

# MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

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## **INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND INDIA**

### **INDUS WATER TREATY : IN NEWS**

- India and Pakistan have agreed to undertake the Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours by their Commissioners in the Indus basin on both sides to resolve issues on the various hydroelectric projects, including the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The recently concluded deliberations were held to further strengthen the role of **the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)** for matters under the 1960 Treaty.

#### **About the treaty:**

- Signed in 1960 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistan President Ayub Khan, the treaty allocates 80% of water from the six-river Indus water system to Pakistan.
- Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum from the Indus water system that flows from India to Pakistan. The Indus river basin spans parts of 4 countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and China) in an area that is more than 30% arid.
- Under the treaty, control over six north Indian rivers were divided between the two countries. India got control over the rivers Beas, Ravi and Sutlej whereas Pakistan got control over Indus, Chenab and Jhelum.
- This is a unique treaty involving a third party. It was brokered by the World Bank.
- A Permanent Indus Commission was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing.
- The Treaty also provides *arbitration mechanism* to solve disputes amicably.

#### **Mechanism for cooperation:**

- The treaty sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two countries regarding their use of the rivers. However, there have been disagreements and differences between India and Pakistan over the treaty.
- The water commissioners of Pakistan and India were required to meet twice a year and arrange technical visits to projects' sites and critical river head works, but Pakistan had been facing a lot of problems in timely meetings and visits.

### **Conservation of Western Ghats:**

- The six Western Ghats States, including Kerala, have been restrained by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) from giving environmental clearance to activities that may adversely impact the eco-sensitive areas of the mountain ranges.

#### **Important directions issued by the NGT:**

- The extent of Eco-Sensitive Zones of Western Ghats, which was notified by the Central government earlier, should not be reduced in view of the recent floods in Kerala.
- Any alteration in the draft notification of zones may seriously affect the environment, especially in view of recent incidents in Kerala.

#### **Background:**

- The Western Ghats Ecological Expert Panel had earlier proposed “much larger areas for being included in the eco-sensitive zone” though the Kasturirangan-led High Level Working Group, also appointed by the MoEF to look into the WGEEP report, had reduced it.
- The Ministry had accepted the Kasturirangan report and issued the draft notifications on ecologically sensitive zones.

#### Need of the hour:

- Western Ghats region is under serious stress. The region is one of the richest biodiversity areas which needed to be conserved.

#### Why was the Gadgil Committee set up?

- Environment Ministry set up the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel under Gadgil.
- The panel was asked to make an assessment of the ecology and biodiversity of the Western Ghats and suggest measures to conserve, protect and rejuvenate the entire range that stretches to over 1500 km along the coast, with its footprints in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

#### What did the Gadgil Committee say?

- It defined the boundaries of the Western Ghats for the purposes of ecological management.
- It proposed that this entire area be designated as ecologically sensitive area (ESA). Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III based on their existing condition and nature of threat.
- It proposed to divide the area into about 2,200 grids, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks.
- The committee proposed a Western Ghats Ecology Authority to regulate these activities in the area.

#### Way ahead:

- Kerala flood is a lesson worth of learning for India’s disaster management system. India, having more than 7500 km of coastline, should have a strong disaster early warning and management system.
- Cooperation between the states can create an expert and integrated national structure, to manage any kind of natural disaster.

### **India, Nepal sign MoU on Raxaul-Kathmandu railway line**

- India and Nepal have signed MoU to build strategic railway line connecting Raxaul city in Bihar, India to Kathmandu, capital of Nepal.
- It was signed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held talks on all aspects of the bilateral ties with his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli on sidelines of 4th BIMSTEC Summit held in Nepal.

#### Raxaul-Kathmandu rail line:

- It is expected to expand connectivity by enhancing people-to-people linkages and bulk movement of goods between both countries. It help to promote economic growth and development in the region.

- India's Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd. will conduct preliminary engineering-cum-traffic survey of this new rail line in consultation with Government of Nepal.
- This will be followed by finalization of implementation and funding modalities of project based on detailed project report.
- Besides, there are also three other railway projects in pipeline between both countries viz. Nautanwa-Bhairahawa, New Jalpaiguri-Kakarbhitta and Nepalgunj Road-Nepalgunj.

#### Background:

- The signing of MoU comes two years after China agreed to construct strategic railway link with Nepal through Tibet with apparent aim of reducing Himalayan nation's dependence on India.
- It also comes in backdrop of recent Chinese linkages with Nepal as it took on building three highways to be completed by 2020.
- The two countries have recently also signed transit treaty. It also comes years after sense of mistrust had prevailed when certain sections in Nepal blamed India for the 135-day blockade in 2015 – 2016 that had crippled Nepal's economy.

#### **Government launches online platform for Agmark quality certification**

- Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched online software for processing applications Agmark quality certification mark for agricultural products. It was launched by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

#### Agmark:

- Agmark is certification mark that assures conformity to set of standards approved by Government agency Directorate of Marketing and Inspection.
- It is legally enforced by Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and amended in 1986).
- The present AGMARK standards cover quality guidelines for 205 different commodities spanning variety of cereals, pulses, vegetable oils, essential oils, fruits & vegetables, and semi-processed products like vermicelli.
- The term agmark was coined by joining the words 'Ag' to mean agriculture and 'mark' for certification mark.
- This term was introduced originally in bill presented in Parliament for the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act.

#### Agmark online system:

- It is being implemented across the country to conduct quality control functions. It will be available 24x7. It will make process of application is simple, quick, transparent.
- Through this online system, certificate of authorisation (domestic), permission of laboratories (domestic), permission of printing press and services related to laboratory information management system will be provided online.
- The online system will make processes easy, reliable and cost effective.
- It also has provisions for online receipt of fees from the applicants as payments can be received in digital mode through bharatkosh.gov.in website.

#### Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI):

- DMI is an attached Office of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare under Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.

- It was set up in 1935 to implement agricultural marketing policies and programmes for integrated development of marketing of agricultural and other allied produce in country with view to safeguard interests of farmers as well as the consumers.

## STATES

### **TAMIL NADU BANS E- CIGARETTES**

- Tamil Nadu Government has issued order banning manufacture, sale and possession of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) or e-Cigarettes with immediate effect in the state.
- The ban covers distribution, trade, display, marketing, advertisement, use, import and possession of e-cigarettes as well.
- So far, Punjab, Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar already have prohibited manufacture, import, sale and distribution of ENDS or e-cigarettes.

### **Krishna Kutir: Government inaugurates home for 1000 widows in Vrindavan**

- Union Ministry of Women and Child Development recently had inaugurated widows' home 'Krishna Kutir' at Vrindavan in Mathura, **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Krishna Kutir is special home for 1000 widows set under **Swadhar Greh scheme** and is the largest ever facility of its kind created by government organization.
- It was constructed to mitigate the plight of widows living in pathetic condition in Vrindavan.

#### Krishna Kutir:

- Its construction was funded by Central Government and will be managed by UP Government. It was constructed on 1.4 hectare of land allotted by UP Government through National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC).
- It has 100 rooms or dormitories with capacity of housing 1000 inmates at time. Its name was selected a month-long Vrindavan Ashram contest held on social media and entry of Sunita Katyal, Krishna Kutir, was adjudged as winning entry.
- The design of this Home was prepared in consultation with Helpage India and is old age friendly. It consists of ground plus three floors with facilities of ramp, lifts, supply of adequate electricity, water and other amenities for meeting requirement of senior citizens and persons with special challenges.
- It is also equipped with large modern kitchen and skill cum training centre. It also has two dispensaries and physiotherapy facility to provide regular medical check-ups to inmates.

### **Odisha Assembly passes resolution for creation of Legislative Council**

- The Odisha State Assembly has passed resolution seeking creation of Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad or second house of legislature).
- The resolution was passed with as many as 104 of total 147 legislators casting their votes in its favour.
- The resolution now will be sent to Central Government (Union cabinet) for approval, following which it will be tabled in both houses of the Parliament. Thereafter, presidential assent is required to make it Act.

**Background:**

- The proposal for creation of Legislative Council in Odisha was passed by State Cabinet chaired by Chief Ministry in August 2018.
- The proposed Council will have 49 members i.e. one-third size of state assembly. State government plans to function legislative council from old assembly building while the existing assembly secretariat will cater to its administrative needs.

**Legislative Council: Explained:**

- India has bicameral system of legislature. Just as Parliament has two Houses, States can have Legislative Council (LC) in addition to the Legislative Assembly if they choose to. This option is available under Article 171 of the Constitution.

**Bengaluru airport set to become first in Asia to use face recognition as boarding pass**

- Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru, capital of Karnataka is set to become first airport in Asia to introduce face recognition based passage system technology from 2019.
- For this, Bengaluru International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), which operates KIA has signed agreement with Portuguese software firm Vision Box.

**Salient features :**

- The face recognition based passage system will allow passengers to board flights and move across different sections of the airport using automatic biometric boarding procedure instead of manual boarding passes verification.
- In this case, face will serve as boarding pass. The first implementation milestone of this system at KIA will be completed in the first quarter of 2019, with Jet Airways, Air Asia and SpiceJet passengers as first users.

**Andhra Pradesh tops Ease of Living Index rankings under AMRUT**

- Andhra Pradesh has topped Ease of Living Index rankings under AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation). It was followed by Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- The three states were awarded best-performing states at National Dissemination Workshop on Ease of Living Index, 2018 held in New Delhi.

**AMRUT:**

- It is an urban transformation scheme with the focus of the urban renewal projects to establish infrastructure that could ensure adequate robust sewerage networks and water supply.
- It aims at ensuring robust sewage networks, water supply and other infrastructure to improve the quality of life of people in urban areas.

**Ease of Living Index:**

- The index was conceived by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in June 2017.
- It aims to help cities assess their liveability vis-a-vis global and national benchmarks and encourage them to move towards 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management.
- It was launched to rank 116 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities and cities with population of 1 million plus based on the liveability parameters.

- The first edition of index released in January 2018 had ranked 111 Indian cities and was topped by Pune. It captures quality of life based on data collected from urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories.
- It seeks to help cities undertake 360-degree assessment of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).
- Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each, physical factors have weightage of 45 points and economic factors 5 points totalling to 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.

### **MAHARASHTRAS FIRST CYBER UNIVERSITY:**

- Maharashtra Government is setting up new Cyber University dedicated to mitigating cyber threats.
- It will train 3,000 professionals to fight online spycyber-attacks, internet crimes and conduct cyber forensics.

#### **Cyber University**

- The Cyber University will provide for and prepare internet professionals on lines of Microsoft Certified Professional Program.
- It will conduct courses in data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, AI, cyber forensics and cyber investigations.
- It will also impart training in 15 other Internet of Things (IoT) areas such as Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI). For this university, state government will provide different levels of training and enable affiliated colleges to impart certification for the 15 courses.
- It will also supply infrastructure for training and education.

#### **Need for Cyber University**

- Cyber-attacks India are taking place every 10 minutes as opposed to 12 minutes previously.
- The current demand of cyber professionals hovers around 30 lakh, but supply of is in about lakh.
- The university will be remedy for this by providing required human resource and bridge skill gap.
- Maharashtra Government is also in process of setting up its version of Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) to ward off external cyber threats.

## **POLITY**

### **SUPREME COURT BATS FOR MINOR RAPE SURVIVORS :**

- In support of minor survivors of rape or sexual assault, the Supreme Court of India has issued a slew of guidelines.

#### Highlights:

- Minor survivors of rape or sexual assault will get compensation on par with women victims. National Legal Services Authority's (NALSA) compensation scheme for women rape and sexual assault survivors shall be extended to minor children.
- Special Judges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act should disburse compensation to minor victims of sex abuse as per the NALSA's 'Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018'.

#### The NALSA compensation scheme:

- The NALSA scheme provides a uniform payment of 5 lakh to a maximum 10 lakh for "loss of life" and to gang rape survivors in any part of the country. Similarly, in case of rape and unnatural sexual assault, the victim would get a minimum of 4 lakh and maximum of 7 lakh as compensation.
- Among other categories, if a victim suffers the loss of foetus, that is, by miscarriage as a result of assault or loss fertility, the NALSA scheme offers a compensation of 2 lakh to 3 lakh.
- The scheme provides a victim of acid attacks, in case of disfigurement of face, would get a minimum compensation of 7 lakh, while the upper limit would be 8 lakh. In acid attack cases, if the injury was more than 50%, a minimum compensation of 5 lakh would be given, while the maximum would be 8 lakh.

#### Way ahead:

- The NALSA scheme would be made applicable to minor victims from October 2 until the Centre frames compensation guidelines under the POCSO.

#### Background:

- The order is a product of the legal efforts undertaken by senior advocate Indira Jaising, who has lent her expertise in the case for uniform compensation for rape survivors.
- The case had begun in the Supreme Court with Ms. Jaising raising her voice against the dormant state of the Nirbhaya funds.
- She has argued that compensation for sex abuse survivors should be a source of financial solace for victims of sex crimes and acid attacks during court trial.

#### **ARTICLE 161 OF THE CONSTITUTION**

- After failing to get the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case released by exercising its statutory power to remit life sentences, the government in Tamil Nadu has taken recourse to a possible constitutional remedy.
- It has decided to invoke the Governor's clemency power under Article 161 of the Constitution.



### What's the issue?

- In 2014, the Tamil Nadu government tried to invoke its remission powers under Section 432 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to release the convicts. The Centre opposed the move, arguing that since the case had been prosecuted by the Central Bureau of Investigation, the state first needed to take the Centre's "concurrence" as required by Section 435 of the code.
- The dispute went to the Supreme Court, which decided in the Centre's favour in 2015, ruling that the word "consultation" in Section 435 in spirit meant "concurrence". In August this year, the Centre denied concurrence to Tamil Nadu on the grounds that releasing the people convicted of assassinating a former prime minister would have "international ramifications" for India.

### What should the governor do now?

- Tamil Nadu Governor will now have to take a call on the advice of the State's Council of Ministers and decide whether he is bound by it. He can either reject the proposal or seek its reconsideration.
- In either case, he will be mindful of the fact that his decision will be subject to judicial review.

### Is the governor bound by the Cabinet's advice?

- It is settled in law that except in matters where governor has discretion or enjoys independent powers, they are bound by the Cabinet's decision.
- Governor does not have the option of returning a decision for reconsideration either since the Indian Constitution provides that recourse only for the President.
- However, governor's decision, even if made on the aid and advice of the Cabinet, is subject to judicial review. Further, Supreme Court rulings on how governor should make decisions under Article 161 add to the complexity of the present case.
- In two separate judgements, the apex court has reiterated that governor's power to pardon cannot be used mechanically. In Epuru Sudhakar, which involved a Congress leader in Andhra Pradesh, the court ruled that political considerations cannot be the basis for granting pardon, and set aside the governor's clemency order.

## **APPOINTMENT OF LOKPAL**

- Government has constituted eight-member search committee headed by former Supreme Court judge, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai, to recommend names for posts of Lokpal chairperson and members. The selection process of Lokpal is underway as per guidelines of laid down in Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.

### Committee's Terms of Reference:

- The search committee will start functioning soon. It will recommend names for Lokpal chairperson and members. It can also consider names other than those recommended by the search committee.

### Highlights of the Lokpal Act of 2013:

- The Act allows setting up of anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level.
- The Lokpal will consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members.
- The Lokpal will cover all categories of public servants, including the Prime Minister. But the armed forces do not come under the ambit of Lokpal.

- The Act also incorporates provisions for attachment and confiscation of property acquired by corrupt means, even while the prosecution is pending.
- The States will have to institute Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of the Act.
- The Act also ensures that public servants who act as whistleblowers are protected.

## **SECTION 377 : IMP JUDGEMENT**

- The Supreme Court has pronounced its much-awaited verdict on a clutch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of section 377 of the IPC which criminalises consensual gay sex.

### The verdict and its significance:

- The Court said gay sex among consenting adults is not an offence. The verdict assumes significance as in the earlier round of litigation in 2013 the Supreme Court had reversed the Delhi high court ruling decriminalising homosexuality or same sex relationship.
- However, bestiality will continue as an offence. Any kind of sexual activity with animals shall remain penal offence under Section 377 of the IPC.
- The judgement is based on the interpretation of Article 14 (Right to Equality); Article 15(prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth); Article 19(Freedom of Speech and Expression); and Article 21 (Right to Life and Right to Privacy) of the Indian Constitution.

### The law:

- Section 377 of IPC – which came into force in 1862 – defines unnatural offences. It says, “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine.”

### Delhi HC legalises homosexuality:

- The Delhi high court had in July 2009 de-criminalised consensual homosexual acts in private by declaring as unconstitutional a part of Section 377 of IPC that criminalises unnatural sex, saying “the section denies a gay person a right to full personhood...”

### SC re-criminalises homosexuality:

- The Supreme Court chose to reverse the verdict in December 2013.
- Upholding the constitutional validity of Section 377 IPC, an SC bench headed by Justice GS Singhvi (since retired), put the ball in the Parliament’s court, saying it was for the legislature to take a call on the desirability of the controversial provision.

### Challenges ahead:

- The Supreme Court judgment only deals with a narrow interpretation of Section 377. Besides decriminalising homosexuality, the judgment does not confer any further rights.
- Gay marriages: Marriages between same-sex partners are not recognised in India, but this can be changed by inserting a provision in the Special Marriage Act.
- Adoption: Law prohibits adoption of a child by a gay couple.

- Inheritance: One partner cannot inherit properties left behind by their same-sex partner, unless a will is drawn in favour of the person. A will, too, can be contested by family members of the partners.
- On pending criminal cases: The judgment will have a bearing on criminal cases pending trial, appeal or revision on disposed off cases. The judgment will have no bearing on disposed off cases and old cases cannot be reopened. It opens the flood gates for securing other civil rights.

### **IPC SECTION 497 - ADULTERY - IMP JUDGEMENT**

- The Supreme Court has declared Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code as unconstitutional saying that the penal provision on adultery was manifestly arbitrary and dents the individuality of women.

#### What is Section 497?

- Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC says, "Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor."

#### Important observations made by the Supreme Court:

- Adultery might not cause of an unhappy marriage, but it could be result of an unhappy marriage.
- In case of adultery, criminal law expects people to be loyal which is a command which gets into the realm of privacy.
- Adultery can be ground for civil issues including dissolution of marriage but it cannot be a criminal offence.
- Any provision treating woman with inequality is not Constitutional.
- Mere adultery can't be a crime, unless it attracts the scope of Section 306 (abatement to suicide) of the IPC.

#### Why strike it down?

- Section 497 perpetuates subordinate status of women, denies dignity, sexual autonomy, and is based on gender stereotypes. Section 497 based on women as chattel, seeks to control sexuality of woman, hits the autonomy and dignity of woman. Besides, Section 497 perpetrates subordinate nature of woman in a marriage.
- Therefore, it should be struck down for violation of Articles 14, 21.

#### Past Supreme Court judgements on adultery:

- The adultery law had come up in court thrice in the past — in 1954, in 1985, and in 1988.
- In 1954, the SC rejected that Section 497 violated the right to equality.
- In 1985, it said that women didn't need to be included in the law as a party which can make complaints.
- In 1988, the Supreme Court said that the adultery law was a "shield rather than a sword".

### **EC removes NOTA option from Rajya Sabha, Legislative Council polls**

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) on September 11, 2018 withdrew the provision of NOTA (None of the above) option from ballot papers of the Rajya Sabha and the state's Legislative Council polls as per the Supreme Court directive.
- The ECI, through the notification, ordered the returning officers for Rajya Sabha and legislative council to ensure that there is no NOTA column displayed in the ballot paper.
- The NOTA option will be available only in Lok Sabha and state's assembly election.

#### **Background:**

- The Supreme Court on August 21, 2018 ruled that the 'None of The Above' (NOTA) option will not be applicable for voting in the Rajya Sabha elections. NOTA could continue to be an option in the direct elections such as the Lok Sabha and the state assemblies.
- A bench of CJJ Dipak Misra and justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud had set aside the EC's notification allowing the NOTA option in the ballot papers for the Rajya Sabha polls.
- The CJJ led bench held that the NOTA option is meant only for the general public in direct elections and not for the polls held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.
- The NOTA decision by SC was taken on a petition filed by Gujarat Congress leader Shailesh Manubhai Parmar to do away with the 'NOTA' option in Rajya Sabha elections. He filed the petition in regard to the Rajya Sabha election in 2017, in which Congress leader Ahmed Patel was contesting.
- The trigger for the petition was the decision of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to use NOTA for Rajya Sabha elections in Gujarat in 2017.
- The ECI had issued two circulars on January 24, 2014 and November 12, 2015, giving the Rajya Sabha members the option to press the NOTA button in the Upper House polls.

### **Supreme Court modifies its order on dowry harassment; scraps Family Welfare Committees**

- The Supreme Court of India on September 14, 2018 modified its July 2017 order in dowry harassment case for preventing misuse of Section 498A of Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Section 498A (dowry harassment) of IPC protects gender justice and rights.
- A three judges' bench led by the Chief Justice Dipak Misra withdrew the earlier direction issued in Rajesh Sharma case which stated that complaints under Section 498A of the IPC should be scrutinised by Family Welfare Committees before any legal action by police.
- The bench acknowledged that there was misuse of the provision leading to social unrest; however, it cannot constitutionally fill up the gaps in penal law. The top court left it to Parliament to make suitable rules to check abuse of the law.
- The apex court had on April 23, 2018 reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas seeking modifications in July 2017 judgement that had reduced the strictness of the anti-dowry law on the offence of subjecting a married woman to cruelty by spouse and in-laws.

### The plea

- The bench was hearing a plea filed by an NGO 'Nyayadhar', an organisation formed by a group of women advocates of Maharashtra's Ahmednagar district.
- The plea seeks sharpness in section 498A, claiming that the earlier direction has made the legislation valueless for the women victims.
- The plea suggested that out of the three members in Family Welfare Committees, at least two should be women and one should have done Masters in Social Work.
- It suggested recording of facts at the time of counselling and said the committee should also consider the economic status of the parties.

### **Political candidates cannot be disqualified on basis of criminal charges:**

#### **Supreme Court**

- The Supreme Court ruled on September 25, 2018 that candidates cannot be disqualified from contesting elections merely because charges have been framed against them in a criminal case.
- The ruling was delivered by a five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court, which was chaired by Chief Justice Dipak Misra and comprised Justices RF Nariman, AM Khanwilkar, DY Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra.
- The judgment came on a batch of petitions filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, former Chief Election Commissioner JM Lyngdoh and NGO Public Interest Foundation.

#### The Judgement: Key Highlights :

- The constitution bench held that candidates cannot be disqualified merely because charges have been framed against them in a criminal case.
- The bench also directed the legislature to consider framing a law to ensure decriminalisation of politics.

### **SECTION 498A**

- Taking note of the 'misuse' of Section 498A, the Supreme Court has said that the accused can now seek anticipatory bail.

#### Latest verdict:

- The apex court, while modifying the verdict given by its two-judge bench, said that there is no scope for courts for constitutionally filling up gaps in penal law. The earlier order had provisions for setting up of a committee to deal with complaints of dowry harassment.
- Erasing role of NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) and NGOs, the apex court said courts are there to protect harassed husbands and their relatives, who are not remotely connected to matrimonial cruelty, by granting them anticipatory bail.

**Background:**

- A batch of pleas were filed in the Supreme Court seeking revisiting of a judgement that had reduced the severity of the anti-dowry law on the offence of subjecting a married woman to cruelty by spouse and in-laws.
- A two-judge bench of the apex court in July last year had voiced concern over “abuse” of section 498 A (subjecting a married woman to cruelty) and passed a slew of directions, including that no arrest should “normally be effected” without verifying allegations as violation of human rights of innocents could not be brushed aside.

**Section 498A:**

- Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code deals with husband or relatives of husbands subjecting a woman to cruelty.
- Punishment under the Section is a maximum of three years and was so far a non-bailable offence.

**What necessitated the court’s intervention?**

- The anti-dowry law was enacted with the laudable object of punishing cruelty at the hands of husband or his relatives – particularly when such cruelty drives the wife to suicide.
- However, complaints are mounting up over the years alleging misuse of the anti-dowry harassment law – framed in 1983 following a spate of dowry-related deaths – by disgruntled wives. The law is also being misused.
- A growing trend is being observed among women involved in marital discord to abuse Section 498A of IPC to rope in their husbands’ relatives — including parents, minor children, siblings and grandparents — in criminal cases. Therefore, it is high time such frivolous cases which violate the human rights of innocent is checked.

**Significance of this move:**

- This is a shift from the dominant judicial conception of women as victims who would silently suffer injustice rather than bring disrepute to their family by taking domestic conflict outside the four walls of the home.
- Going by the popular portrait, it is only the worst victim of abuse among women who approach the court for redress.
- With its latest observations, the court broke away from the reigning perception to rule that in dowry cases, the account of the alleged victim need not be taken at face value.

**Way ahead:**

- Though Section 498A of the IPC was enacted to protect women from cruelty in matrimonial homes, its misuse to harass the other side too is causing social unrest.
- There should be gender justice for women as dowry has a chilling effect on marriage on the one hand. On the other hand, there is right to life and personal liberty of the man.

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**GOVERNMENT SCHEMES****PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY)**

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) recently marked the anniversary of the launch of scheme as Matru Vandana Saptah.

- National level achievement of the scheme post an year's implementation on grounds is 48.11 Lakhs of women enrollment under the scheme till September 13, 2018, out of which 37.30 Lakhs have been paid the maternity benefit which accounts to a total fund disbursement of Rs1168.63 Crores.

#### About PMMVY:

- Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.
- The scheme is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first live birth.
- It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.
- **Exceptions:** The maternity benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force
- **Funding:** The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40 while for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10. It is 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

#### Need for special attention:

- Under-nutrition continues to adversely affect majority of women in India. In India, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are largely irreversible.
- Owing to economic and social distress many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy. Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from fully recovering on one hand, and also impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed their young infant in the first six months.

#### **PRADHAN MANTRI ANNADATA AAY SANRAKSHAN ABHIYAN (PM-AASHA)**

- Giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives of the Government and in keeping with its commitment and dedication for the Annadata, the Union Cabinet has approved a new Umbrella Scheme "Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA).
- The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.

#### The umbrella scheme 'PM-AASHA' comprises three sub-schemes:

- Price Support Scheme (PSS).
- Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS).
- Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).

**Price Support Scheme (PSS):**

- Under the scheme, the physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with the proactive role of the state governments.
- Further, in addition to NAFED, the Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will take up PSS operations in states and districts.
- The procurement expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by the Union Government as per norms.

**Price Deficiency Payment Scheme this scheme (PDPS):**

- Under the scheme, it is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which minimum support price (MSP) is notified.
- In this, direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling/modal price will be made to pre-registered farmers selling his produce in the notified market yard through a transparent auction process. All payments will be done directly into the registered bank account of the farmer.
- This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops as farmers are paid the difference between the MSP price and sale or modal price on disposal in the notified market. The support of the central government for PDPS will be given as per norms.

**Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS):**

- For oilseeds, the states will have the option to roll out Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) on pilot basis in selected districts and Agricultural Produce Market Committee's (APMC) of district involving the participation of private stockiest.
- The pilot district and selected APMC(s) will cover one or more crop of oilseeds for which MSP is notified.
- Since this is similar to the PSS scheme, as it involves physical procurement of the notified commodity, the scheme shall substitute PSS/PDPS in the pilot districts.
- The selected private agency shall procure the commodity at MSP in the notified markets during the notified period from the registered farmers in accordance with the PPSS Guidelines, whenever the prices in the market fall below the notified MSP and whenever authorised by the state or UT government to enter the market. The maximum service charges up to 15% of the notified MSP will be payable.

**Background:**

- Increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get the full benefit of the announced MSP.
- For the same, it is essential that if the price of the agriculture produce market is less than MSP, then in that case state governments and the central government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP for the farmers through some other mechanism.

**ATAL PENSON YOGANA: Government extends Atal Pension Yojana indefinitely**

- Union Cabinet decided to indefinitely extended Atal Pension Scheme, which had lapsed in August 2018.
- It also has broadened its scope by keeping it open-ended. The extension was given by taking into consideration of mass participation.



**New changes:**

- To further incentivize people's participation in the scheme, age criterion for participation has been revised. Earlier, people of age 18 to 60 years were entitled to enroll in this scheme. But now it has been relaxed further to 65 years, taking into consideration rise in average age-expectancy,
- Also, now the scheme will expand its focus to target individuals, instead of households. Besides, all accounts opened after August 2018 will have accident insurance limit of Rs 2 lakh, double than earlier Rs 1 lakh limit. The overdraft facility of the scheme has also been increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

**Atal Pension Yojna (APY):**

- Under the APY, subscribers would receive a fixed minimum pension of Rs. 1000 per month, Rs. 2000 per month, Rs. 3000 per month, Rs. 4000 per month, Rs. 5000 per month, at the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions, which itself would vary on the age of joining the APY.
- The Central Government would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber account, for a period of 5 years, that is, from 2015-16 to 2019-20, to those who join the NPS before 31st December, 2015 and who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and who are not Income Tax payers.
- The minimum age of joining APY is 18 years and maximum age is 40 years. The benefit of fixed minimum pension would be guaranteed by the Government.

**National Nutrition Month being celebrated to mark fight against malnutrition**

- The National Nutrition Month (Rashtriya Poshan Maah) is being celebrated across the country in September 2018 to mark fight against malnutrition.
- Union Ministry of Women and Child Development are spearheading various programmes during this month to spread broad awareness on issues related to malnutrition like stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight in children.

**Salient features :**

- The National Nutrition Month will also focus on adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers to eliminate the deficiencies prevailing in the Health sector.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development is working on eight focused themes like optimal breast feeding, growth monitoring, food fortification and girls' education, hygiene and sanitation, diet and marriage at right age etc. to achieve improvement in nutritional status of children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- It is also trying to reach about 11 crore women and children during this month through various grass-root activities, with the convergence of different ministries.

**Background:**

- The decision to celebrate September as the National Nutrition Month every year was taken during the second meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under Poshan Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) held in July 2018.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan- the National Nutrition Mission was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2018 in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan with aim to bring down stunting of children in age group of 0-6 years from 38% to 25% by 2022.

## **Neta App launched to rate and review elected representatives**

- Former President Pranab Mukherjee launched National Electoral Transformation (NETA) mobile application that allows voters to rate and review their political representatives.
- The app is brainchild of 27-year-old entrepreneur Pratham Mittal. It is first of its kind platform in India that allows voters to rate and review the political representatives in their constituencies.

### NETA app:

- The app aims to foster political accountability and transparency among leaders. It is inspired by US' approval system.
- Using it, voters can review and can review and rate their elected representatives (MLAs, MPs and ministers) and hold them accountable as well.
- It will also help to determine popularity of politicians and electoral candidates, using public polls.
- This app is also seen as instrument to gauge voter sentiment across constituencies in the country. It uses multiple mediums like the app, IVR calls, SMS and even offline activations with help of Aashawadi and Aanganwadi workers to gather data on evolving political inclinations.
- The app is available on Android and iOS and web in 16 languages to cater to a diverse user profile. It uses combination of Artificial Intelligence (AI, one-time password (OTP) and Aadhaar numbers to ensure that voters who rate leaders are genuine.
- This app was piloted during February 2018 bypolls in Rajasthan's Ajmer and Alwar constituencies. It was later used in Karnataka ahead of the assembly elections in May 2018.
- The app in its beta version has already seen over 1.5 crore voters rating and reviewing their local leaders.

## **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana: PM launches world's largest healthcare scheme**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched ambitious Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), under Ayushman Bharat umbrella at Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- The scheme aims to provide annual health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to 10.74 crore beneficiary families i.e. over 50 crore beneficiaries across India.
- It is touted as world's largest healthcare scheme that will serve beneficiary population that equals 27-28 European countries and almost equal to population of Canada, Mexico and US put together.
- The scheme will become operational from September 25, 2018 i.e. on birth anniversary of Deendayal Upadhyay.

### Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):

- PMJAY is government-sponsored health insurance scheme, that will provide free coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India.
- It will cover beneficiaries families identified on the basis of Socio Economic Caste Survey (SECC) 2011 in 444 districts of 30 states/Union Territories. Note: Telangana, Odisha, Kerala,

Punjab and Delhi (UT) are the states which have still not signed MoUs for joining this schemes.

- National Health Agency (NHA) is the apex body for implementing this scheme. States will be required to form State Health Agency (SHA) to implement scheme and at the district level also structure for its implementation will be set up.
- Around 13000 hospitals both public and private in the country have been coordinated for implementation of the scheme.
- PMJAY will be funded with 60% contribution from Centre and remaining from the states. NITI Aayog will be working as partner for this scheme for operationalizing robust, modular and interoperable IT platform which will involve a paperless and cashless transaction.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **CJI Dipak Misra recommends Justice Ranjan Gogoi as his successor**

- Chief Justice of India, Dipak Misra on September 4, 2018 recommended the name of Justice Ranjan Gogoi as the next Chief Justice of India.
- This recommendation will now be processed and forwarded to the President who will issue the warrant of appointment.
- CJI Misra retires on October 2, 2018. He was sworn in as the **45th** Chief Justice of India (CJI) on August 28, 2017.
- Once Gogoi's appointment is confirmed, he will become the first Supreme Court judge from the north-east to be appointed as Chief Justice of India. He will assume the office of the Chief Justice of India on October 3, 2018 and will have tenure of 13 months till November 17, 2019.
- Justice Gogoi is the second most senior judge of the Supreme Court.

### **Justice Ranjan Gogoi :**

- Son of former Assam Chief Minister, late Keshab Chandra Gogoi, Justice Gogoi joined the Bar in 1978.
- He practiced mainly in the Gauhati High Court where he was appointed as Permanent Judge in February 2001.
- He was transferred to Punjab & Haryana High Court on September 9, 2010 and was elevated as Chief Justice of the High Court on February 12, 2011.
- He was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court on April 23, 2012.
- Justice Gogoi headed the bench that directed the government to set up special courts to fast track cases against politicians.
- Another bench headed by him is currently monitoring the case of Assam's National Register of Citizens that intends to identify illegal migrants in the state.
- He was appointed as permanent judge of High Court in February 2001. He was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court in September 2010 and was appointed its Chief Justice in February 2011. He was elevated to the Supreme Court in April 2012.

- In Supreme Court, Justice Gogoi had led important benches that have dealt largely with issue of corruption in politics and public life. He has led apex court bench which ordered Centre to set up special courts to exclusively try MPs and MLAs as means to de-criminalise politics.
- His Bench is also monitoring progress made by government in appointment of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal.

#### Comment:

- Justice Ranjan Gogoi gained limelight recently after he addressed a press conference on January 12, 2018 along with his three colleagues — Justices J Chelameswar (since retired), Madan B Lokur and Kurian Joseph.
- These four judges had complained about the selective allocation of cases to preferred benches by the CJI. They had also claimed that the "senior-most judges" were ignored when cases were allocated.
- Following the press conference, there were speculations that whether Justice Gogoi's name would be recommended for the CJI's post. However, Justice Misra wiped-off all those speculations by adhering to the tradition of recommending the senior-most judge after him for the apex office.

### **Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas appointed Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission**

- Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has appointed renowned scientist Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas as chairman of Atomic Energy Commission and secretary of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- He will have tenure till he attains the age of 64 years, i.e. till May 2021. He will succeed Shekhar Basu.
- Basu was appointed to the post in October 2015 and his tenure was to end in September 2016. However, he was given two extension of one year each one in 2016 and another in 2017 till September 2018.

#### Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas:

- Vyas at present is Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). He is Mechanical Engineering graduate from MS University, Vadodara.
- After completion of training in BARC training school in 1979, he had joined Fuel Design and Development Section of Reactor Engineering Division of BARC.
- He has worked for design and analysis of nuclear reactor fuels. He was also responsible for design and development of a novel fuel for strategic applications.
- He has worked extensively in thermal hydraulics and stress analysis of critical reactor core components.
- He has been conferred several awards including Indian Nuclear Society Outstanding Service Award 2011, Homi Bhabha Science and Technology Award 2006, DAE Awards in years 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2013. He is also Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineers.

#### Atomic Energy Commission (AEC):

- AEC is the governing body of the DAE which is under the direct charge of Prime Minister. It was established in 1948 to look after atomic energy activities in the country.

- Its functions are to organize research in atomic scientists in India, train atomic scientists in the country, promote nuclear research in commission's own laboratories and undertake prospecting of atomic minerals and extract such minerals for use on industrial scale.

## ECONOMICS AND HRD

### **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX:**

#### Why in news?

#### United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.
- India's ranking in UN's Human Development Index (HDI) went up by one from last year, to **130<sup>th</sup> among 189 countries**, released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

#### Facts on Index :

- Within South Asia, India's HDI value is above the **average of 0.638 for the region**, with Bangladesh and Pakistan, countries with similar population size, being ranked 136 and 150, respectively.
- Between 1990 and 2017, **India's HDI** value increased from **0.427 to 0.640**, an increase of nearly 50 per cent and an indicator of the country's remarkable achievement in lifting millions of people out of poverty putting the country in **the medium human development category**.
- India's **life expectancy** increased from **57.9(1990) to 68.8(2017)**.
- India's **per capita income** in PPP terms saw an increase of a 267% from **\$1,733 to \$6,353** between 1990 and 2017.
- **Expected years of schooling** went up from **7.6 years (1990) to 12.3 years (2017)**.
- Development hasn't been spread evenly, with India's **income inequality the highest at 18.8%** – compared to 15.7% for Bangladesh and 11.6% for Pakistan. In fact, when corrected for inequality India's HDI value falls by 26.8% to 0.468.

#### Outcome for India

- Most of **the** improvements have flowed to the top of the social pyramid while those at the base have only just been lifted out of poverty.
- Middle class hasn't grown as much as it should have, while small and medium enterprises have failed to transfer the agrarian workforce to manufacturing.
- Inequality remains a challenge for India as it progresses economically, though the Government of India and various state governments have, through a variety of social protection measures, attempted to ensure that the gains of economic development are shared widely and reach the farthest first.
- In India, women remain significantly less politically, economically and socially empowered than men. For instance, women hold only 11.6 percent of parliamentary seats, and only 39 percent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education as compared to 64 percent males.
- Female participation in the labour market is 27.2 percent compared to 78.8 percent for men.
- Deteriorating air quality in major Indian cities and its impacts on human health are also worrying. India also has one of the largest number of people in the world living on degraded land.

## GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX:

- This is according to The Global Liveability Index 2018, an annual report by The Economist Intelligence Unit released August 14.
- Out of 140 cities around the world determined the most livable, not one American city made the top 20. Honolulu, Hawaii came closest, ranked no. 23 globally.
- **Vienna, Austria** is ranked the No. 1 most liveable city in the world. This is the first time the city ranked as the most livable on the list, displacing Melbourne, Australia which had a record seven-year winning streak. Melbourne is now ranked second.
- For its methodology on ranking the cities, The EIU assessed which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions.
- Every city is assigned a rating of relative comfort for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability (looking at things like crime, conflict and terrorism), healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.
- Cities in the U.S. aren't as "liveable" as those in Australia, Japan and Canada.

### Ranking Indicators:

- For its methodology on ranking the cities, The EIU assessed which locations around the world provide the best or the worst living conditions. Every city is assigned a rating of relative comfort for over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability (looking at things like crime, conflict and terrorism), healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.
- Vienna and Melbourne scored maximum points of 100 in the healthcare, education and infrastructure categories, though Vienna edged forward in the stability category with 100 points (Melbourne ranked 95). In the culture and environment category, Vienna scored 96.3. The city's overall score was 99.1. Melbourne scored 98.4.
- Canada and Australia both have three cities in the top 10: Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto, Canada and Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide, Australia.

### **Top 10 most liveable cities in the world: The Global Liveability Index:**

1. Vienna, Austria (99.1)	6. Vancouver, Canada (97.3)
2. Melbourne, Australia (98.4)	7. Toronto, Canada(97.2)
3. Osaka, Japan (97.7)	8. Tokyo, Japan(96.8)
4. Calgary, Canada (97.5)	9. Copenhagen, Denmark(96.36)

5. Sydney, Australia (97.4)	10. Adelaide, Australia(96.6)
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### **Mauritius remains top source of FDI into India in 2017-18: RBI**

- According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, Mauritius was top source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India in 2017-18 followed by Singapore. The total FDI in FY 18 stood at \$37.36 billion in financial year which was marginal rise over \$36.31 billion recorded in the previous fiscal 2016-17.

#### Salient features :

- FDI from Mauritius was \$13.41 billion in 2017-18 as against \$13.38 billion in previous year. FDI inflows from Singapore rose to \$9.27 billion from \$6.52 billion.
- FDI from Netherlands has declined marginally to \$2.67 billion as against \$3.23 billion. FDI into manufacturing sector had witnessed substantial decline to \$7.06 billion, as against \$11.97 billion a year earlier.
- FDI into communication services had rose to \$8.8 billion in 2017-18 from \$5.8 billion. The inflows into retail and wholesale trade increased to \$4.47 billion as against \$2.77 billion.
- FDI in financial services too saw rise to \$4.07 billion from \$3.73 billion in the previous year.
- These sectors accounted for more than 50% of total FDI of \$37.36 billion in 2017-18 reflects global interest in new areas, including online marketplaces and financial technologies.

### **Govt proposes to merge Dena Bank, Vijaya Bank and Bank of Baroda**

- The Centre has proposed the amalgamation of state-owned Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank to create India's third largest bank as parts of reforms in the public sector banking segment.
- The proposal will now need the approval of the boards of these individual banks. The banks' boards will shortly meet and take up the decision.

#### Background:

- The merger of these three state-owned banks is a part of the government's agenda of consolidation of public sector banks. The consolidation was proposed by the Alternative Mechanism.
- The Union Cabinet in August 2017 approved amalgamation of Public Sector Banks through Alternative Mechanism (AM) with an aim to facilitate consolidation among the Nationalised Banks to create strong and competitive banks.

#### Why merger is good?

- The merger benefits include getting economies of scale and reduction in the cost of doing business.
- Technical inefficiency is one of the main factors responsible for banking crisis. The scale of inefficiency is more in case of small banks. Hence, merger would be good.
- Mergers help small banks to gear up to international standards with innovative products and services with the accepted level of efficiency.
- Mergers help many PSBs, which are geographically concentrated, to expand their coverage beyond their outreach.
- A better and optimum size of the organization would help PSBs offer more and more products and services and help in integrated growth of the sector.

- The size of each business entity after merger is expected to add strength to the Indian Banking System in general and Public Sector Banks in particular.
- This will also end the unhealthy and intense competition going on even among public sector banks as of now. In the global market, the Indian banks will gain greater recognition and higher rating.
- The volume of inter-bank transactions will come down, resulting in saving of considerable time in clearing and reconciliation of accounts.
- The burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially. This will also help in meeting more stringent norms under BASEL III, especially capital adequacy ratio.
- A great number of posts of CMD, ED, GM and Zonal Managers will be abolished, resulting in savings of crores of Rupee. This will also reduce unnecessary interference by board members in day to day affairs of the banks.
- After mergers, bargaining strength of bank staff will become more and visible. Bank staff may look forward to better wages and service conditions in future. The wide disparities between the staff of various banks in their service conditions and monetary benefits will narrow down.
- Customers will have access to fewer banks offering them wider range of products at a lower cost. From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers. This is at the macro level.

#### Concerns associated with merger:

- Immediate negative impact would be from pension liability provisions (due to different employee benefit structures) and harmonisation of accounting policies for bad loans recognition.
- There are many problems to adjust top leadership in institutions and the unions.
- Mergers will result in shifting/closure of many ATMs, Branches and controlling offices, as it is not prudent and economical to keep so many banks concentrated in several pockets, notably in urban and metropolitan centres.
- Mergers will result in immediate job losses on account of large number of people taking VRS on one side and slow down or stoppage of further recruitment on the other. This will worsen the unemployment situation further and may create law and order problems and social disturbances.
- The weaknesses of the small banks may get transferred to the bigger bank also. New power centres will emerge in the changed environment. Mergers will result in clash of different organizational cultures. Conflicts will arise in the area of systems and processes too.
- When a big bank books huge loss or crumbles, there will be a big jolt in the entire banking industry. Its repercussions will be felt everywhere.
- Also, India right now needs more banking competition rather than more banking consolidation. In other words, it needs more banks rather than fewer banks.
- This does not mean that there should be a fetish about small-scale lending operations, but to know that large banks are not necessarily better banks.

#### Way ahead:

- Merger is a good idea. However, this should be carried out with right banks for the right reasons.
- Merger is also tricky given the huge challenges banks face, including the bad loan problem that has plunged many public sector banks in an unprecedented crisis.



- Since mergers are also about people, a huge amount of planning would be required to make the consolidation process smoother.
- Piecemeal consolidation will not provide a lasting solution and what is required is an integrated approach from all stakeholders including the government.

## SPORTS AND AWARDS

### **NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS**

- National Sports Awards 2018 have been announced.

#### Salient features :

- National Sports Awards are given every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports.
- Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award is given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sports person over a period of four years.
- Arjuna Award is given for consistency outstanding performance for four years.
- Dronacharya Award for coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious International sports events.
- Dhyan Chand Award for life time contribution to sports development.
- Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar is given to the corporate entities (both in private and public sector) and individuals who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.
- MAKA Trophy: Overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments is given Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy.

### **National Sports Awards 2018 announced; Mirabai Chanu, Virat Kohli to get Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna**

- The National Sports Awards 2018 were announced by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports on September 20, 2018.
- Cricket captain Virat Kohli and world champion weightlifter Mirabai Chanu will jointly be conferred with Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award 2018, India's highest sporting honour.
- This year, the Ministry received a large number of nominations for these awards. The nominations were considered by the Selection Committees consisting of a former Olympian, Arjuna Awardees, Dronacharya Awardees, Dhyan Chand Awardees, Sport Journalists, Experts and sports administrators.
- The Selection Committee for Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award and Arjuna Awards was headed by Justice Indermeet Kaur Kochhar (Former Judge of High Court of Delhi High Court).
- The Selection Committee for Dronacharya Awards and Dhyan Chand Awards was headed by Justice Mukul Mudgal (Former Chief Justice of High Court of Punjab and Haryana).
- The Selection Committee for Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar was headed by Rahul Bhatnagar, Secretary (Sports).
- The Selection Committee for MAKA Trophy was headed by Ashok Kumar, former Olympian.

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna 2018 recipients

S. No.	Name of the Sports person	Discipline
1.	S. Mirabai Chanu	Weightlifting
2.	Virat Kohli	Cricket

- The Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna is the highest sporting honour of India.
- The award is named after Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India who served the office from 1984 to 1989.
- The recipient(s) is/are selected by a committee constituted by the Ministry and is honoured for their "spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports over a period of four years" at international level.
- The award comprises a medallion, a citation, and a cash prize of Rupees 7.5 lakh.

Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna 2018:

- It is India's highest sporting award given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sports person over a period of four years.
- **Recipients are:** S. Mirabai Chanu (Weightlifting) and Virat Kohli (Cricket).

Dronacharya Awards 2018:

- It is bestowed upon coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious international sports events.
- **Recipients are:** Chenanda Acharya (Boxing), Vijay Sharma (Weightlifting), A. Srinivasa Rao (Table Tennis), Sukhdev Singh Pannu (Athletics), Clarence Lobo (Hockey-Life Time), Tarak Sinha (Cricket-Life Time), Jiwan Kumar Sharma (Judo-Life Time), V.R. Beedu (Athletics -Life Time).

Arjuna Award 2018:

- It is India's second highest sporting award bestowed upon sports person for consistently outstanding performance for four years.
- **Recipients are:** Neeraj Chopra (Athletics), Jinson Johnson (Athletics), Hima Das (Athletics), Nelakurthi Sikki Reddy (Badminton), Satish Kumar (Boxing), Smriti Mandhana (Cricket), Shubhankar Sharma (Golf), Manpreet Singh (Hockey), Savita (Hockey), Ravi Rathore (Polo), Rahi Sarnobat (Shooting), Ankur Mittal (Shooting), Shreyasi Singh (Shooting), Manika Batra (Table Tennis), G. Sathyan (Table Tennis), Rohan Bopanna (Tennis), Sumit (Wrestling), Pooja Kadian (Wushu), Ankur Dhama (Para-Athletics) and Manoj Sarkar (Para-Badminton).

Dhyan Chand Award 2018:

- It is bestowed upon sports persons for life time contribution to sports development.
- **Recipients are:** Satyadev Prasad (Archery), Bharat Kumar Chetri (Hockey), Bobby Aloysius (Athletics), Chougale Dadu Dattatray (Wrestling).

## Village Rockstars is India's official entry to Oscars 2019

- Village Rockstars, an Assamese language feature film by National Award-winning filmmaker Rima Das, was on September 22, 2018 selected as India's official entry for the Best Foreign Language Film category of the 2019 Academy (Oscar) Awards.
- The announcement was made by SV Rajendra Singh Babu, Chairman of the Selection Committee for Oscar Award, FFI.
- The movie's entry to Oscars 2019 is commendable as it had to compete with **27 other contenders** including Hichki, Padmaavat, Raazi, Love Sonia, Nude, Pihu, Manto, October, Tumbaad, Halkaa, Kadvi Hawa and Padman.
- Rima Das acts as a **one-woman army for the film**; she is the writer, director, cinematographer, editor and the producer of the film. She took over 3 years to script Village Rockstars, which was then shot over a period of 130 days.

### Village Rockstars and its journey to over 70 film festivals:

- Village rockstars tells the story of 10 year old Dhanu, a young girl from a remote village in assam, who dreams of owning a guitar and forming a rock band despite the awful financial situation at home.
- The film was shot in director Das's native village of Chhaygoan, and most of the cast members are non-actors from the village, including the leading actor Dhanu which is played by Das's niece Bhantia Das.
- Village Rockstar is scheduled for a pan-india release on sept 28, 2018.
- The movie had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2017.
- The film has travelled to more than 70 film festivals around the world.
- At the 65<sup>th</sup> National film Awards earlier in 2018, the movie won four awards for Best Feature, best editing, best location sound recordist and best child artist.

### India's Oscar nominations:

- Oscar nominations are usually announced in the month of January every year. In 2017, Amit Masurkar's Newton was India's official entry but failed to make it to the final nomination list.
- The only three Indian films that have made it to the top five nominees for Best Foreign Language Film are Mehboob Khan's Mother India (1957), Mira Nair's Salaam Bombay! (1988); and Ashutosh Gowariker's Lagaan (2001).

## Dr B.K. Misra named for 2018 Dr B.C. Roy National Award as eminent medical person of the year

- Mumbai-based eminent neurosurgeon Dr B.K. Misra was named for prestigious Dr B.C. Roy National Award for year 2018 as Eminent Medical Person of the Year. It is highest medical honour of India and will be bestowed upon him by President Ram Nath Kovind in July 1, 2019 on the occasion of National Doctors Day.

### Dr B.K. Misra:

- Misra is the Head of Department of Surgery as well as Neurosurgery and Gamma Knife Radiosurgery at Mumbai's P.D. Hinduja Hospital.
- During his medical career, he has several firsts to his credit, including image guided aneurysm microsurgery, first doctor in South Asia to perform gamma knife radiosurgery and first in country to perform awake craniotomy for brain tumours.

#### B C Roy Award

- BC Roy Award is the highest recognition for medical practitioners in India. It was instituted by Medical Council of India (MCI) in 1976 in memory of renowned physician and former West Bengal Chief Minister Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy.
- The award is bestowed annually six categories viz. statesmanship of the Highest Order in India, eminent medical person, medical man-cum-statesman, eminent person in philosophy, eminent person in arts and eminent person in Science.

#### Bidhan Roy

- Bidhan Roy was was physician, educationist, philanthropist, freedom fighter and politician. He had served as the Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1948 until his death in 1962.
- He is often considered founder of modern West Bengal due to his key role in founding of several institutions and five eminent cities, Durgapur, Kalyani, Bidhannagar, Ashokenagar and Habra in West Bengal.
- He is one of the few people in history to have obtained F.R.C.S. and M.R.C.P. degrees (they are higher medical degrees) simultaneously.
- National Doctors' Day is celebrated in his memory every year on July 1 in India. He was awarded India's highest civilian honour Bharat Ratna in February 1961.
- He was also the member of the Brahmo Samaj founded by social reformist Raja Ram Mohun Roy.

#### **18th Asian Games concludes in Indonesia**

- 18th Asian Games concluded in Indonesia. This edition of pan-continental mega sporting was held from August 18 to September 2, 2018 in two cities – Jakarta (capital of Indonesia) and Palembang (capital of Indonesia's province of South Sumatra).
- This was second time Asian Games history, Indonesia had hosted it after first time in 1962 in Jakarta. Indian women hockey captain Rani Rampal was India's flag-bearer at closing ceremony.

#### Salient features :

- 18th Asian Games saw participation of around 11,000 athletes from 45 countries from across Asian continent, who competed in 40 sports, 67 disciplines, 4 new Olympic sports and 8 non-Olympic sports.
- It also first time hosted eSports (form of competition using video games) and canoe polo as demonstration sports.
- In this edition Asian Games, China has topped medals tally with 132 gold, 92 silver and 65 bronze followed by Japan and South Korea.
- India finished 8th with 15 gold, 24 silver and 30 bronze. The next Asian Games (19th edition) are scheduled to Hangzhou, China between 10 and 25 September 2022.

#### Mascots:

- Trio of Bhin Bhin (bird of paradise), Kaka (one horned rhino) and Atung (deer) are mascots of 2018 Asian Games.
- These three represent east, west and centre of country and they have dress traditional to each locality.

India's performance:

- It was India's best performance in the Asian Games till now. India finished at **eight position** both in terms of gold medals and total tally.
- India's medal tally is its highest ever, as it won four more medals than in 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. In terms of gold medal tally, India matched its best performance at the inaugural 1951 Games in New Delhi.
- In 2018 Asia Games, track and field events remained most productive discipline for India as it won in seven events. Indian athletes had claimed two gold medals in shooting and wrestling and one each in boxing, bridge, rowing and tennis.

Asian Games:

- It is pan-continental multi-sporting event held every four years between athletes from all over Asia. It is also known as Asiad.
- It is second largest multi-sport event after Olympic Games. It is organised by Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) since 1982, prior to that, it was regulated by Asian Games Federation (AGF).
- The first Asian Games were held in New Delhi, India in 1951. Since then overall, nine nations have hosted it and forty-six nations have participated in it, including Israel (now excluded from it after its last participation in 1974).
- The 17th edition of games was hosted by Incheon, South Korea from in 2014. India had hosted Asian Games two times in 1951 (inaugural) and 1982, both in New Delhi.

Asian Games 2018 medals tally and standings:

<u>SR NO</u>	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>GOLD</u>	<u>SILVER</u>	<u>BRONZE</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1	China	132	92	65	289
2	Japan	75	56	74	205
3	Republic of Korea	49	58	70	177
4	Indonesia	31	24	43	98
5	Uzbekistan	21	24	25	70
6	IR Iran	20	20	22	62
7	Chinese Taipei	17	19	31	67
8	India	15	24	30	69
9	Kazakhstan	15	17	44	76
10	DPR Korea	12	12	13	37

**2018 US Open: Novak Djokovic wins men's singles title**

- Former world number one Novak Djokovic from Serbia won 2018 US Open title of tennis in men's singles category by defeating Argentina's Juan Martín del Potro (world no 3).
- It was Djokovic's third US Open title and overall 14th Grand Slam title. With this win, he equalled Pete Sampras' haul of 14 Grand Slams. Further, he became seventh man to win US Open singles title at least thrice in the Open Era.

#### 2018 US Open Winners:

- Women's singles title: It was won by Japan's Naomi Osaka by defeating Serena Williams of US by score of 6-2, 6-4 in the finals.
- Men's Double title: It was won by US pair of Mike Bryan and Jack Sock. They defeated Łukasz Kubot (Poland) and Marcelo Melo (Brazil) by 6-3, 6-1 score.
- Women's Doubles title: It was won by Ashleigh Barty (Australia) and CoCo Vandeweghe (US). They defeated Tímea Babos (Hungary) and Kristina Mladenovic (France) pair by 3-6, 7-6(7-2), 7-6(8-6).
- Mixed Doubles title: It was won by Jamie Murray (UK) and Bethanie Mattek-Sands (US). They defeated Alicja Rosolska (Poland) and Nikola Mektić (Croatia) pair by 2-6, 6-3, [11-9] score.

#### 2018 US Open:

- It was the 138th edition of tennis' US Open held on outdoor hard courts at USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City.
- It was fourth and final Grand Slam event of the year.
- Rafael Nadal and Sloane Stephens were defending champions in the men's and women's singles events, but they were unsuccessful to defend their titles in this edition of tournament.

### **Justice Mukul Mudgal to head Selection Committee to pick up Dronacharya and Dhyanchand Awardees**

- Justice Mukul Mudgal was named Chairman of 11-member selection committee to pick this year's Dronacharya and Dhyanchand awardees given as part of National Sports Awards ceremony.
- These awards will be presented at National Sports Awards ceremony scheduled to be held on September 25, 2018.
- Dhyanchand award is bestowed on sportspersons for their lifetime achievements and contribution to sport during both their active career and after retirement.
- Dronacharya award is presented to coaches for their outstanding and meritorious work on consistent basis over period of four years.
- **Other members of selection committee are:** former Commonwealth Games gold medalist Samresh Jung, Indian badminton ace Ashwini Ponnappa, former national boxing coach G S Sandhu, hockey coach AK Bansal and archery coach Sanjeeva Singh apart from Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Special Director General Onkar Kedia, Joint Secretary (Sports) Inder Dhamija, two sports journalists and Target Olympic Podium Scheme CEO Commander Rajesh Rajagopalan.

#### Background:

- National Sports Awards ceremony is held every year on August 29 to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyanchand.
- But this year it will be organised on September 25, 2018. The change of schedule was done because of clash of dates with 2018 Asian Games, which concluded on September 2, 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Justice Mukul Mudgal:

- Justice Mudgal is retired Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court. Previously he was appointed by Supreme Court to probe into 2013 IPL spot-fixing scandal, involving three players from Rajasthan Royals.
- Currently, he is deputy chairman of FIFA Governance Committee and Review Committee. Mukul Mudgal, is also popular name among cricketing circles, as he is regarded as pioneer behind reviving Test cricket in India. He also had devised new procedures on how to get crowds into cricket stadiums.

**INSV Tarini crew bestowed with Tenzing Norgay Award**

- All-women crew of INSV Tarini has bagged the prestigious Tenzing Norgay National Adventure award for beating the odds in water with their enduring skills and sailing across the world for eight long months.
- The award is the highest national recognition for outstanding achievements in the field of adventure on land, sea and air.
- The women Navy officers had spent as many as 194 days at sea as part of a mission under the Navika Sagar parikrama project that began in September last year. The crew was also bestowed with Nav Sena Medal on the occasion of 72nd Independence Day.
- The team had arrived in Panaji, Goa on May 21 after successfully circumnavigating the globe for eight months. They also set a record by becoming the first-ever all-women crew to complete circumnavigation. Their expedition was covered in five legs, with stopovers at four ports - Fremantle in Australia, Lyttelton in New Zealand, Port Stanley in Falklands and Cape Town in South Africa .
- The INSV Tarini team, led by Lt. Commander Vartika Joshi, is comprised Lieutenant P. Swathi, Lieutenant Pratibha Jamwal (Air Traffic Control specialists) Lieutenant, Vijaya Devi, Sub Lieutenant Payal Gupta (both Education officers) and Lieutenant B Aishwarya, a naval architect .

**FIRST IN WORLD, INDIA AND MAHARASHTRA****WORLD'S FIRST HYDROGEN FUEL CELL TRAIN**

- Germany has rolled out world's first hydrogen fuel cell powered trains called **Coradia iLint**.

About the Train :

- It was manufactured by Alstom, Europe's largest railway manufacturers, signalling the start of a push to challenge the might of polluting diesel trains with costlier but eco-friendly technology.
- Coradia iLint is world's first noise free, zero emissions trains running at 140km/hr and covering 1000 km on a full tank of hydrogen with seating capacity of 150 passengers.
- The train will be refuelled from a 40 foot high mobile hydrogen steel container.
- Its running cost is cheaper than the diesel trains.

About Hydrogen fuel cell :

- It is a fuel cell that combines hydrogen and oxygen to produce electricity with water and steam as the only byproducts.

- Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity through a combination of hydrogen and oxygen, a process that leaves steam and water as the only emissions.
- The excess energy can be stored on board in ion lithium batteries.
- It is a climate friendly fuel as it does not emit carbon dioxide or particulate matter as the case with conventional fuels like diesel, coal etc.

#### How the hydrogen fuel cell works?

- A fuel cell is composed of an anode, a cathode, and an electrolyte membrane.
- A fuel cell works by passing hydrogen through the anode of a fuel cell and oxygen through the cathode.
- At the anode, the hydrogen molecules are split into electrons and protons.
- The protons pass through the electrolyte membrane, while the electrons are forced through a circuit, generating an electric current and excess heat.
- At the cathode, the protons, electrons, and oxygen combine to produce water molecules.
- Unlike traditional combustion technologies that burn fuel, fuel cells undergo a chemical process to convert hydrogen-rich fuel into electricity.
- Fuel cells do not need to be periodically recharged like batteries, but instead continue to produce electricity as long as a fuel source is provided.

#### Way forward :

- Currently, the cheapest way to produce hydrogen is by burning natural gas at high temperature which emits carbon dioxide thus defeating the very purpose of using hydrogen fuel trains.
- The technology based renewable energy production of hydrogen from the water technology is required for a sustainable and cost effective rail transport for better tomorrow.

#### **India's first Coal-gasification fertilizer plant to come up in Talcher, Odisha**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched commencement of work for India's first Coal-gasification based fertilizer plant with pet coke blending will come up in Talcher, Odisha. The coal gasification based fertilizer plant is being developed by Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL). TFL is joint venture company of GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL-29.67% stake), Coal India Limited (CIL-29.67% stake), Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers Limited (RCFL-29.67% stake) and Fertilizer Corporation of India Limited (FCIL-10.99% stake).

#### Salient features :

- The plant will be built at an estimated investment of Rs. 13,000 crore and is targeted to be commissioned by 2022.
- On completion, this plant will have capacity of producing 1.27 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA) of **Neem coated prilled urea** using coal and petcoke as feedstock.
- Neem coated urea reduces leaching of nitrogen into soil and checks diversion of urea from agriculture uses. For this plant, TFL has been allotted captive coal mine in Talcher region to ensure steady supply of the feedstock for maintaining continuous operations of the plant.
- It will produce 2.38 million metric standard cubic meter per day (MMSCMD) natural gas equivalent syngas from coal, leading to reduction in import bill of liquefied natural gas (LNG) by more than Rs 1,620 crore per annum.

#### Significance of Coal-gasification based fertilizer plant:



- It will use gas produced from coal, thus reducing dependence on urea and gas imports. It will promote alternative use of domestic coal in environment friendly manner, thereby supporting India's commitments under CoP 21 Paris Agreement 2016.
- Pollutants like Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) produced by this plant will be recycled for production of Urea and other by – products. Further, ash produced by it will be converted to inert slag which is non-hazardous.

## IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES

### **National Hindi Divas: 14th September**

- National Hindi Divas is observed every year on **14 September** in Hindi speaking regions of India and other countries with Hindi speaking population.
- Observance of this day aims to propagate Hindi language and its cultural heritage and values. It also seeks to promote Hindi as matra bhasha (mother tongue) of India and show its importance as a language in country and world at large.
- On this occasion, President Ram Nath Kovind presented Rajbhasha awards for Year 2016-17 at Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- These awards were instituted by Department of Official Language of Union Home Ministry to recognize excellent contribution of Ministries, Departments and Nationalized Banks in field of Hindi.

### National Hindi Divas:

- Hindi Divas is celebrated to mark adaptation of Hindi language as the official language of India by the Constituent Assembly of India on 14 September 1949.
- The decision of using Hindi as official language was ratified by Constitution of India which came into effect on 26 January 1950.
- Under the Article 343 of Indian Constitution, Hindi written in Devanagri script was adopted as the official language. But presently, there are 2 official languages: Hindi and English.

### Hindi Language:

- Hindi is one of the main languages of India and is spoken by around 40% of the Indian population. It belongs to Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European language family.
- As per 2011 census, 43.63% of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue i.e. around 258 million people.
- It is native language for most people living in Hindi belt of North India comprising Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.
- It is also spoken in many countries of the world including Pakistan, Mauritius, Trinidad, Surinam etc. Outside Asia, Hindi is official language in Fiji along with other two official languages, namely English, Fijian. The dialect of Hindi spoken there is known as Fiji Hindi or Fiji Baat.

### **25th September observed as Antyodaya Diwas**

- **25th September** was observed as Antyodaya Diwas across the country to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, a noted philosopher, historian and political activist.
- Antyodaya means uplifting of the weakest section of the society. Several activities including blood donation camps, seminar, symposia were organised on this occasion across the country.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-68):

- He was well-known political personality and thoughtful philosopher. He was coordinator and famous leader of Jan Sangh, which is considered precursor to BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).
- He was critic of both capitalism and communism. He advocated his own brand of Integral Humanism which combined morality in politics and human centric approach to economics.
- He strongly supported swadeshi and small scale industrialization. He upheld nationalistic ideals and believed that blindly adhering to Western ideologies wouldn't be suitable path for India.
- He founded Rashtra Dharma Prakashan publishing house in Lucknow and launched Rashtra Dharma, a monthly magazine, to advocate principles he held sacred.
- Later he launched weekly Panchjanya and daily Swadesh. He wrote drama Chandragupta Maurya in Hindi and later wrote a biography of Shankaracharya.

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE OZONE LAYER**

- The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on **September 16** for the preservation of the Ozone Layer.
- **2018 Theme:** 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.

Significance of the day:

- In 1994, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 16 September the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, commemorating the date of the signing, in 1987, of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

What you need to know about the Ozone layer?

- The ozone layer absorbs most of the Sun's ultraviolet light which is harmful to human life and other life forms. The layer absorbs about 97 to 99% of ultraviolet rays and maintain the ozone-oxygen cycle.
- Dobson unit is a unit which is used to measure the ozone in the atmosphere at a standard temperature and pressure.

Montreal protocol:

- The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was designed to reduce the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances in order to reduce their abundance in the atmosphere, and thereby protect the earth's fragile ozone Layer. The original Montreal Protocol was agreed on 16 September 1987 and entered into force on 1 January 1989.
- The Montreal Protocol includes a unique adjustment provision that enables the Parties to the Protocol to respond quickly to new scientific information and agree to accelerate the reductions required on chemicals already covered by the Protocol. These adjustments are then automatically applicable to all countries that ratified the Protocol.
- Montreal Protocol stipulates that the production and consumption of compounds that deplete ozone in the stratosphere-chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride, and methyl chloroform-are to be phased out by 2000 (2005 for methyl chloroform). These compounds significantly deplete the stratospheric ozone layer that shields the planet from damaging UV-B radiation.

Background:

- The phaseout of controlled uses of ozone depleting substances and the related reductions have not only helped protect the ozone layer for this and future generations, but have also contributed significantly to global efforts to address climate change; furthermore, it has protected human health and ecosystems by limiting the harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth.

## SCI-TECH

### **MISSILE 'PRAHAR'**

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the indigenously developed surface-to-surface tactical missile 'Prahara', from Launch Complex-III, ITR, Balasore.

#### About Prahara:

- 'Prahara', developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), is capable of filling the gap between the multi-barrel rocket system 'Pinaka' and medium-range ballistic missile 'Prithvi'. It can also engage multiple targets in different directions.
- It has length of 7.3 meter, diameter of 420 mm and weighs 1,280 kg. It has operational range of 150 km and flight altitude of 35 km.
- It is a solid-fuelled short-range missile fitted with inertial navigation system.
- The missile is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with advanced on board computer.
- It is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system.

### **India, Sri Lanka conducts joint naval exercise 'SLINEX 2018'**

- The sixth edition of 'SLINEX 2018', a joint naval exercise between the naval forces of **India and Sri Lanka** is currently underway in Trincomalee, a major port city of Sri Lanka. The bilateral exercise is being held from September 7-13, 2018.
- The bilateral exercise, which was previously held once in two years, will be held as an annual event from this year onwards. Three Navy ships from each side along with around 1,000 naval personnel from both countries are participating in the joint drill.

### **India, US to carry out joint military exercise- 'Yudh Abhyas 2018'**

- The armies of **India and the US** will carry out a military training exercise- Yudh Abhyas 2018 in the foothills of the Himalayas at Chaubattia from September 16.
- The military exercise is one of the longest running joint military training exercises and a major bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and the US.
- This will be the 14th edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries which will conclude on September 29.
- The combined exercise will simulate a scenario where both nations are working together in counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment in mountainous terrain.
- The two-week exercise will witness participation of about 350 personnel of the US Army and similar strength of Garud Division of the Indian Army.

### **India, Mongolia commence joint military exercise ‘Nomadic Elephant – 2018’**

- The joint military exercise between **Indian and Mongolian armies**, the Nomadic Elephant - 2018, began on September 11, 2018 in Mongolia.
- The Nomadic Elephant is an annual, bilateral exercise designed to strengthen the partnership between Indian and Mongolian Armed Force.
- The exercise would see both the countries improve their tactical and technical skills in joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural and urban scenario under UN Mandate.
- The Indian contingent was represented by Arunachal Pradesh 17 Punjab Regiment while the Mongolian contingent was represented by Unit 084 of the Mongolian Armed Forces.

### **Indo-Kazakhstan joint exercise ‘KAZIND 2018’ begins**

- The Indian Army commenced joint military exercise- ‘KAZIND-2018’ - with the army of central Asian nation **Kazakhstan** on September 11, 2018.
- The exercise takes the number of India’s on-going and scheduled drills with different nations, including the US, this month to four.
- The military exercise between the armies of India and Kazakhstan commenced in Otar region, approximately 175 kilometres from Almaty, Kazakhstan.
- The Kazakh contingent was represented by Military Base 85395, while India was represented by 5 Ladakh Scouts Regiment.
- The 14-day joint training aims to promote army-to-army relations and exchange skills and experiences between Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army.

### **India’s combat aircraft Tejas successfully completes first-ever mid-air refuelling trial**

- In a first, **Tejas**, the advanced version of India’s indigenously produced Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was successfully refuelled mid-air by a Russian-origin Ilyushin-78 tanker on September 10, 2018.
- The mid-air refuelling was a part of a ‘wet contact’ trial for LCA Tejas MK-1. The Russian-origin tanker refuelled the fighter plane, piloted by Wing Commander Siddarth Singh, with 1,900 litres of fuel at an altitude of 20,000 ft.
- The move demonstrates a key capability sought by the Indian Air Force.

#### Significance :

- The successful test is being seen as a significant achievement and a major step towards the final operational clearance of the Light Combat Aircraft.
- The air-to-air refuelling capability for LCA is a ‘force multiplier’ for the IAF, giving the aircraft the potential to stay airborne for a much longer period of time.
- The enhanced range and endurance in air is expected to provide IAF a host of options in exploiting the operational potential of the LCA as well as to participate in international exercises without having to stage through several locations en route.

Key Highlights:

- The actual engagement followed two dry tests, which were conducted last week when the refuelling systems (probe and drogue) were tested without actually transferring fuel.
- On the day of the actual test, the LCA's internal and drop tanks were refuelled while the jet was flying at 270 knots.
- The IAF provided all required support to DRDO including the tanker aircraft for the successful test flight.
- The IAF has ordered 123 LCA variants at a cost of Rs 70, 000 crores and plans to order 201 more upgraded models to arrest a sharp decline in its combat capabilities.
- Among the 123 planes on order, 20 each are in the initial operational clearance (IOC) and the more advanced final operational clearance (FOC) configurations, while the remaining 83 are in the Mk-1A configuration that comes with additional improvements.

Key features of LCA Tejas:

- Besides the mid-air refuelling capability, the most advanced Tejas versions will come with improvements, including a digital radar warning receiver, external self-protection jammer pod, active electronically scanned array radar, advanced beyond-visual-range (BVR) missiles and improved maintainability.

LCA Tejas:

- LCA Tejas is lightweight single-seat multi-role jet fighter, powered by single engine. It has tailless and compound delta wing design made entirely of composite structures.
- It is pegged as world's smallest and lightest supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
- It is first advanced fly-by-wire Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) designed, developed and manufactured indigenously by state owned Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) and Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) as part of LCA programme, started in 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- It was named 'Tejas', which means 'radiance', by former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It took total of 20 years from 1993 to 2013 for building this aircraft. Its maiden flight took place in 2001.

Background:

- The Indian Air Force raised its first Tejas squadron in 2016 and has inducted nine jets so far.
- The Indian aerospace and defence company, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), claims that it is ready to produce eight aircraft per year and is ramping up the production rate to 16 by 2019-20 by investing Rs1,331 crore.

**India successfully test fires short-range Prahaar missile**

- India on September 20, 2018 successfully test-fired the indigenously developed surface-to-surface, short-range tactical ballistic missile 'Prahaar' from the Odisha coast.
- The missile has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

- It was test-launched from launch pad-3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, near Balasore. It is capable of filling the gap between the multi-barrel rocket system 'Pinaka' and medium-range ballistic missile 'Prithvi'.

#### Missile Test:

- The test launch was successful, as the missile travelled a range of 200 km before zeroing in on the target, achieving all mission objectives.
- The missile is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with an advanced onboard computer.
- It is fitted with an inertial navigation system and is capable of engaging multiple targets in different directions.
- Further, the missile is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain and highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system.
- The DRDO used various tracking radars as well as electro-optic equipment to track and monitor the trajectory of the missile.
- As a safety measure, 4,494 people residing in five villages adjacent to the missile launch site were temporarily shifted by the district administration before the launch to nearby two shelters with compensation.
- The people returned to their houses after getting clearance from ITR authorities soon after the test was over.

#### Significance

- The indigenously developed Prahaar missile is expected to further strengthen the defence capabilities of the Indian Army.

#### About Prahaar Missile:

- It is an Indian solid-fuel road-mobile tactical ballistic missile developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The all-weather missile, which has a length of 7.3m, a diameter of 420 mm and weighs 1,280 kg, can carry a payload of 200 kg. It is capable of striking targets as far as 150km.
- It is essentially a quick reaction battlefield tactical missile with advance maneuvering capability.
- It has been developed to provide a cost-effective, quick reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical weapon system to the Indian Army.
- It can be launched from a road-mobile launch platform, which can carry six missiles at a time. It can be fired in all directions from the launcher. It could be used for striking both tactical and strategic targets.

#### Background:

- The Prahaar missile was test-fired successfully for the very first time in July 2011 from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur.

- During the test, the missile had traveled a distance of 150 km in about 250 seconds, meeting all launch objectives and struck a pre-designated target in the Bay of Bengal with a high degree of accuracy of less than 10 m (33 ft).

### **Apsara: BARC recommissions upgraded version of India's oldest research reactor:**

- Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Trombay has recommissioned India's oldest nuclear research reactor named 'Apsara', which was shut down permanently in 2009 for repair.
- The refurbished version of this reactor has been named as 'Apsara-upgraded' (Apsara-U) and also has double capacity compared to its earlier version.
- It is located within India's nuclear weapons facility at BARC's Trombay campus (Maharashtra).

#### Apsara:

- Apsara was the first nuclear research reactor in Asia. It had become operational in BARC's Trombay campus in August 1956.
- It was first nuclear research reactor indigenously developed in India. The design was conceptualised in 1955 by Dr Homi Bhabha, the father of Indian Nuclear programme.
- Its name Apsara was coined by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Apsara was a light water moderated (swimming pool-type) reactor with maximum power output of 1 megawatt thermal (MWt).
- It burned enriched uranium in form of aluminum alloyed curved plates. It was utilised for various experiments including neutron activation analysis, radiation damage studies, forensic research, neutron radiography, and shielding experiments.
- It was shut down in 2009, after more than five decades of service.

#### Apsara-upgraded:

- The upgraded version, like its ancestor, is indigenously made. It uses plate type dispersion fuel elements made of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU).
- It will help to increase indigenous production of radio-isotopes for medical application by about 50% mainly due to higher neutron flux.
- It will also be extensively used for research in nuclear physics, material science and radiation shielding.
- The radioisotopes produced by it will be also used in the field food preservation, agriculture, and other industries apart from medicine for diagnosis and therapy.

#### Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC):

- BARC is India's premier nuclear research facility based in Mumbai, Maharashtra
- It is multi-disciplinary research center with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development. Its R&D covers entire spectrum of nuclear science, engineering and related areas. BARC's core mandate is to sustain peaceful applications of nuclear energy, primarily for power generation.

### **Vijaya: Indian Coast Guard commissions indigenously built patrol vessel**

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has commissioned indigenously built patrol vessel ICGS Vijaya in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It is second in the series of 98 m offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) commissioned by ICG.

#### ICGS Vijaya:

- It has been designed and built indigenously by Larsen & Toubro (L&T). It is 98-metre long ship.
- It can carry one twin engine helicopter and four high speed boats, including two inflatable boats for boarding.
- It is fitted with advanced technology navigation and communication equipment and sensors. It is fitted with 30 mm gun and will be fitted with 12.7 mm gun with fire control system.
- On joining ICG fleet, ICGS Vijaya will be based at Paradip, Odisha. It will be manned by 12 officers and 91 men.

#### Significance:

- It will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance and other duties as enshrined in Coast Guard charter.
- It will also undertake search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol operations. It will help to enhance ICG's operational capability to discharge its multifarious maritime tasks.
- It will also give fillip to maritime protection of Eastern seaboard in general and the maritime states of Odisha and West Bengal in particular.
- It is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to contain oil spill in sea.

#### **DAC approves procurement of upgraded Akash missile system**

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitaraman given approval to Indian Army for inducting upgraded variant of indigenously developed Akash short-range surface-to-air missile (SRSAM) system.
- Under this proposal two new two regiments of this missile systems will be procured under 'Buy (Indian)' category from Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- Indian Army already has inducted two Akash regiments. Induction of upgraded variants will increase total count to four regiments.

#### Akash Missile:

- It is short-range mobile surface-to-air missile indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme initiated in 1984.
- It is made by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL). It has range of 25 km and can engage multiple targets at time in all-weather conditions.
- It has capability to neutralise aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles as well as ballistic missiles.
- It has large operational envelope, from 30 metre to maximum of 20 km. Each regiment of this missile system consists of six launchers, each having three missiles. It is in operational service with Indian Army and Indian Air Force.

#### Upgraded Akash Missile System:

- The upgraded Akash Missile System will include seeker technology, possess 360 degree coverage and will be of compact configuration with reduced signature. The upgraded Akash Weapon System is operationally critical equipment which will provide protection to vital assets.

#### **Astra: IAF successfully test fires indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile**



- Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully test fired indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) Astra from Su-30 fighter aircraft.
- The missile was tested at Kalaikunda Air Force Station, West Bengal. During the test, missile successfully engaged manoeuvring target with high precision meeting mission objectives.

#### Significance:

- The flight test assumes significance as it was part of the series of final pre-induction trials. In the series of trials held till date, Astra missile has been launched in complete Su-30 flight envelope. So far it has undergone more than 20 developmental trials.

#### Astra Missile:

- Astra is air to air beyond visual range air-to-air indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It is one of the smallest weapon system developed by DRDO, having length of 3.8-metre and weighing 154kg.
- It is single stage solid fuelled missile and has payload capacity of 15 kg conventional explosives.
- It can be launched from different altitudes and is capable of engaging targets at varying range and altitudes at both short-range targets (up to 20 km) in tail-chase mode and long-range targets (up to 80 km) in head-on mode.
- It is radar homing supersonic missile having maximum speed of Mach 4 (four times speed of sound). It possesses high Single Shot Kill Probability (SSKP) making it highly reliable.
- It is all-weather missile with active radar terminal guidance, excellent electronic counter-counter measure (ECCM) features, smokeless propulsion and process improved effectiveness in multi-target scenario.
- It has advance on-board electronic counter-measures that jam radar signals from enemy radar, making tracking of the missile difficult.
- It is fitted with terminal active radar-seeker and an updated mid-course internal guidance system that helps missile to locate and track targets.
- The missile can be integrated with all fighter aircraft of IAF including Sukhoi-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar and the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).