● <b>Mining of Helium-3 on Moon:</b> It is also said that China considering mining for helium-3 on Moon, a rare substance on earth that can be used as a fuel in nuclear fusion power generation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on China and US relations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China’s advances can mutate into a Cold war-style competition in outer space with the United States.</li> <li>● Landing could intensify the space race between China and the U.S.</li> <li>● U.S. is growing increasingly alarmed because a more advanced Chinese space programme could be translated into military strength.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### New planet discovered by NASA’s probe

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NASA’s latest planet-hunting probe has discovered a new world outside our solar system, orbiting a dwarf star 53 light years away.</li> <li>● This is the third new planet confirmed by the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) since its launch in April 2018.</li> </ul>
<b>HD 21749b</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>HD 21749b:</b> The planet, named HD 21749b, orbits a bright, nearby dwarf star about 53 light years away, in the constellation Reticulum.</li> <li>● It appears to have the longest orbital period of the three planets so far identified by TESS.</li> <li>● <b>Slow journey:</b> HD 21749b journeys around its star in a relatively leisurely 36 days as compared to the two other planets :                      (1) Pi Mensae b, a “super-Earth” with a 6.3-day orbit.                      (2) LHS 3844b, a rocky world that speeds around its star in just 11 hours.</li> <li>● All three planets were discovered in the first three months of TESS observations.</li> <li>● The planet is about three times the size of the earth, which puts it in the category of a “sub-Neptune.”</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### Decreased deep sleep and Alzheimer’s disease

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to Washington University School of Medicine, Older people who get less deep sleep have higher levels of the brain protein tau, a sign of cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease.</li> <li>● Slow-wave sleep is the deep sleep people need to consolidate memories and wake up feeling refreshed.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poor-quality sleep in later life could be a red flag for deteriorating brain health.</li> <li>● There is inverse relationship between decreased slow-wave sleep and more tau protein in people who were either cognitively normal or very mildly impaired.</li> <li>● It means that reduced slow-wave activity may be a marker for the transition between normal and impaired.</li> </ul>
<b>Tau proteins</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Function:</b> To stabilize microtubules.</li> <li>● <b>Diseases associated with tau proteins:</b> Pathologies and dementias of the nervous system such as <b>Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease</b> are</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● associated with tau proteins that have become defective and no longer stabilize microtubules properly.</li> <li>● <b>Categorization:</b> They have been characterized as <b>intrinsically disordered proteins</b>.</li> <li>● <b>Where they found?</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) These proteins are found mostly in neurons compared to non-neuronal cells.</li> <li>(2) They are abundant in neurons of the central nervous system.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## ISRO cranks up Gaganyaan project

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said work on 'Gaganyaan', the project to send a manned mission to space by 2022, would start soon at the newly created Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC).</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Human Space Flight Centre [based in Bengaluru] will carry out all activities related to the human programme.</li> <li>● Under it will function the Gaganyaan Project.</li> <li>● The facility would be staffed by a dedicated team, with ISRO planning to deploy 800 to 900 people over time on the project.</li> <li>● The year 2019 has started with Gaganyaan getting the government's approval and budget for putting three astronauts in space for seven days.</li> <li>● The astronauts will orbit Earth at a distance of 400 km.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## PSLV-DL

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) planning to keep the fourth and final stage of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) 'alive' in space as a useful 'orbital platform'.</li> <li>● The PSLV rocket — popularly dubbed ISRO's trusted workhorse — is getting added features.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New variant of the PSLV- "PSLV-DL":             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Upcoming PSLV-C44 mission will see a new variant of the PSLV in use.</li> <li>(2) This variant, tagged PSLV-DL, will be the first to sport two strap-on boosters for providing added thrust.</li> <li>(3) It's final and fourth stage — PS4 — will be equipped with lithium-ion batteries, but no solar panels.</li> <li>(4) An in-house technology, the lithium-ion cells are critical to keep the spent stage in orbit.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Aimed to reduce space debris:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Idea of transforming the expendable fourth stage into a makeshift satellite is to reduce space debris.</li> <li>(2) In a normal scenario, the initial stages of the rocket, once they detach, drop back into the sea.</li> <li>(3) However, stage four, after releasing the payload, wanders around in space as junk.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Rapid diagnostic kit for Chikungunya detectio

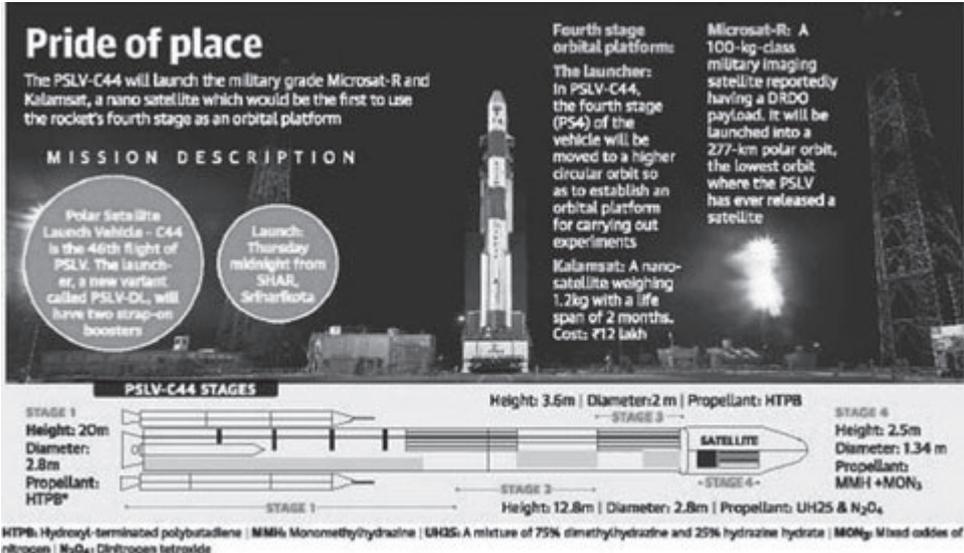
<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An antigen-based chikungunya rapid diagnostic kit developed in 2013 by an international group of researchers was put to test in India, a dengue endemic country, to check its efficiency during co-infection with dengue.</li> <li>● During the chikungunya outbreak that happened in Delhi in 2016, over 100 suspected chikungunya-dengue patients were tested using the new technology and the kit was able to detect chikungunya accurately — 93% sensitivity and 95% specificity.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Comparison between Present technique and new technique:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The kit is designed to detect the chikungunya virus antigen in human serum.</li> <li>(2) Current tests for chikungunya look for the antibody produced by our body against the virus.</li> <li>(3) This is the first time a technology has been developed to identify the virus antigen.</li> <li>(4) The ability of the antigen-based test to detect chikungunya at different times after the onset of fever was 72%.</li> <li>(5) The kit is also faster than the DNA- and antibody-based methods and can give results in 15-30 minutes.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Kit speciality: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The kit was able to detect the antigen even in dengue co-infected patient and did not cross-react with dengue positive or chikungunya negative patients.</li> <li>(2) The cross-reactivity was also tested with other fever-causing diseases like malaria, typhoid, hepatitis B and C and Salmonella infection.</li> <li>(3) The new kit did not react with any of the samples.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

## Swine Flu

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As per data released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), 49 swine flu deaths and 1,694 cases reported in just one fortnight from January 1-13.</li> <li>● States put on high alert as swine flu cases spike across the country.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Rajasthan case:</b> It alone has reported 31 deaths in this period with other instances being reported from Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Prdaesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.</li> </ul>
<b>Swine Flu</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Swine Flu: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>H1N1 influenza (or swine flu) is a highly contagious acute respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs.</b></li> <li>(2) <b>Swine flu viruses do not normally infect humans. However, sporadic human infections with swine flu have occurred.</b></li> <li>(3) <b>Most commonly, these cases occur in people with direct exposure to pigs (e.g., children near pigs at a fair or workers in the swine industry). However, there have been cases of human-to-human spread of swine flu.</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>● Symptoms: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) H1N1 causes a respiratory illness and is very contagious.</li> <li>(2) Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to those of the seasonal flu and may include: Fever, Body aches, Loss of appetite, cough, sore throat, headache, Fatigue,</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) H1N1 flu is a virus just like any other strain of flu, but it does appear to respond to the antiviral medications <b>Tamiflu and Relenza</b>.</li> <li>(2) These medications do not cure the illness, but they may shorten the duration, make symptoms less severe, or help you avoid it altogether if you are exposed.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu, webmd

## Microsat - R

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indian Space Research Organisation's first mission of 2019 is going into space.</li> <li>● It's a Microsat-R, a 130-kg military imaging satellite.</li> </ul>
More in news	 <p><b>Pride of place</b></p> <p>The PSLV-C44 will launch the military grade Microsat-R and Kalamsat, a nano satellite which would be the first to use the rocket's fourth stage as an orbital platform</p> <p><b>MISSION DESCRIPTION</b></p> <p>Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle - C44 is the 46th flight of PSLV. The launcher, a new variant called PSLV-DL, will have two strap-on boosters</p> <p>Launch: Thursday midnight from SHAR, Sriharikota</p> <p><b>Fourth stage orbital platforms</b></p> <p>The launcher: In PSLV-C44, the fourth stage (PS4) of the vehicle will be moved to a higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments</p> <p>Microsat-R: A 100-kg class military imaging satellite reportedly having a DRDO payload. It will be launched into a 277-km polar orbit, the lowest orbit where the PSLV has ever released a satellite</p> <p>Kalamsat: A nano-satellite weighing 1.2kg with a life span of 2 months. Cost: ₹12 lakh</p> <p><b>PSLV-C44 STAGES</b></p> <p>STAGE 1: Height: 20m, Diameter: 2.8m, Propellant: HTPB*</p> <p>STAGE 3: Height: 12.8m   Diameter: 2.8m   Propellant: LH2 &amp; N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub></p> <p>STAGE 4: Height: 2.5m, Diameter: 1.34 m, Propellant: MMH + MON<sub>3</sub></p> <p>SATELLITE</p> <p><small>HTPB: Hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene   MMH: Monomethylhydrazine   LH2: A mixture of 75% dimethylhydrazine and 25% hydrazine hydrate   MON<sub>3</sub>: Mixed oxides of nitrogen   N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>: Dinitrogen tetroxide</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Satellite would be placed within 15 minutes after take-off in a polar orbit 274 km away from Earth.</li> <li>● This is much lower than any of its civil Earth observation spacecraft, which fly pole to pole over the globe at between 400 km and 700 km.</li> <li>● Kalamsat, a small student payload, will be the first to use PS4 as an orbital platform.</li> <li>● In PSLV-C44, the fourth stage (PS4) of the vehicle will be moved to higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Sickle-cell disease

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Researchers are testing strategies for correcting the problem at the genetic level.</li> <li>● Patients under observation who have endured an illness that causes excruciating bouts of pain, strokes and early death, no longer show signs of the disease.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Alternative to present techniques:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) At present the only remedy for sickle-cell disease is a rarely used, dangerous and expensive option- Bone marrow transplant.</li> <li>(2) Now gene therapy which is not a simple or inexpensive, but it could change the lives of tens of thousands of people.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>More prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa:</b> The disorder is most common in sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimated 70% of children with it die before adulthood.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Sickle cell disease</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is Sickle cell disease?                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Sickle cell disease is a group of disorders that affects hemoglobin, the molecule in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells throughout the body.</li> <li>(2) People with this disorder have atypical hemoglobin molecules called hemoglobin S, which can distort red blood cells into a sickle, or crescent, shape.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Crises condition:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The misshapen cells get stuck in blood vessels, causing strokes, organ damage and episodes of agonizing pain- called crises- as muscles are starved of oxygen.</li> <li>(2) Children usually return to normal between crises, but teenagers and adults may suffer chronic pain.</li> <li>(3) The misshapen cells don't survive long in the blood- 10 to 20 days, compared to the usual 120 days.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Signs and symptoms of sickle cell disease:                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) It usually begins in early childhood.</li> <li>(2) Characteristic features of this disorder include a low number of red blood cells (anemia), repeated infections, and periodic episodes of pain.</li> <li>(3) The severity of symptoms varies from person to person. Some people have mild symptoms, while others are frequently hospitalized for more serious complications.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● What causes sickle cell disease?                     <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The cause of SCD is a defective gene, called a sickle cell gene.</li> <li>(2) People with the disease are born with two sickle cell genes, one from each parent.</li> <li>(3) Person born with one sickle cell gene, it's called sickle cell trait. People with sickle cell trait are generally healthy, but they can pass the defective gene on to their children.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Source</b></p>	<p>The Hindu, nih.gov</p>

**CMB-Bharat project**

<p><b>Why is it in news?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, <b>Project CMB (Cosmic Microwave Background)-Bharat</b> was concluded in Bengluru.</li> <li>● It is a project to listen to the faintest murmurs of the universe.</li> </ul>
<p><b>More in news</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It consists of a school to train early career researchers and a workshop for active researchers in the field of cosmology.</li> <li>● The scientific space project CMB-Bharat has been presented as a proposal to ISRO.</li> <li>● <b>Scientific promise of project:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Project would reveal the first clear signature of quantum gravity and ultra-high-energy-physics in the very early universe.</li> <li>(2) This referred to quantum gravitational waves, which are different from what LIGO detectors had observed that were classical in nature.</li> <li>(3) The “high” goals lay in neutrino physics where more discovery about the neutrino species, their total mass and mass hierarchy is planned.</li> <li>(4) Also mapping all dark matter and most baryons in the observable universe is also under consideration.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Gathering of cosmologists:</b> The workshop was a unique gathering of cosmologists from across the world, and participants could attend invited talks by eminent cosmologists and experimental physicists from across the world, such as Lyman Page, Rashid Sunyaev, J. Richard 'Dick' Bond, etc.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## WHO report on Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) recent report, Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)-mainly cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and cancer-continue to be the top killers in the South-East Asia Region, claiming 8.5 million lives each year.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Data points:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, are collectively responsible for over 70% of all deaths worldwide, or 41 million people.</li> <li>(2) These include 15 million people dying prematurely, aged between 30 and 69.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Health goal:</b> Containing the NCDs has been listed by the WHO as its health goal for this year along with reducing mortality related to air pollution and climate change, global influenza pandemic etc.</li> <li>● <b>Four 'major' NCDs causing behavioural risk factors:</b> Tobacco use, unhealthy diet, insufficient physical activity and harmful use of alcohol.</li> <li>● <b>Socio-economic effects:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) One third of these deaths is premature and occurs before the age of 70, affecting economically productive individuals.</li> <li>(2) The NCDs disproportionately affect the poor, impoverish families, and place a growing burden on health care systems.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Fibre, whole grains as a solution:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) A study conducted world-wide has noted that consuming fibre and whole grains can reduce health risks from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease.</li> <li>(2) The paper published in <i>The Lancet</i> indicates that eating fibre-rich foods reduces the incidence of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer by 16% to 24%.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## New Delhi superbug gene on Arctic

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Soil samples taken in <b>Svalbard — a Norwegian archipelago between mainland Norway and the North Pole</b> — have now confirmed the spread of <b>blaNDM-1 (called New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1)</b> into the High Arctic.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>History:</b> This Antibiotic-Resistant Gene (ARG), originally found in Indian clinical settings, conditionally provides multi-drug resistance (MDR) in microorganisms.</li> <li>● <b>Spread:</b> British scientists later found the “superbug” in New Delhi’s public water supply. Since then, the resistant gene has been found in over 100 countries, including new variants.</li> </ul>
What is NDM-1?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● NDM-1 stands for <b>New Delhi metallo-β-lactamase-1.</b></li> <li>● A medical team first isolated the gene in a Swedish patient of Indian origin who traveled to India in 2008.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An NDM-1 superbug is resistant to almost all antibiotics.</li> <li>● The NDM-1 protein product itself does not cause disease, but it has the potential to change the characteristics of bacteria.</li> <li>● The gene makes bacteria resistant to antibiotics. In this way, it can lead to a range of conditions, such as a urinary tract, bloodstream, or wound infections and pneumonia.</li> <li>● The NDM-1 gene allows the bacterium to produce an enzyme that neutralizes the activity of these antibiotics.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	<b>The Hindu, medicalnews</b>

### Zika virus-Rajasthan case

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to a new study published in the journal Infection, Genetics and Evolution, the Zika virus that infected 159 people in an outbreak in Rajasthan last year, could have been circulating in India for several years and is endemic to Asia.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The study, led by authors from Pune's National Institute of Virology (NIV), an institute under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is the first to sequence full Zika virus genomes from India.</li> <li>● This publication contradicts the ICMR's previous statements and indicates that the Rajasthan Zika strain is not closely related to the Brazilian one.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu



# 7

## Internal Security

### China building ‘advanced’ warships for Pakistan: report

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China is building the first of four “most advanced” naval warships for Pakistan as part of a major bilateral arms deal to ensure among other things “balance of power” in the strategic Indian Ocean.</li> </ul>
<b>More in news</b>	<p><b>Balance of power:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Once constructed, the warship will be one of the largest and technologically advanced platforms of the Pakistani Navy.</li> <li>● It will strengthen the country’s capability to respond to future challenges, maintain peace and stability and the balance of power in the Indian Ocean region.</li> <li>● It will also support the Pakistani Navy’s initiative of securing sea lanes for international shipping by patrolling distant waters.</li> </ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

### Defence manufacturing rules eased

<b>Why is it in news?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The government issued a notification simplifying the process for approval of manufacturing of a range of defence and aerospace equipment and components by private industry, by bringing them under the licensing authority of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP).</li> <li>● The notification was issued as a press note by the DIPP, which is under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.</li> </ul>
<b>What notification says? And its impacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What notification says?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) This notification, which supersedes DIPP’s earlier press note of June 2014 on this issue, segregates defence items in two categories covered by two different Acts — the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, and the Arms Act, 1959.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Warships included:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Items are listed in <b>three categories</b> — defence aircraft, warships of all kinds, and allied items of defence equipment.</li> <li>(2) The most significant aspect is that warships of all kinds, surface and sub-surface, have been included in the listing.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● <b>Ambitious Strategic Partnership (SP) model:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The Defence Ministry has formulated an ambitious Strategic Partnership (SP) model under the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), covering four specific areas to promote role of private sector in defence manufacturing.</li> <li>(2) However, progress on finalising the projects under the SP model has been slow.</li> </ol> </li> <li>● Impacts:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) This would accrue benefits towards Tier-I/Tier-II vendors giving a boost to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs).</li> <li>(2) This move is also expected to help foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) looking for partnerships with the private sector.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

Source	The Hindu
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## Section 66A of IT Act

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There are over three years since SC struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act as unconstitutional.</li> <li>● But recently Supreme Court said it was shocked to hear that authorities still continued to book people under the now-extinct draconian provision.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SC warns of action if allegation in PUCL plea is found true.</li> <li>● The court ordered the Centre to respond to the petition in four weeks.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>What PUCL petition says?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The PUCL said Section 66A, which restricted free expression online, continued to survive and occasionally found a place in the FIRs registered by the police in complete contravention of the Supreme Court judgment in the Shreya Singhal case.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>SC judgment in the Shreya Singhal case:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The judgment had found that Section 66A was contrary to both Articles 19 (free speech) and 21 (right to life) of the Constitution. The entire provision was struck down by the court.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Light Combat Helicopter

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter has crossed a milestone by successfully firing an air-to-air missile at a moving target.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This is the <b>first time in the country</b> that a helicopter has carried out an air-to-air missile engagement.</li> <li>● None of the helicopters in the military services in the country has demonstrated such a capability.</li> <li>● The LCH has successfully completed all weapon integration tests and is ready for operational induction.</li> <li>● <b>Hindustan Aeronautics Limited</b> is developing the helicopter.</li> <li>● The <b>LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world capable of operating at altitudes as high as Siachen Glacier.</b></li> <li>● The <b>fire-and-forget missile</b> is effective against all types of aerial threat, including unmanned aerial vehicles and micro-light aircraft.</li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Operation Kabaddi

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recently, two former senior commanders have revealed in a new book- 'Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics' that Indian army planned <b>Operation Kabaddi</b> to end cross-LoC infiltration by capturing at least 25 selected Pakistani posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in September 2001.</li> </ul>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b><u>Much wider scope:</u></b> The operation, dubbed 'Operation Kabaddi', would have on far larger scale than the "land-grab" attempted by Pakistan, which led to the Kargil war in 1999.</li> <li>● <b><u>Objective:</u></b> To change the geography of the LoC with access to tactical points there, which would then help them [the Army] tackle the infiltration of militants by the Pakistani side.</li> </ul>

Source	The Hindu
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## Exercise Sea Vigil- Largest coastal security drill

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ten years after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, India conducted its largest coastal defence drill, <b>Exercise Sea Vigil</b>, to test its preparedness along the entire 7,516.6 km-long-coastline and exclusive economic zone of the country.</li> <li>The first of its kind exercise was conducted on January 22 and 23 and coordinated by the Navy.</li> </ul>
Exercise Sea Vigil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Aim:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To comprehensively and holistically validate the efficacy of the measures taken since 26/11.</li> <li>To simultaneously activate the coastal security mechanism across all 13 coastal States and Union Territories.</li> <li>This involves the evaluation of critical areas and processes, including inter-agency coordination, information sharing and technical surveillance.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Post 26/11-             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Navy:</b> Designated as the agency responsible for overall maritime security, including offshore and coastal security.</li> <li><b>Coast Guard:</b> Designated as the agency <b>responsible for coastal security in territorial waters.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Source	The Hindu

## Al Qaeda on the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS)

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A top intelligence official dismissed U.S.-based think tank's report that contends that the Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was exploiting the growing incidents of violence against Muslims in India and attacks in the name of "cow vigilantism" to recruit cadres.</li> </ul>
	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>Terror trail</b> al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) is being backed by the Pakistan establishment to carry out attacks in India, according to intelligence officials</p>  <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">ISTOCK</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p><b>2014:</b> The AQIS was created and led by Maulana Asim Umar, who was later identified as Uttar Pradesh resident Sanaul Haq</p> <p><b>2015:</b> The CIA helped Delhi police arrest three AQIS members, Mohammad Asif, Zafar Masood and Rehman</p> <p><b>2017:</b> The AQIS released a video where its self-styled spokesperson Usama Mahmood asked Muslims to support the Rohingya in Myanmar</p> <p><b>2018:</b> The Union Ministry of Home Affairs bans the AQIS</p> </div> </div>
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What report says?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report titled 'AQIS-The Nucleus of Jihad in South Asia' asserts that the rise in inter-religious clashes in India due to a changing political discourse had resulted in further divisions between Hindus and Muslims.</li> <li>Increasing incidents of violent attacks on Muslims in India, who are accused of eating beef, was being exploited by groups like AQIS to "incite Indian Muslims to join what is being called a fight for their honour.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What intelligence official says?<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) India is a pluralist country with 180 million Muslims.</li><li>(2) Indian Islam is based on rich Sufistic traditions of pluralism, inclusivism and composite nationalism.</li><li>(3) The wave of Al Qaeda in the 1990s and 2000s did not impact the Indian Muslim.</li><li>(4) The wave of Islamic State had minimal impact, with only about 108 individuals succumbing to its lure.</li><li>(5) In the past few decades, global Islamist uprisings and terrorism have not impacted the Indian Muslim, as they were based on Jihadism, born out of exclusionism.</li></ol></li></ul>
<b>Source</b>	The Hindu

