

MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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INTERNATIONAL , NATIONAL AND INDIA:

Quit India Movement

- 76th anniversary of Quit India movement was observed on August 8th, 2018.

What is Quit India Movement?

- It was in 1942 when the world was going through the havoc caused by World War II.
- India too was facing the heat and after the Cripps Mission had failed, and on 8 August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi made a Do or Die call through the Quit India movement.
- Large protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. However, as the movement didn't get too much support from the outside, it was crushed and the British refused to grant immediate Independence, saying that it could happen only after the war had ended.

Who started Quit India Movement?

- The Quit India movement was started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 but drew protests from the AllIndia Congress Committee demanding what Gandhi called was "An Orderly British Withdrawal" from India.
- This forced the British to act immediately and soon all the senior INC leaders were imprisoned without trial within hours of Gandhi's speech.
- Where was the Quit India Speech given? On 14th July 1942, the Congress Working Committee at Wardha had passed a resolution demanding complete independence from the British government.
- On August 8, 1942, Mahatma Gandhi made a Do or Die call in his Quit India speech which was delivered in Bombay at the Gowalia Tank Maidan.
- Even though the speech caused some turmoil within the party and even leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad were apprehensive and critical of the call, but backed it and stuck with Gandhi's leadership until the end.

Other key facts:

- Several national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were arrested.
- The Congress was declared an unlawful association, leaders were arrested and its offices all over the country were raided and their funds were frozen.
- The first half of the movement was peaceful with demonstrations and processions. The peaceful protest was carried till Mahatma Gandhi's release.
- The second half of the movement was violent with raids and setting fire at post offices, government buildings and railway stations. Lord Linlithgow adopted the policy of violence.

- The Viceroy's Council of Muslims, Communist Party and Americans supported Britishers.

BIMSTEC SUMMIT

Why in News?

- Recently, the 4th summit of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was held in Nepal.

More about 4th summit :

- The meeting is taking place after a gap of four years, the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit took place in Nay Pyi Taw in 2014.
- Several important decisions taken in the summit include: Drafting a charter for BIMSTEC, which has functioned so far on the basis of the Bangkok Declaration of 1997.
- Setting up of a Permanent Working Committee to provide direction during the period between two summits and also to prepare the Rules of Procedure.
- The Secretariat has been promised additional financial and human resources and enhancement of its role to coordinate, monitor and facilitate the grouping's activities.
- Establishing a BIMSTEC Development Fund, with voluntary contributions from the Member States.
- Welcomed Thailand proposed new strategy of five pillars (viz. connectivity, trade and investment, people-to-people contacts, security, and science and technology) as a part of rationalisation of focus sectors
- Strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Importance for India :

- For India, it is a natural platform to fulfil our key foreign policy priorities of '**Neighbourhood First**' and '**Act East**'.
- **Stagnation of SAARC** is also a key reason for India to reach out to BIMSTEC as stagnation limited the scope of India's growing economic aspirations as well as the role it could play in improving regional governance.
- BIMSTEC provides new battleground for India-China. It could allow India to push a constructive agenda to **counter Chinese investments** such as in Belt and Road initiative, and follow international norms for connectivity projects which Chinese projects are widely seen as violating.
- It could develop codes of conduct that **preserve freedom of navigation** and apply existing law of the seas regionally.
- It could stem the region's creeping militarisation by instituting, for instance, a **Bay of Bengal Zone of Peace** that seeks to limit any bellicose behaviour of extra regional power

Achievements of BIMSTEC:

- **BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement** and **BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA)** are being negotiated.
- BIMSTEC countries have completed negotiations for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the establishment of the **BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection**.

- BIMSTEC Agreement on Mutual Assistance on Customs Matters has been signed and is under ratification.
- Considerable progress has been achieved in areas such as cooperation among national security agencies, cooperation to check security threats such as smuggling, human trafficking, drugs and piracy, etc.
- Secretariat has been established at Dhaka along with few BIMSTEC Centres in the region.

Rashmi, India's first humanoid robot, can speak Hindi, Bhojpuri, Marathi

- Rashmi, India's first humanoid robot, can speak Hindi, Bhojpuri, Marathi! Taking a leaf out of Sophia's (popular human-like robot) book, a 38-year-old Ranchi man is on the verge of developing India's own humanoid robot.
- Ranjit Srivastava said Rashmi has a functional head and body, but is missing the limbs, which will be fixed shortly.
- Rashmi is the world's first such Hindi-speaking robot, Srivastava claims, adding it can also speak in Bhojpuri, Marathi and English.
- Rashmi, India's first lip-syncing robot, uses linguistic interpretation (LI), artificial intelligence (AI), visual data and facial recognition systems, just like Hong Kong-based Sophia.
- "Rashmi functions under a specially designed software and LI system. The LI analyzes the conversation while AI helps extract a response," Srivastava said, adding Rashmi says 'thank you' when complimented. But when chided, it says 'go to hell,' he laughingly said.
- Making Rashmi has cost its creator Rs. 50,000 till now .
- He will take one more month to "give it complete shape of a human. Process is on to add hands and legs to it."
- As of now, it's capable of moving its eyes, lips and eyebrows and can also move its neck.
- 'It can talk for hours, recognize someone after meeting them' "It can talk for hours and it recognizes the person after few meetings due to cameras fitted in its eyes," Srivastava said.
- When asked about his inspiration, Srivastava gave the unsurprising answer: Sophia, who's also the world's first robot citizen.
- "Humanoid robot is the need of future generation and can work as receptionists, helper, friend of lonely people, even politicians," he claimed.
- Both Sophia and Rashmi are SRK fans! Apart from the technology, Rashmi and Sophia are also alike in another aspect: Shahrukh Khan is a favorite of both, Srivastava, who has 15yrs of experience as a techie, quips.

Government launches logo, tagline for GI

- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Ministry of Commerce and Industry has unveiled tricolour logo for geographical indication (GI) certified products. The logo has tagline "Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India" printed below it.

Salient features:

- In the open contest, winning logo was designed by Adri Chatterjee and winning tagline was coined by Akancha Tripathi.

- The purpose of logo and tagline for GI selected is to increase awareness about intellectual property rights (IPRs) and also and importance of GI products in the country.
- From now on, GI-registered goods will sport logo and tagline to make them more attractive.

Geographical Indication (GI):

- GI tag is name or sign used on certain products which correspond to specific geographical location or origin.
- It is used for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods having special quality and established reputation.
- The goods and products having tag are recognised for their origin, quality and reputation and gives it required edge in global market.
- It also ensures that none can use their name, giving them exclusivity. The registration of GI is valid for 10 years after which it needs to be renewed.
- Violation of GI tags is punishable offence under law. The purpose of GI tag enables stakeholders to authenticate their production while earning a premium and derive an improved livelihood.
- GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property. At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). In India
- GI tag Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it. This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is also Registrar of Geographical Indications and is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- So far, total of 320 products have been conferred GI status in India. Darjeeling Tea, Tirupathi Laddu, Kangra Paintings, Nagpur Orange and Kashmir Pashmina are among registered GIs in India.
- Karnataka tops with 38 GI products, followed by Maharashtra which has 32 GI products. Tamil Nadu comes third with 25 GI products.

Pingali Venkayya: in news :

- 141st birth anniversary of freedom fighter and designer of Indian National Flag Pingali Venkayya was observed on August 2, 2018.

Pingali Venkayya

- Pingali Venkayya was a freedom fighter and the designer of the Indian National Tricolour.
- The national flag that we see today was based upon his design. Early life: Born on August 2, 1876 in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, Venkayya served as a soldier in the British Army in South Africa during the Anglo Boer war in Africa.
- A firm believer in Gandhian principles and an ardent nationalist, Venkayya met the Mahatma during the war. The evolution of Indian National Flag: Between 1918 and 1921, Venkayya raised the issue of having an own flag in every session of the Congress.
- Back then, he was working as a lecturer in the Andhra National College in Machilipatnam. He met the Mahatma once again in Vijayawada and showed him his publication with the various designs of the flag.

- Acknowledging the need for a national flag, Gandhi then asked Venkayya to design a fresh one at the national congress meeting in 1921.
- Initially, Venkayya came up with saffron and green colours, but it later evolved with a spinning wheel at the centre and a third colour-white.
- **(LALA HANS RAJ SONDHI SUGGESTED ADDING A SPINNING WHEEL — SHOWING THE INDEPENDENT INDIANS WHO CAN SPIN THEIR OWN CLOTHING FROM LOCAL FIBRES.)**
- The flag was officially adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931.

STATES :

Kanyashree scheme

- **West Bengal government** has announced that there would not be any ceiling for a family's annual earnings to be a beneficiary under the UN award winning Kanyashree scheme.
- Currently, girls who belong to families with annual family income not more than Rs 1.20 lakh is entitled to get the benefits.
- The state government would also be coming up with a “Kanyashree University” for girls soon.

About Kanyashree scheme:

- Kanyashree is a conditional cash transfer scheme aiming at improving the status and well being of the girl child by incentivising schooling of teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18.
- It received the United Nations Public Service Award last year. Performance of the scheme: Through the initiative, cash was deposited into the bank account of girls for every year they remained in school and were unmarried.
- This initiative led to a “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”

UN Public Service Awards:

- The UN Public Service Awards are given by the world body to institutions from across the world for their innovation and excellence in providing public services. It highlights the pivotal role of public services in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The Awards aim at discovering innovations in governance; reward excellence in the public sector; motivate public servants to further promote innovation; enhance professionalism in the public service; raise the image of public service; enhance trust in government; and collect and disseminate successful practices for possible replication.

Marriage certificate must for official work in Meghalaya

- The State government in matrilineal **Meghalaya** has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes.
- The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children.
- Some of these men live with other women.

What necessitated this?

- The step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children.
- The abandonment of families by men lead to a spike in school dropouts and juvenile crimes. Also, most marriages in the Khasi society are not registered, and this makes it difficult for abandoned women to fight for the maintenance of their children.
- Significance of the move: The government's order cannot stop divorce, but marriage certificates will help abandoned women fight for the maintenance of their children after their husbands abandon them.

Cheetah reintroduction project:

- The **Madhya Pradesh** forest department has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority to revive the plan to reintroduce cheetahs in the State's Nauradehi sanctuary.
- The ambitious project, conceived in 2009, had hit a roadblock for want of funds.

Salient features :

- The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the big cat species, with ancestors that can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- The cheetah is also the world's fastest land mammal, an icon of nature. With great speed and dexterity, the cheetah is known for being an excellent hunter, its kills feeding many other animals in its ecosystem—ensuring that multiple species survive.
- The country's last spotted feline died in Chhattisgarh in 1947. Later, the cheetah — which is the fastest land animal — was declared extinct in India in 1952.

Cheetah reintroduction programme in India:

- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a 260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago.
- It was estimated that an amount of 25 crore to 30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi.

- The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild, he said.
- Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat.
- Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary. According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa.
- The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India. However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.

Background:

- The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man's interference. Problems like human-wildlife conflict, loss of habitat and loss of prey, and illegal trafficking, have decimated their numbers.
- The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse. With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.

Significance of reintroduction:

- The reintroduction of cheetahs will help restore India's open forests and grassland ecosystems, which have been suffering. Having cheetahs will result in greater biodiversity, and biodiversity is the hallmark of healthy ecosystems.
- India is also home to the world's largest free-roaming populations of livestock. Bringing back the cheetah will focus attention on pastoralism, and in doing so, help restore India's natural heritage.

NEW ELEPHANT RESERVE

Why in News?

- Recently, **Nagaland** government declared the Singphan Wildlife Sanctuary as an Elephant Reserve, with the approval of central government.

About the Singphan Elephant Reserve :

- It is located in Mon district of Nagaland and spreads over an area of 5825 acres.
- It has huge tracts of forest, strategically located in contiguity with the Abhaypur Reserve Forest of Assam.
- Presently, elephant distribution habitat in Nagaland is highly fragmented, this move will give better protection and conservation of elephants in the state.
- After the declaration it became the 30th Elephant Reserve in the country.

Other Protected areas in Nagaland :

- Intanki National Park, Puliebadze Wildlife Sanctuary, Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary and Rangapahar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Related Information Status of elephant conservation;

- Elephant is National Heritage Animal and categorised as Endangered under IUCN list.
- It is under schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).
- **Singhbhum Elephant Reserve** in Jharkhand is the first Elephant Reserve of the Country.
- Karnataka has the highest number of elephants followed by Assam and Kerala respectively.

Kadakhnath chicken meat from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh gets GI tag

- Kadakhnath chicken meat from Jhabua district of **Madhya Pradesh** has received Geographical Indication (GI) tag from Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India.
- GI tag denotes that product comes from particular geographical. Kadakhnath chicken was awarded GI tag in "Meat Product, Poultry & Poultry Meat" category.
- The application for GI was made by Gramin Vikas Trust of Krishak Bharati Cooperative (KRIBHCO) on behalf of tribals of Jhabua district who breed the variety.

Significance:

- GI tag will ensure that no one else can use name Kadakhnath Chicken while selling any other black chicken.
- It will also enhances its commercial value that will translate into higher prices for producers mainly tribal districts of Jhabua.

Kadakhnath Chicken:

- Kadakhnath or Kali Masi (flowl with black flash) is unique breed of chicken that is complete *black colour*. It is completely black with black plumage having greenish iridescence, black legs, beak, tongue, comb and wattles.
- Apart from its meat, its bones and most organs are also black. Its black colour stems from deposition of *melanin pigment*.
- This breed of chicken is popular for its adaptability and *flavourful good-tasting black meat*, which is believed to have medicinal properties.
- It is native tribal districts of Jhabua, Alirajpur and parts of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh. It is produced mainly in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states of India. Kadakhnath chicken contains 25-27% of protein in comparison with other breeds of chickens that contain 18% protein.
- It is also known for its high iron content. It has fat and cholesterol content lower compared with other chicken breeds.
- Due to this special characteristics, Kadakhnath chicken's chicks and eggs are sold at much higher rate than other varieties of chicken.
- This chicken breed is very popular among local tribal people mainly due to its adaptability to the local environment, disease resistance, meat quality, texture and flavour.

Assam Government extends AFSPA in the state for 6 more months

- Governor of Assam has extended application of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in the entire state for six more months with immediate effect.
- For this, it used powers conferred under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 declaring entire state as 'Disturbed Area' upto 6 months or unless withdrawn earlier.

Reason for extension:

- This decision was taken as precautionary measure to maintain law and order during ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) update process during the ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) update process. The final draft NRC is likely to be published by end of 2018.
- In September 2017, Union Home Ministry had delegated to Assam and Manipur Governors power to impose or withdraw AFSPA.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):

- AFSPA was enacted in 1958 to bring 'disturbed' areas declared under it under control. It empowers both state and central government to declare areas as 'disturbed' due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **Declaration of Disturbed area:** The section (3) of the Act empowers governor of State/UT to issue an official notification in Gazette of India, following which Centre has authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid.
- Once declared 'disturbed', the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months.
- **Special powers to armed forces:** The Act gives special powers to army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property used by insurgents in disturbed areas. It also provides army personnel with safeguards against malicious, vindictive and frivolous prosecution.
- **Note:** At present, the AFSA has been enforced in 6 states viz. Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh (only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus 20-km belt bordering Assam), Manipur (except Imphal municipal area), Meghalaya (confined to 20-km belt bordering Assam) and Jammu and Kashmir.

MAHARASHTRA

Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT):

- Astronomers have used an Indian telescope to discover the most distant radio galaxy ever known, located at a distance of 12 billion light-years.
- The galaxy, from a time when the universe was only 7% of its current age was found using the Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) in **Pune**.
- The distance to this galaxy was determined using the Gemini North telescope in Hawaii and the Large Binocular Telescope in Arizona.

What are radio galaxies?

- Radio galaxies are very rare objects in the universe. They are colossal galaxies with a supermassive black hole in their centre that actively accretes gas and dust from its surroundings.
- This activity initiates the launch of high-energy jet streams, which are capable of accelerating charged particles around the supermassive black hole to almost the speed of light.
- The discovery of such galaxies at extremely large distances is important for our understanding of the formation and evolution of galaxies.

About GMRT:

- The Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT), located near Pune in India, is an array of thirty fully steerable parabolic radio telescopes of 45 metre diameter, observing at metre wavelengths.
- It is operated by the National Centre for Radio Astrophysics, a part of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.
- At the time it was built, it was the world's largest interferometric array offering a baseline of up to 25 kilometres (16 mi).
- One of the aims for the telescope during its development was to search for the highly redshifted 21-cm line radiation from primordial neutral hydrogen clouds in order to determine the epoch of galaxy formation in the universe.

Maharashtra Government announces special assistance of Rs 500 crore for OBC community

- The state government of Maharashtra has announced a special assistance worth Rs 500 crore for the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community in the state.
- With the move, the state government reaffirmed its commitment to retaining OBC quotas in jobs and rejected reports that Maratha community may be included in the OBC category for reservation purpose.
- The announcement was made by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis while addressing the 3rd National Convention of National OBC Association in Mumbai.

Salient features:

- The main objective behind the special assistance is to help the OBC community develop employment opportunities for the youth.
- Besides, the state government plans to assess the extent of representation given to OBCs in jobs and take steps to address the backlog, in a time-bound manner.
- The government has also earmarked funds for the construction of hostels for OBC students in 19 districts of the state.
- The state government has also recommended to the Centre that the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, be conferred posthumously to the 19th-century social reformer Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule, who was a pioneer of women's education.

Background:

- The people belonging to the OBC community constitute 52 percent of Maharashtra's population.
- However, when it comes to reservation, currently the OBC community enjoys 17 percent reservation in the state.
- On the other hand, the politically dominant Maratha community, which constitutes 30 percent of the state's population, has been demanding 16 percent reservation in jobs and educational institutes.

POLITY

Triple talaq bill

What is Triple Talaq, Important provisions of the Bill

- The Union Cabinet has approved a few amendments in the instant triple talaq bill. The amended triple talaq bill will be tabled in Rajya Sabha for its approval.

Background:

- In December, the Lok Sabha passed the Muslim Women (Protection Bill, 2017), which criminalises the practice of talaq-e-bidda.
- This came after the Supreme Court on August 22, 2017, struck down triple talaq, calling the Islamic practice unconstitutional.
- Changes in the triple Talaq Bill- The Cabinet made three amendments to the triple talaq law:
 - **One:** provision for bail: While the proposed law will remain “non-bailable” offence, the accused can approach a magistrate even before the trial to seek bail.
 - Under a non-bailable offence, bail cannot be granted by police at the police station. A provision has been added to allow the magistrate to grant bail ‘after hearing the wife’.
 - “But the offence of instant triple talaq under the proposed law remains non-bailable.
 - The magistrate would ensure that bail is granted only after the husband agrees to grant compensation to the wife as provided in the bill.
 - The quantum of compensation will be decided by the magistrate, as per the bill.
- **Two- check misuse:** Another amendment makes it clear that the police would lodge FIR only if approached by the victim (wife), her blood relations or people who become her relatives by virtue of her marriage.
- This would settle fears that even a neighbour can file FIR as is the cases in any cognisable offence. This would check misuse.
- **Third- A compoundable offence:** The third amendment makes the offence of instant triple talaq “compoundable”. Now, a magistrate can use his powers to settle the dispute between a husband and his wife.

- Under a compoundable offence, both parties have the liberty of withdrawing the case. However, the jail term for a Muslim man who resorts to triple talaq remains three years and only a magistrate, and not a local police officer, can release the accused on bail.

President appoints Governors of seven states

Constitutional provisions related to the office of governor:

- By exercising his authority under Article 156 of the constitution, President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Governors of seven states including Bihar, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Meghalaya, and Tripura.
- Governors of States in India: Governor is the head of the Executive power of any state in India, just like the President who is the head of the executive power in the Union.
- Governor is the nominal head of a state, unlike the Chief Minister who is the real head of a state in India.
- According to an amendment in the Constitution of India (7th Constitutional Amendment Act), brought about in 1956, the same person can be the Governor of two or more states.

Lok Sabha passes Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018

- Lok Sabha has unanimously passed Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 to reverse effects of Supreme Court order concerning certain safeguards against arrests under SC/ST law.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Background:

- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 protects marginalized communities against discrimination and atrocities.
- It prohibits commission of offences against members of SCs/STs and establishes special courts for trial of such offences and rehabilitation of victims.
- In 2018, Supreme Court had expressed concern over misuse of Act and ruled against automatic arrest of booking of accused under this law.
- It also had introduced provision of anticipatory bail. It had stated that for persons accused of committing offence under Act, approval of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) will be required before an arrest is made.
- Further, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) may conduct preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is prima facie case under Act.

Salient Features of Bill:

- The Bill states that investigating officer will not require approval of any authority for arrest of accused.

- Further, it provides that preliminary enquiry will not be required for registration of First Information Report (FIR) against person accused under Act. The Act states that persons accused of committing offence under Act cannot apply for anticipatory bail.
- It also clarifies that this provision will apply despite any judgments or orders of any court that provide otherwise, thus overturning SC judgment given in April 2018.

NRIs cannot file RTI applications: Government

- Government has informed Lok Sabha that Non-Resident Indians (NRI) cannot file Right to Information (RTI) applications to seek governance-related information from Central government departments.
- It mentioned that only citizens of India have the right to seek information under the provisions of RTI Act, 2005 and NRIs are not eligible to file RTI applications.

Right to Information Act 2005:

- This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 12 October 2005.
- It mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information by various public authorities under Central Government as well as the State Governments.
- The law imposes penalty for wilful default by government officials. Citizens can ask for anything that government can disclose to Parliament.
- Objectives of RTI are to empower citizens (as right to information is fundamental right of the citizens under Article 19), promote transparency and accountability in working of Government, check corruption and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.
- Public authorities defined under this law are required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days of the request. The law also mandates every public authority to computerise their records for wide dissemination and proactively certain categories of information so that citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

PROXY VOTING BY NRIS

Why in news?

- Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to allow for the proxy voting by the Non-Residential Indians through amendment in Section 60 (special procedure for voting by certain classes of persons).

Background :

- As of now, overseas Indians are free to cast their votes in the constituencies where they are registered. The Bill seeks to give them the option of proxy voting, which till now is only available to service personnel.
- The proposal includes a provision that made it mandatory for NRIs to nominate a new person every time they vote in an election, unlike service personnel who are allowed to nominate a permanent proxy.
- On the direction of the Supreme Court of India the Election Commission constituted a committee for 'Exploring Feasibility of Alternative Options for voting by Overseas Electors', which expressed the feasibility of both proxy voting and e-postal ballot.

- It is not clear yet how NRIs will nominate their proxies. The Election Commission will lay down the procedure by amending the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, after the Bill is passed by both Houses of Parliament.
- The bill also proposes to replace the term 'wife' with 'spouse' (in case of service voters), thus making the provision gender neutral.

Criticism of the Proxy Voting :

- **Vulnerable nature of the process** of using a proxy can amount to malpractices and misuse, like-
- The proxy voters might not choose to cast their votes according to the will of the NRI who assigns the proxy.
- The **loss of secrecy** while using the mechanism is a major drawback.
- It might also lead to **purchasing of the votes**.

Conclusion :

- Along with the challenges and concerns related to proxy voting, it is also important to understand that NRIs are a large stratum of our population, large enough to not be overlooked.
- Apart from that, history stands as a testimony to their contribution to Indian economy as well as India's bilateral or multilateral agreements. Where on one hand they have an impact on India they are also in turn impacted by the events in the country. Thus, steps like proxy voting are considered.
- There are various alternative ways to proxy voting, viz. Personal voting (setting up booth at the embassy itself), e-voting, etc.
- If the Parliament gives its nod to proxy voting, there are various safeguards that it may follow like- o An NOC must be issued in advance by the NRI voter to the proxy and an e-vote or postal ballot must be casted to cross-verify the whole process.
- Preparation of electoral roll and the database must be kept secretive to avoid any purchasing of votes.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES:

'Ujjwala' programme:

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has achieved the 5 crore mark.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Smt Sumitra Mahajan handed over 5 crore LPG connection under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) to Smt Takdiran of Delhi in the Parliament House.
- **The target:** Through PMUY, initially, 5 crore BPL households were targeted for providing deposit free LPG connections to BPL households by 31st March, 2019.
- In a record time of 28 months for its launch, PMUY achieved the initial target of providing 5 crores LPG connection to BPL households.
- In the current year, considering the huge success of the Scheme, target was revised to 8 crores with budgetary allocation of Rs 12,800 crore.
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.

- Who is eligible? Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.

Significance of the project:

- PMUY has been a revolutionary initiative that has transformed the lives of more than 3.57 crore households spanning across the length and breadth of the country.
- The initiative is in line with Governments aim to eradicate energy poverty, thereby promoting economic empowerment.

“PARIVESH”-ENVIRONMENTAL WINDOW HUB

- What is it? It is an environmental single window hub for Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ clearances launched recently. This Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System has been developed in pursuance of the spirit of ‘Digital India’ initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.
- PARIVESH: Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Singlewindow Hub.

Salient features :

- “PARIVESH” is a workflow based application, based on the concept of web architecture.
- It has been rolled out for online submission, monitoring and management of proposals submitted by Project Proponents to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC), as well as to the State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA).
- It seeks to give various types of clearances (e.g. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances) from Central, State and district-level authorities.
- The system has been designed, developed and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with technical support from National Informatics Centre, (NIC).
- It provides single registration and single sign-in for all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ), unique-ID for all types of clearances required for a particular project and a single Window interface for the proponent to submit applications for getting all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forests, Wildlife and CRZ clearances).

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana extended beyond 12th 5 year plan

- On August 11, 2018, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the continuation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) beyond the 12th five year plan period. It has an estimated cost of Rs. 84,934 crore.

- Giving a boost to rural road connectivity, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday approved the continuation of Pradhan MANTRI Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) beyond the 12th five year plan period.
- It will help in connecting 38,412 habitations at an estimated cost of Rs. 84,934 crore. The Centre's share in this will be Rs 54,900 crore and the states' share is Rs 30,034 crore.
- According to a Government release, initially the targets of PMGSY were to be achieved by March 2022, however, the sunset date of achievement of PMGSY-I was pre-poned to March, 2019, with enhanced fund allocation and changed funding pattern i.e. in the ratio of 60:40 between the Centre and State for all States except for 8 North Eastern and 3 Himalayan States (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand) for which it is 90:10.
- The Task of connecting 1,78,184 eligible unconnected habitations under PMGSY on its way towards completion by March, 2019.
- So far, 95 per cent habitations (1,69,415) have been sanctioned, of which 91 per cent habitations (1,54,257) have been connected including 16,380 habitations connected by the States from their own resources.
- Against the sanctioned length of 6,58,143 km, 5,50,601 km road length has been completed. Under, PMGSY-II, against the target length of 50,000 km works of upgradation almost 32,100 km road length have been sanctioned in 13 States, which have transited to PMGSY-II.
- Against the sanctions issued, 12,000 km road length has been completed up to March, 2018.
- (PMGSY) was launched on December 25, 2000, with the objective to provide All-Weather road connectivity to the eligible unconnected habitations in rural areas of Country.

Heritage Circuit and North East Circuit

- The Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned two new projects under Heritage and North East Circuits of Swadesh Dashan Scheme for Rs. 164.95 Crores in Punjab and Tripura.
- Under Heritage Circuit in the state of Punjab, the project covers sites of Anandpur Sahib – Fatehgarh Sahib – Chamkaur Sahib – Ferozpur – Amritsar – Khatkar Kalan – Kalanour – Patiala at the cost of Rs. 99.95 crores.
- The project includes development of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar for Rs. 8 Crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure and Heritage Path at Anandpur Sahib for Rs. 28.99 crores, development of Tourist Infrastructure at Fatehgarh Sahib among others.
- The facilities being developed include Virtual Reality Shows (Jallianwala and Hussainiwala Border), beautification and landscaping, interpretation centres, façade development, wayside amenities, parking, CCTV and Wi-Fi facilities, Cafeterias, Open Air Theatre, drinking water facility etc.

North East Circuit:

- Under North East Circuit in Tripura, the sites of Surma Cherra- Unakoti- Jampui Hills- Gunabati Bhunaneswari- Matabari- Neermahal- Boxanagar- Chotta khola- Pilak- Avangchaarra are covered with total project cost of Rs. 65 Crores.

- The project envisaged infrastructural development of the sites with special emphasis on developing an Interpretation Centre, Tourist Visitor Centres, Cafeteria, Last Mile Connectivity, Illumination of sites and monuments, Wayside Amenities, Floating Jetties, Camping Grounds, Parking Facilities, Adventure Activities, Ghat Development at above sites.

About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- The Tourism Ministry had launched 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme with an objective to develop theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

Project Navlekha:

- Google has unveiled Project Navlekha to make online content relevant for more Indian users especially in local languages.

About Project Navlekha:

- Navlekha in Sanskrit means "a new way to write." Google is using its expertise in artificial intelligence for Project Navlekha, using which, it will quickly render any PDF with Indian language content into editable text, overcoming issues that usually occur when you try to copy text in Indian languages from a PDF.
- The project aims to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.
- It will allow local publishers who do not have websites to make their offline content fit for online publishing in less than a minute.
- It also comprises tool that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to allow publishers to simply scan documents or PDFs and create instant web pages on the platform.
- The project will provide a handy online publishing tool for local language newspapers and content companies—90% of which do not have a website.
- The registered publishers on Navlekha will also be provided with free web hosting, along with a branded domain for three years.
- They'll also have AdSense support to begin monetising their content.
- Under Navlekha project, Google will help these publishers to receive training and support and a branded page domain for the first three years.

Significance of the project:

- At present, amount of online content in Indian languages is only 1% of what is available in English.
- India is important market for Google as it has second largest population of internet users in the world.

- Hence, with the new project the amount of resources available for Indians in local languages will increase.

APPOINTMENTS

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- Satya S Tripathi, an Indian development economist and lawyer, has been appointed assistant secretary general of the United Nations and will head the New York office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

About UNEP:

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was founded by Maurice Strong, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in the Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya.
- UNEP has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy.
- UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.

IPCC:

- The World Meteorological Organization and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988.
- UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and it is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- The International Cyanide Management Code, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis.

Rekha Sharma appointed as Chairperson of National Commission for Women:

- Rekha Sharma (54) was appointed as chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW).
- Prior to this appointment, she was member of the Commission and was holding the additional charge of chairperson after Lalitha Kumaramangalam had demitted office in September 2017.

National Commission for Women (NCW):

- NCW is a statutory body established under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. It was established in January 1992.
- It is apex national level organization of India the mandate of protecting and promoting the interests of women. It also reviews constitutional and legal safeguards for women.
- It recommends remedial legislative measures, advise Government on all policy matters affecting women and facilitate redressal of grievances related to women.
- It regularly publishes monthly newsletter, Rashtra Mahila, in both Hindi and English.

Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha

- Harivansh Narayan Singh has been elected as the new deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha. The Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha: The Deputy Chairman is a constitutional position created under Article 89 of the Constitution, which specifies that Rajya Sabha shall choose one of its MPs to be the Deputy Chairman as often as the position becomes vacant.
- The office becomes vacant either by resignation or removal from office or when the Rajya Sabha member's term gets over.
- Election of Deputy Chairman: The election of a Deputy Chairman shall be held on such date as the Chairman may fix and the Secretary-General shall send to every member notice of this date.
- At any time before noon on the day- preceding the date so fixed, any member may give notice in writing addressed to the Secretary-General of a motion that another member be chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council, and the notice shall be seconded by a third member and shall be accompanied by a statement by the member whose name is proposed in the notice that he is willing to serve as Deputy Chairman if elected: Provided that a member shall not propose or second more than one motion.
- A member in whose name a motion stands in the list of business may, when called, move the motion or not move the motion, in which case he shall confine himself to a mere statement to that effect.
- The motions which have been moved and duly seconded shall be put one by one in the order in which they have been moved and decided if necessary by division.
- If any motion is carried, the person presiding shall, without putting later motions, declare that the member proposed in the motion which has been carried, has been chosen as the Deputy Chairman of the Council.

ECONOMICS AND HRD

RBI releases its Third Bi-monthly Policy on August 1, 2018

- On August 1, 2018, a 3 day 6 member meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee headed by Governor Dr. Urjit Patel concluded where RBI released its 3rd bi-monthly policy.
- The Next meeting will be scheduled from October 3-5, 2018.

Policy rates

2nd bi-monthly in

3rd bimonthly in

	June 6 th 2018	August 1, 2018
Repo Rate	6.25%	6.50%
Reverse Repo Rate	6.0%	6.25%
Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)	6.5%	6.75%
Bank Rate	6.5%	6.75%
Reserve Ratios		
Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	4%	4%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	19.5%	19.5%

99.30% of demonetised money back in the system, says RBI report

- As much as 99.3 per cent of the junked Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes have returned to the banking system, the RBI said today, indicating that just a minuscule percentage of currency was left out of the system after the government's unprecedented note ban aimed at curbing black money and corruption.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which has taken an awfully long time to count the currency that was returned in the limited period window provided by the government to exchange or or deposit the demonetised currency, said in its Annual Report for 2017-18 that the exercise is finally over.
- Of the Rs 15.41 lakh crore worth Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in circulation on November 8, 2016, when the note ban was announced, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore have been returned.
- This meant just Rs 10,720 crore of the junked currency did not return to the banking system.
- After the note ban, old junked notes, called specified bank notes (SBNs), were allowed to be deposited in banks with unusual deposits coming under income tax scrutiny.
- The "humungous task of processing and verification of specified bank notes (SBNs) was successfully achieved," it said.
- The SBNs received were verified, counted and processed in the sophisticated high speed currency verification and processing system (CVPS) for accuracy and genuineness and then shredded, it added.
- RBI said the processing of SBNs has since been completed. "The total SBNs returned from circulation is Rs 15,310.73 billion."
- A collateral damage as a result of rise in printing and other cost was dividend RBI pays to the government.
- The government replaced old Rs 500 notes with new ones, but no replacement for Rs 1,000 notes have been made. Instead, a new Rs 2,000 notes were introduced post note ban.
- Post-demonetisation, RBI spent Rs 7,965 crore in 2016-17 on printing new Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 and other denomination notes, more than double the Rs 3,421 crore spent in the previous year.
- In 2017-18 (July 2017 to June 2018), it spent another Rs 4,912 crore on printing of currency, the annual report said.

- The demonetisation was hailed as a step that would curb black money, corruption and check counterfeit currency but RBI said, "Counterfeit notes detected in SBNs decreased by 59.7 and 59.6 per cent in the denominations of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000, respectively."
- "Compared to the previous year, there was an increase of 35 per cent in counterfeit notes detected in the denomination of Rs 100, while there was a noticeable increase of 154.3 per cent in counterfeit notes detected in the denomination of Rs 50," RBI said adding that counterfeit notes detected in the new Rs 500 and Rs 2,000 notes during 2017-18 were 9,892 and 17,929 as against 199 and 638, respectively, during the previous year.

Anganwadi Centres (AWCs):

- Context: A total of 14 lakh AWCs have been sanctioned to various States/UTs across the country which consists of about 1.36 lakh AWCs located in the urban areas.
- As on 01.06.2018, 13.63 lakh AWCs (rural and urban) are operational. As per the data captured through the ICDS Monitoring Information System, about 24.3% AWCs out of 13.63 lakh operational AWCs (rural and urban) are running in rented buildings.

What are Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)?

- Anganwadi is a type of rural mother and child care centre in India. They were started by the Indian government in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services program to combat child hunger and malnutrition.
- They provide a package of six services—supplementary nutrition, referral services, immunisation, health check-up, pre-school non-formal education and health and nutrition education— to women and children.

Challenges faced by AWCs?

- About a third of total 13.6 lakh anganwadi centres have neither toilets nor drinking water facilities.
- In Manipur only 21 per cent AWCs have drinking water facilities followed by Arunachal Pradesh (28.51 per cent), Uttarakhand (29.04 per cent), Karnataka (38.76 per cent), Telangana (40.21 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (48.18 per cent) and Maharashtra (53.47 per cent).
- Similarly, in Telanagana only 21.30 per cent AWCs have toilets, followed by Manipur (27.05 per cent), Jharkhand (38.74 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (43.93 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (44.11 per cent), Assam (47.51 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (48.73 per cent) and Odisha (52.64 per cent).

Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS):

- ICDS is one of the flagship initiatives of Govt. of India that is being implemented in the state by WCD Dept. ICDS seeks to provide young children with an integrated package of services such as supplementary nutrition, health care and pre-school education.
- ICDS programme seeks to provide all basic essential services to children and mothers in an integrated manner right in their villages or wards. Gradually, the scheme has been expanded to urban slums and to rural and tribal blocks.

Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month)

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India had recently organized an orientation workshop for various stakeholders participating in the Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) being celebrated in the month of September.
- The Workshop focused on sensitizing the line Ministries, States/UTs and District level functionaries and partners on various aspects of Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) being celebrated during the month of September across the Country as part of Jan Andolan under POSHAN Abhiyaan.

About Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month):

- The primary objective of the celebration of Poshan Maah is to take the messages of POSHAN to the grass root level.
- The programme- an initiative of WCD Ministry and NITI Aayog is supported by 18 line Ministries/Departments/Government Organizations.
- It seeks to synergise all efforts by leveraging technology and intends to take nutrition awareness to the level of Jan Andolan or People's Movement.
- The programme focuses on 8 themes – Antenatal Care, Optimal Breastfeeding (Early & Exclusive), Complementary Feeding, Anemia, Growth Monitoring, Girls-education, diet, right age of Marriage, Hygiene & Sanitation, Food Fortification.

About POSHAN Abhiyan:

- POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched on 8th March, 2018.

Objectives:

- The programme through use of technology, a targeted approach and convergence strives to reduce the level of Stunting, Under-nutrition, Anemia and Low Birth Weight in Children, as also, focus on Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers, thus holistically addressing malnutrition.
- Aims: POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure service delivery and interventions by use of technology, behavioural change through convergence and lays-down specific targets to be achieved across different monitoring parameters over the next few years.

- **Coverage:** To ensure a holistic approach, all 36 States/UTs and 718 districts will be covered in a phased manner by the year 2020.

FALLING RUPEE

Why in news?

- Recently, the Indian rupee weakened past the 71 mark for the first time ever.

More on news

- The rupee has registered a loss of about 10% of its value against the dollar since the beginning of the year making it the worst-performing currency in Asia.
- Other emerging market currencies, most notably the Turkish lira, the Argentine peso and the South African rand, have suffered much larger losses owing to a serious loss of confidence among investors.

Reasons of falling rupee :

- **Increasing demand for the dollar across the globe:** The tightening of liquidity in the West, with the U.S. Federal Reserve raising interest rates, has played a major role in the strengthening of the dollar since February this year. Investors who earlier put their money in emerging markets have recently preferred American assets, which now yield higher returns.
- **Higher domestic inflation in emerging economies when compared to the West:** Thus, it is natural for these currencies to slide in value over time against the dollar and other major Western currencies.
- **Trade war** between China and America, leading to import restrictions with high tariffs is causing dollar to appreciate. Huge dollar purchases by oil importing companies have also weighed heavily on rupee.
- **Oil prices: Iran sanctions** have been driving oil prices higher despite OPEC move to raise output. The benchmark Brent crude surpassed the significant \$75-mark a barrel. This is bad for India as it is third largest importer of oil, hence **current account deficit** has been coming under pressure.
- **More imports than exports:** India's import bill has been significantly rising without increase in net exports. India's current account deficit is rising and is expected to go up to 2.5-3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current financial year. Differently put, India is importing a lot more than it is exporting. Higher CAD in an environment of tightening financial conditions may continue to put pressure on the rupee

Impact of falling rupee :

- **On imports:** the country's imports become more expensive as it takes more rupees to pay for the same quantum of imports.
- **On competitiveness:** As fewer dollars are required for a buyer to pay for the same quantity of exports, India may gain its competitiveness which has been gravely hurt by an exchange rate policy that has prioritised a muscular rupee. It would also promote Make in India.
- **On inflation:** More expensive imports are likely to drive inflation upward, especially in India where input products constitute a large part of our imports. It also impacts the oil import bill which plays its own part in pushing inflation up. Rise in inflation would hurt investors sentiment as well.

- **On GDP growth:** On the one hand, costlier inputs and the subsequent increase in the prices of finished goods may have a positive impact on GDP while on the other hand, consequent decrease in demand due to higher prices could nullify this.
- **Widening of deficits:** As per analysts, every \$10 per barrel increase in oil prices could worsen current account and fiscal balances by 0.4% and 0.1% of GDP respectively.
- **On tourism:** trips abroad turning more expensive. On the flip side, the domestic tourism could grow as more tourists visit India since their currency now buys more here.
- **On employment:** In the medium term, export-oriented industries like Pharma sector, IT, gems and jewellery etc. may also create more jobs.

Steps that can be taken by government :

- Long term solution o Reduce heavy dependence on imports as well as on oil.
- **Boost export industries** by measures such as ensuring that exporters have easier access to tax refunds; a war-footing attack on red tape at the borders; and a clear commitment to opening up to new market-enhancing trade deals.
- **Attract FDI instead of FII**, through simplification of procedures, laws and dispute redressal. The rules for foreign borrowing should be liberalised by Indian firms to ensure higher inflows.
- **Maintain limit on deficit:** Although India's fiscal position has improved in recent years, compared to peers, the combined deficit is still on the higher side. The government should not allow the deficit to slip at this stage as it will increase macroeconomic stability risks.
- **Increase in interest rates** by central bank to control money outflow. However, cost of borrowing increases due to this which may cause fall in investment in the country.
- **Using foreign reserves to reduce volatility:** As of June 22, the RBI had foreign exchange reserves of \$407.81 billion, which it can sell in the open market. It is important to note, though, that reserves are only useful in reducing volatility and are not an antidote for poor economic management. If financial markets start believing that the country has problems at the fundamental level, then defending the currency can become extremely difficult.

FIRST IN WORLD, INDIA AND MAHARASHTRA

India's first genetic bank for wildlife conservation:

- In a step that would further the cause of conservation of endangered and protected animals, India has got its first scientific and most modern national wildlife genetic resource bank.
- It is located in Hyderabad at the Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES), a research wing of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB).

Salient features :

- The state-of-the-art bank is equipped with sophisticated equipment to preserve the genetic resources that could be utilised to virtually resurrect an animal species in case it goes extinct.
- The bank that contains genetic resources of about 250 wildlife species. The Genetic Resource Bank will store genetic material of Indian species.

- It will also help in protecting India's biodiversity and environment.

Achievements of Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES):

- It is India's only research facility engaged in conservation and preservation of wildlife and its resources.
- It was established in 1998 with the help of Central Zoo Authority of India, CSIR and the government of Andhra Pradesh.
- LaCONES has helped the Mouse Deer Conservation Breeding Centre at Nehru Zoological Park to increase the population of mouse deer in Telangana forests.
- Amrabad forest, for instance, ran out of mouse deer and through the efforts of LaCONES, the animal is now reintroduced in Amrabad Tiger Reserve.
- Earlier, LaCONES has developed universal DNA based marker for identification of wild animals from parts and remains. It has a DNA banking of more than 250 species of mammals, birds and reptiles.

Kowsar: Iran unveils first domestically manufactured fighter jet

- Iran has unveiled first domestically manufactured fighter jet nicknamed Kowsar. It was unveiled at defence show held in the capital city of Tehran.

Kowsar:

- It is fourth-generation fighter with advanced avionics and multi-purpose radar. It was 100% indigenously made in Iran.
- Its name Kowsar means *river in paradise* in Islam and also title of chapter in Koran. It is dualcockpit, single engine jet with single tail fin.
- It resembles US-made F-5F Tiger (first flew in 1974), which is variant of 1950s-era US Northrop F-5 fighter that is a long-time mainstay of Iranian Air Force.
- It can be used for short aerial support missions. It is equipped with systems that promote precision targeting.

Background:

- Iran's functional air force has been limited to perhaps as few as few dozen strike aircraft either Russian or ageing US models including F-5s that were acquired before 1979 Iranian revolution.
- Iran has unveiled several new fighter jets in last few years. In 2013, it had unveiled domestically built fighter jet Qahar-313, which was compared to US F-22 and F-35.

Rajasthan first State to implement biofuel policy:

- Rajasthan has become the first State in the country to implement the national policy on biofuels unveiled by the Centre in May this year.
- The policy lays emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds and establish a Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in the fields of alternative fuels and energy resources.

- **National Policy on biofuels- salient features: Categorization:** The Policy categorises biofuels as “Basic Biofuels” viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and “Advanced Biofuels” – Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.
- **Scope of raw materials:** The Policy expands the scope of raw material for ethanol production by allowing use of Sugarcane Juice, Sugar containing materials like Sugar Beet, Sweet Sorghum, Starch containing materials like Corn, Cassava, Damaged food grains like wheat, broken rice, Rotten Potatoes, unfit for human consumption for ethanol production.
- **Protection to farmers:** Farmers are at a risk of not getting appropriate price for their produce during the surplus production phase.
- Taking this into account, the Policy allows use of surplus food grains for production of ethanol for blending with petrol with the approval of National Biofuel Coordination Committee.
- **Viability gap funding:** With a thrust on Advanced Biofuels, the Policy indicates a viability gap funding scheme for 2G ethanol Bio refineries of Rs.5000 crore in 6 years in addition to additional tax incentives, higher purchase price as compared to 1G biofuels.
- **Boost to biodiesel production:** The Policy encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, Used Cooking Oil, short gestation crops.
- **Expected benefits:** Import dependency: The policy aims at reducing import dependency. Cleaner environment: By reducing crop burning & conversion of agricultural residues/wastes to biofuels there will be further reduction in Green House Gas emissions.

Health benefits:

- Prolonged reuse of Cooking Oil for preparing food, particularly in deep-frying is a potential health hazard and can lead to many diseases.
- Used Cooking Oil is a potential feedstock for biodiesel and its use for making biodiesel will prevent diversion of used cooking oil in the food industry.
- **Employment Generation:** One 100klpd 2G bio refinery can contribute 1200 jobs in Plant Operations, Village Level Entrepreneurs and Supply Chain Management.
- **Additional Income to Farmers:** By adopting 2G technologies, agricultural residues/waste which otherwise are burnt by the farmers can be converted to ethanol and can fetch a price for these waste if a market is developed for the same.
- **Significance of Biofuels:** Globally, biofuels have caught the attention in last decade and it is imperative to keep up with the pace of developments in the field of biofuels.
- Biofuels in India are of strategic importance as it augers well with the ongoing initiatives of the Government such as Make in India, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill Development and offers great opportunity to integrate with the ambitious targets of doubling of Farmers Income, Import Reduction, Employment Generation, Waste to Wealth Creation.

Classification of Biofuels:

- 172 1st generation biofuels are also called conventional biofuels. They are made from things like sugar, starch, or vegetable oil. Note that these are all food products. Any biofuel made from a feedstock that can also be consumed as a human food is considered a first generation biofuel.
- 2nd generation biofuels are produced from sustainable feedstock. The sustainability of a feedstock is defined by its availability, its impact on greenhouse gas emissions, its impact on land use, and by its potential to threaten the food supply.
- No second generation biofuel is also a food crop, though certain food products can become second generation fuels when they are no longer useful for consumption.
- Second generation biofuels are often called “advanced biofuels.” 3rd generation biofuels are biofuel derived from algae.
- These biofuels are given their own separate class because of their unique production mechanism and their potential to mitigate most of the drawbacks of 1st and 2nd generation biofuels.

Santhali becomes India’s first tribal language to get own Wikipedia edition:

- Santhali has become the first Indian tribal language to get a Wikipedia edition in its own script after the Santhali Wikipedia went live earlier this month.
- “The Santhali Wikipedia got approval from the language committee of the Wikimedia Foundation on June 28 and went live on August 2,” said Jayanta Nath of the Indian chapter of Wikimedia Foundation, which runs Wikipedia.
- Wikipedia contributors from India, Bangladesh and Nepal generated the content to make this page possible, Nath said. It presently has content of about 70,000 words.
- Santhali is written in Ol Chiki script and spoken by 6.4 million people, according to the 2001 census, in India alone and its speakers live mostly in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Assam. It is also spoken in Bangladesh and Nepal.
- The home page of the Santhali edition of Wikipedia carries an article on Raghunath Murmu, who created the Ol Chiki script.
- There have been several initiatives in the past few months to push the Santhali language.
- In November 2017, 24-year-old Shikha Mandi became the first radio jockey in the language. The programme is aired by Radio Milan 90.4 with listeners in West Bengal’s Jhargram and West Midnapore districts.
- Several hundred students wrote their Class 10 board examinations under the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) in the Ol Chiki script for the first time this year.
- The Santhali language was heard for the first time on a global platform in March during the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a body made up of national parliaments from all over the world, when Uma Saren, a 33-year-old doctor by training and a Lok Sabha MP from Jhargram constituency, addressed a conference in Geneva.
- The Wikipedia initiative was first taken up in 2012 when workshops were held, but lost steam soon after due to the lack of contributors.

- The project was revived in September 2017 by the Bangladesh chapter of Wikimedia Foundation. Workshops were first conducted in Bangladesh in December 2017 and then in India in March this year.
- “We are soon going to conduct more workshops in India, Bangladesh and Nepal,” said Manik Soren, information and research secretary of Jatiya Adibasi Parishad, a tribal-rights organisation in Bangladesh. Soren was among the key contributors from Bangladesh.
- Pashupati Prasad Mahato, an anthropologist, said this will help boost people’s interest in getting higher education in Santhali.
- “The scope of higher education in Santhali is increasing over the past few years. Coming at this juncture, this will increase the scope of reading in Ol Chiki script and enthuse Santhali speakers to pursue higher education in their mother tongue,” Mahato said.
- Among the 22 scheduled languages in India, Dogri, Bodo and Manipuri have no version of Wikipedia in their own language. The Assamese version of Wikipedia, which is live since 2002, is in the Bengali script.
- Bishnupriya Manipuri, which is spoken mostly in parts of Assam and Tripura in India and Sylhet in Bangladesh, and Bhojpuri spoken mainly in Bihar are the only non-scheduled language to have its own Wikipedia edition.
- However, the script of Bishnupriya Manipuri is Bengali.
- Wikipedia is available in nearly 300 languages globally as of August 2018.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES :

World Biofuel day 2018:

- Context: World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10th August to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels and to highlight the various efforts made by the Government in the biofuel sector.

About World Bio Fuel Day:

- Every year 10th August is observed as World Bio-Fuel Day in a bid to create awareness about non fossil-fuels (Green Fuels). On this day in 1893, Sir Rudolph Diesel (inventor of the diesel engine) for the first time successfully ran mechanical engine with Peanut Oil.
- His research experiment had predicted that vegetable oil is going to replace the fossil fuels in the next century to fuel different mechanical engines.
- Thus to mark this extraordinary achievement, World Biofuel Day is observed every year on 10th August.

Government initiatives to promote the use of Biofuels:

- Since 2014, the Government of India has taken a number of initiatives to increase blending of biofuels.

- The major interventions include administrative price mechanism for ethanol, simplifying the procurement procedures of OMCs, amending the provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 and enabling lignocellulosic route for ethanol procurement.
- The Government approved the National Policy on Biofuels-2018 in June 2018. The policy has the objective of reaching 20% ethanol-blending and 5% biodiesel-blending by the year 2030.
- Among other things, the policy expands the scope of feedstock for ethanol production and has provided for incentives for production of advanced biofuels.
- Recently, the Government has increased the price of C-heavy molasses-based ethanol to Rs. 43.70 from Rs. 40.85 to give a boost to EBP Programme.
- Price of B-heavy molasses-based ethanol and sugarcane juice-based ethanol has been fixed for the first time at Rs. 47.40.
- The Government has reduced GST on ethanol for blending in fuel from 18% to 5%. The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas is making all efforts to increase ethanol supply for petrol and has taken several steps in this direction.

Outcomes:

- These interventions of the Government of India have shown positive results.
- Ethanol blending in petrol has increased from 38 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2013-14 to an estimated 141 crore litres in the ethanol supply year 2017-18.
- Bio-diesel blending in the country started from 10th August, 2015 and in the year 2018-19, Oil Marketing Companies have allocated 7.6 crore litres of biodiesel.
- Oil PSUs are also planning to set up 12 Second Generation (2G) Bio-refineries to augment ethanol supply and address environmental issues arising out of burning of agricultural biomass.

SCIENCE AND TECH

5G

Why in news?

- The Steering Committee constituted for identifying the 5G deployment roadmap for India recently submitted report titled 'Making India 5G Ready'.

Background

- Mobile wireless generation generally refers to a change in the nature of the system, speed, technology, frequency, data capacity, latency etc.
- Each generation has certain standards, different capacities, new techniques and new features which differentiate it from the previous technology.
- **First Generation (1G)** mobile wireless communication network was analog and was used for voice calls only. Its basic features were – speed of 2.4kbps, voice calls in one country only, use analog signal, poor voice quality etc.

- **Second Generation (2G)** is a digital technology and supports text messaging. Next to 2G, 2.5G system uses packet switched and circuit switched domain and provide data rate upto 144kbps e.g. GPRS, CDMA etc.
- **Third Generation (3G)** mobile technology provided high data transmission rate, increased capacity and provided multimedia support. The aim of this technology was to provide high speed data and offers data services, access to television/videos, new services like Global Roaming etc. It used Wide Band Wireless Network with which clarity is increased.
- **Fourth Generation (4G)** integrates 3G with fixed internet to support wireless mobile internet which is an evolution to mobile technology and it overcomes the limitations of 3G. Long Term Evolution (LTE) is considered 4G technology.

What is 5G?

- 5G is a wireless communication technology using **radio waves** or radio frequency (RF) energy to transmit and receive data.
- It is the next generation mobile networks technology after 4G LTE networks. 5G technologies will enter services gradually, beginning in 2019 and advance to a full range of services by 2024.
- The final standard for 5G will be set up by the **International Telecommunications Union (ITU)**.
- Technical specification for 5G – o **high data rates** (1 Gbps for hotspots, 100 Mbps download and 50 Mbps upload for wide-area coverage)
- **massive connectivity** (1 million connections per square kilometre)
- **ultra-low latency** (1 millisecond)
- **high reliability** (99.999% for mission critical ‘ultra-reliable’ communications), and **Mobility at high speeds** (up to 500 km/h i.e. high-speed trains).
- The technology is still a long way from becoming a reality but it has the potential to completely change the way we interact with wireless devices.

Advantages of 5G

- **Faster Data Speed** – Currently 4G networks are capable of achieving the peak download speed of one gigabit per second. With 5G the speed could be increased upto 10Gbps.
- **Ultra-low latency** – Latency refers to the time it takes for one device to send a packet of data to another device. In 4G the latency rate is around 50 milliseconds but 5G will reduce that to about 1 millisecond.
- **A more Connected World** – 5G will provide the capacity and bandwidth as per the need of the user to accommodate technologies such as **Internet of Things**. Thus, will help to incorporate **Artificial Intelligence** in our lives.

Steps taken:

- The Government has launched a program titled ‘**Building an End-to-End 5G Test Bed**’. The program envisages close collaboration between the universities and small technology companies to build broadly compliant with the 3GPP standards.
- A 5G High Level Forum was set up by the Government in September 2017 to articulate the Vision for 5G in India and to recommend policy initiatives and action plans to realize this vision.
- Several smaller academic R&D programs around 5G themes have also been funded by DST and MEITY.
- Ericsson has installed the first public access 5G test bed at IIT Delhi.

- As per the **OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) Committee** on Digital Economic Policy, 5G technologies rollout will help in **increasing GDP, creating employment and digitizing the economy.**
- The cumulative economic impact of 5G on India can reach one trillion USD by 2035. It will help aid incorporation of **Artificial Intelligence** in our lives and will enable Smart devices to exchange data seamlessly providing the ecosystem for Internet of Things (**IoT**).
- In agriculture, 5G can enable improvement in the entire value-chain, from precision farming, smart irrigation, improved soil and crop monitoring, to livestock management.
- In manufacturing, 5G will enable use of robotics for precision manufacturing, particularly where humans cannot perform these functions safely or accurately.
- In the energy sector, 'smart grids' and 'smart metering' can be efficiently supported. With the rise of renewable and storage technologies, low latency communications will be critical to manage these grids.
- Vehicle platooning can double vehicle density in roads promoting efficient and safer use of the limited road infrastructure.
- In health-care, 5G can enable more effective tele-medicine delivery, tele-control of surgical robotics and wireless monitoring of vital statistics.

Challenges :

- **Integration of various standards** – There are already multiple groups working to come up with standards around interoperability, backward compatibility with older technologies etc. Thus, standardization becomes a major challenge faced by 5G.
- **Common Platform** – There is no common architecture for interconnecting various engineering practices. Therefore, a common governing body should develop a common platform for all engineering practices.
- **Building Infrastructure** - It is a huge task, with issues around spectrum and installing new antennas.
- **Obstacles** – Like buildings, trees and even bad weather can cause interruptions which would require more base stations to be built to ensure better connections.
- India lacks a strong backhaul to transition to 5G. Backhaul is a network that connects cells sites to central exchange.
- As of now 80% of cell sites are connected through microwave backhaul, while under 20% sites are connected through fibre.
- The former has bandwidth issues as it uses traditional bands while the latter provides low latency and unlimited capacity (a prerequisite for 5G).
- The Indian market is yet to adapt to 4G completely and has not fully evolved to experience an AI revolution.

Key Recommendations :

- The committee spells out **three priority areas** for India in 5G :
- Deployment – rolling out early, efficient and pervasive 5G networks
- Technology – building India's industrial and R&D capacity in 5G
- Manufacturing - expanding the manufacturing base in 5G for both semiconductor fabrication as well as assembly & test plants

- **Spectrum Policy:** India's spectrum allocation for public wireless services should be enhanced significantly. Also, the cost of spectrum relative to per capita GDP is high and should come down.
- **Regulatory Policy:** Three expert **committees on business, security and safety** segments to be created to develop clear guidelines on regulatory policy.
- **Education and Awareness Promotion Program:** The Committee recommends **three initiatives** o Attract global 5G conference events to India
- Set up national 5G events and Create a comprehensive skills development program.
- **Setting up applications and Use Case Labs:** It can provide multiple functions – interoperability, testing for new applications, fostering innovation, etc. within different economic sectors.

Participation in International Standards:

- Short term initiatives like setting up 'Standards Project Teams' to participate in standards activities.
- Long term initiatives like expert committee should be constituted to recommend a ten year strategy for Information Technology Standards in India.
- **Technology Demonstration and Major Trials:** 5G trials will be an important learning opportunity for our Telecom Service Providers (TSP), academia and industry.
- Create a **5G Program Office within Department of Telecommunications and an Oversight Committee.**
- New civil infrastructure like highways, roads, canals and utilities(gas, electricity, water) lines should be mandated to provision Common Telecom Infrastructure resources such as ducting and power junction boxes to support 5G infrastructure.
- Security audits, a prerequisite for importing of equipment before deploying in Indian networks, needs to be simplified.

India successfully tests indigenously developed Anti-Tank Guided Missile 'HELINA'

- On 19th August 2018, India successfully flight tested the indigenously developed helicopter launched Anti-Tank Guided Missile(ATGM) 'HELINA' from Army helicopter in Pokhran, Rajasthan.
- HeliNA (Helicopter-launched Nag) is helicopter launched version known of NAG ATGM. The Strike Range of HeliNa is range of 7–8 km.
- Indigenously developed helicopter launched anti-tank guided missile HELINA has been successfully flight tested from Army helicopter in the ranges of Pokhran, today. The weapon system has been tested for its full range.
- The HELINA weapon system released smoothly from the launch platform has tracked the target all through its course and hit the target with high precision.
- All the parameters have been monitored by the telemetry stations, tracking systems and the Helicopters.
- India has successfully test-fired indigenously designed and developed long-range precision-guided anti-airfield bomb that was dropped from an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft, the Defence Ministry said on Sunday.

- The missile is guided by an Infrared Imaging Seeker (IIR) operating in the Lock on Before Launch mode. It is one of the most advanced Anti-Tank Weapons in the world. Senior officials from DRDO and Indian Army were present during the mission.
- The indigenously designed and developed Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW) system was successfully tested at the Chandan firing range in Rajasthan.
- The weapon system was integrated with live warhead and has destroyed the targets with high precision. The telemetry and tracking systems captured all the mission events.
- The weapon has undergone eight developmental trials till date and performance of system for different ranges under multiple launch conditions has been demonstrated.
- Senior officials from DRDO, HAL and Indian Air Force participated and witnessed the flight tests.
- Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman congratulated the DRDO and the Indian Army on the successful flight test for further strengthening the defence capabilities of the country.

India successfully tests smart anti-airfield weapon

- India has successfully test-fired indigenously designed and developed long-range precision-guided anti-airfield bomb that was dropped from an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft, the Defence Ministry said on Sunday.
- The Smart Anti- Airfield weapon(SAAW) system was successfully tested at the Chandan firing range in Rajasthan . A total of three tests with different release conditions were conducted from August 16 to 18, a defence spokesman said.
- "The weapon system was integrated with live warhead and destroyed the targets with high precision. The telemetry and tracking systems captured all the mission events. All the mission objectives have been achieved."
- The 120-kg class smart weapon is capable of destroying ground targets using precision navigation up to a range of 100 km. It is capable of destroying runways, bunkers, aircraft hangers and other reinforced structures.
- The guided bomb is considered to be one of the world-class weapons systems, developed by state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with the IAF and the Research Centre Imarat (RCI).
- The bomb, which is said to have higher precision and much cheaper compared with missiles, can be carried on IAF's various aircraft like Jaguar and MIG.
- The weapon has so far undergone eight developmental trials and performance of the system for different ranges under multiple launch conditions has been demonstrated.
- Senior officials from DRDO, HINDUSTAN Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) and the IAF participated and witnessed the flight tests.
- Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman congratulated the DRDO, IAF and HAL on the successful tests for further boosting the defence capabilities of the country.

Exercise Maitree: Annual Joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army conducted between 06 to 19 August 2018 in Thailand

- Exercise Maitree is a joint military exercise between Indian Army and Royal Thai Army which will be conducted from 06 to 19 August 2018 in Thailand. It is a platoon level exercise which comprises of infantry component.
- The opening ceremony started with familiarization of organisation and display of weapons & equipment of both armies.
- The exercise will emphasize to hone the tactical and technical skills in joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural and urban scenario under UN mandate.
- Due emphasis will be laid on increasing interoperability between forces from both countries which is crucial for success of any joint operation.
- Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well developed tactical drills for neutralization of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario.
- Experts from both sides will also hold detailed discussions to share their experience on varied topics for mutual benefit.
- Exercise Maitree will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and bonhomie between the two armies in order to counter terrorism.

SPORTS AND AWARDS:

Javed Akhtar bestowed with Shalaka Samman, highest honour of Hindi Sahitya Academy

- Hindi Academy Delhi has given its highest Shalaka Samman for 2017-18 to bollywood lyricist and poet Javed Akhtar. He is a father of Actor-filmmaker Farhan Akhtar.
- The lyricist has also been honoured with the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2007.
- He is also a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu for his collection of poems entitled Lava.

SAHITYA AKADEMI:

- The **Sahitya Akademi**, India's [India's](#) National Academy of Letters, is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of literature in the languages of India. Founded on 12 March 1954, it is supported by, though independent of, the Indian government. It is in Rabindra Bhavan near Mandi House in Delhi.
- The Sahitya Akademi organises national and regional workshops and seminars; provides research and travel grants to authors; publishes books and journals, including the Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature; and presents the annual Sahitya Akademi Award of Rs. 100,000 (approx. USD 1,500 (in year 2013)) in each of the 24 languages it supports, as well as the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship for lifetime achievement.
- The Sahitya Akademi Library is one of the largest multi-lingual libraries in India, with a rich collection of books on literature and allied subjects.
- It publishes two bimonthly literary journals: Indian Literature in English and *Samkaleen Bharatiya Sahitya* in Hindi.

- The idea of constituting a National Academy of Letters in India was considered by the colonial British government, and in 1944 a proposal from the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal for the formation of a 'National Cultural Trust' was, in principle, accepted.
- The original plan conceived of three institutions, or academies, devoted to the visual arts, performing arts, and letters.
- The independent Government of India carried out this proposal, constituting a National Academy of Letters, called the 'Sahitya Akademi' by a government resolution on 15 December 1952.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi conferred with 2018 Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award

- Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi was conferred with 2018 Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award.
- He was presented award in New Delhi on occasion of 74th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Gopalkrishna Gandhi:

- Born on 22 April 1945. He is grandson of Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi. He is retired IAS officer (Tamil Nadu cadre) and also had served as diplomat.
- He was 22nd Governor of West Bengal serving from 2004 to 2009. As former IAS officer, he had served as Secretary to President of India (1987-1992).
- He had served as India's High Commissioner to South Africa and Sri Lanka and also held other important administrative and diplomatic posts.
- He was United Progressive Alliance (UPA) nominee for 2017 Vice President of India election and lost with 244 votes against NDA candidate Venkaiah Naidu, who received 516 votes.

Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award:

- It is awarded every year on persons for outstanding contribution towards promotion of communal harmony, national integration and peace.
- It was instituted in 1992 by All India Congress Committee of Indian National Congress Party (INC) to commemorate the lasting contribution made by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. The award carries citation and cash award of Rs. ten lakhs.
- It is given on 20 August (birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi observed as), which is celebrated as Sadbhavana Diwas (Harmony Day).
- Former recipients of award include Mother Teresa, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Yunus, Sunil Dutt, Kapila Vatsyayan, Dilip Kumar, Teesta Setalvad, Swami Agnivesh, K.R. Narayanan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Muzaffar Ali and Shubha Mudgal. In 2017, it was awarded to Former Cricketer Mohammad Azharuddin and Retired IAS Officer M.Gopala Krishna.

Shane Warne to come out with autobiography in October:

- Shane Warne is widely regarded as one of the finest bowlers in the history of the game. He played his first Test match in 1992, and took over 1,000 international wickets.

- Spin legend Shane Warne will talk about his extraordinary cricketing career and his life off the pitch besides unveiling several unknown facts in his autobiography which will be published this October.
- Ebury Press on Monday announced that Warne's memoir "No Spin" will have a global release on October 4.
- "No Spin" is the true story behind the headlines, in Warne's own voice, and challenges some of the enduring myths and untruths that surround him. Uncompromising and compelling, it is destined to rank alongside some of the greatest sports autobiographies ever, the publisher said.
- Andrew Goodfellow, deputy publisher at Ebury, said, "Despite all the pain he's inflicted on us over the years Shane Warne is still one of the most admired and celebrated cricketers to a British audience.
- "You simply can't imagine the game without his unique contributions. I think his insight, no-nonsense honesty and strength of voice will make this the most read cricketing autobiography in years. At Ebury we are all very excited and honoured to be publishing such a legend."
- Warne's mesmerising bowling prowess coupled with his personal life (which has long been fodder for the tabloid press) has made him one of the world's most illustrious sportsmen.
- Born on September 13, 1969, Warne is widely regarded as one of the finest bowlers in the history of the game. He played his first Test match in 1992, and took over 1,000 international wickets (in Tests and One-Day Internationals).
- A useful lower-order batsman, Warne also scored over 3000 Test runs. He played domestic cricket for his home state of Victoria, and English domestic cricket for Hampshire. He also captained the Rajasthan Royals to victory in the IPL in 2008. He officially retired from all formats in 2013 and currently commentates for Foxtel.

VVS Laxman pens autobiography "281 and Beyond"

- Indian cricketer VVS Laxman, known for the suppleness of his wrists, plans to release his emotional journey as cricket player through his autobiography "281 and Beyond" on November 20, 2018.
- Veteran cricketer VVS Laxman, known for the suppleness of his wrists, has penned down his autobiography titled, "281 and Beyond". The book will be released this year in November.
- The book will be released by the Westland Publications. The title has been borrowed from the Hyderabad stylist's fabulous series-turning innings of 281 against Australia at the Eden Gardens in 2001.

- Veteran cricketer VVS Laxman, known for the suppleness of his wrists, will now bring his expertise into play as he picks up the pen to write his tell-all book, which will hit the stands on November 20.
- Westland Publications today announced the release of the former Indian cricketer's autobiography titled, "281 and Beyond".
- The title has been borrowed from the Hyderabad stylist's fabulous series-turning innings of 281 against Australia at the Eden Gardens in 2001.
- "It (writing the book) was an emotional journey that left me drained at the end of each session. Several incidents that I had all but forgotten suddenly sprang back into memory as I relived my life in great detail. It was hard work, but it was also great fun," Laxman said.
- Though promising to be an "honest and frank" account of the cricketer's journey, it comes with the important caveat of "no dressing-room secrets".
- "I have been honest and frank, and shared the experiences that have made me the person I am. Without revealing dressing-room secrets, I have tried to offer a peek into the psyche of Indian cricket, and some of its most celebrated sons," said the ever-smiling non-controversial batting great.
- Laxman, who announced his retirement from international cricket in 2012, played 134 Tests, amassing 8,781 runs at an average of 45.97. He scored 17 centuries and 56 half centuries.
- He also played in 86 ODIs for an aggregate of 2338 and average of 30.76 in the shorter format.
- "VVS's account of his life is refreshingly candid and full of insights into the way cricket is played - at the domestic, national and international level," Gautam Padmanabhan, CEO, Westland said

P V Sindhu wins silver World Championships 2018 of Badminton

- Ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu finished second best winning silver medal at World Championships 2018 of Badminton in women's singles category held at Nanjing, China.
- It makes Sindhu only Indian to have four world championships podium finishes. Earlier she had won two bronze medals at 2013 (Guangzhou) and 2014 (Copenhagen) editions.

World Championships 2018 Winners:

- **Men's singles:** Kento Momota of Japan won the title (gold medal) with 21-13, 21-11 victory over China's Shi Yuqi. With this victory, he became the first Japanese man to win the Championships.
- **Women's singles:** Olympic champion Carolina Marin of Spain won this title by defeating India's P V Sindhu by 19-21 10-21 score.. With this victory, Marin became the first woman shuttler to

win the world championships thrice. She had earlier won the title in 2014 (Copenhagen) and 2015 (Jakarta).

- **Men's doubles:** Chinese pair of Li Junhui and Liu Yuchen won the title by defeating Japanese pair of Takeshi Kamura and Keigo Sonoda
- **Women's doubles:** Japanese pair of Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara won the title by defeating another Japanese pair of Yuki Fukushima and Sayaka Hirota.
- **Mixed doubles:** Chinese pair of Zheng Siwei and Huang Yaqiong won the title by defeating another Chinese pair of Wang Yilü and Huang Dongping.

DEATHS AND OBITUARIES:

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former Prime Minister, passed away at 93

- On 16th August 2018, former Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, passed away following a long term illness, at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. He was the first BJP leader to become the prime minister of India.
- He was a three-time Prime Minister of India.
- The only non-congress leader to have completed a full term as PM, breathed his last at AIIMS.
- Mr. Vajpayee was admitted to the AIIMS on June 11 with a kidney tract infection and chest congestion.
- Mr. Vajpayee was PM THRICE IN 1996, 1998-99 AND 1999-2004. As his health deteriorated, he slowly withdrew himself from public life and was confined to his residence for several years.
- Born on December 25, 1924, in Gwalior, Mr. Vajpayee was elected 10 times to the Lok Sabha from four different states, the first time in 1957 from Balrampur in Uttar Pradesh and was twice member of Rajya Sabha.
- As one of the founding members of the Jan Sangh in 1951, Mr. Vajpayee became its president in 1968 upon the death of Deendayal Upadhyaya.
- As his parliamentary career flourished, Mr. Vajpayee made a name for himself as an orator and with his poetic flourishes, his poetry was collated in his book *Meri Ekyaavan Kavitayein*. (My 51 Poems).

'Atal Ji Ne Kaha', A Book On AB Vajpayee Launched

- "**Atal Ji Ne Kaha**" is the latest of the books on the BJP patriarch and former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee launched with a message by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- **The book is authored and compiled by Brijendra Rehi.** Mr. Rehi is noted Doordarshan producer, and senior journalist.
- The 320-page book is a rich repository of the former Prime Minister's select speeches and photographs beside having three interviews by the author. The book has been published by Darpan Publication.

Kofi Annan, former UN secretary general, dies at 80

- On 18th August 2018, former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, passed away following a short term illness, at a hospital in Bern, Switzerland.
- He was the seventh UN secretary general and also the first black African secretary-general. He served two terms between 1997 and 2006. He received the Nobel peace prize in 2001.
- In 2016, Mr. Annan was named by the Myanmar government to head a panel to find “lasting solutions” to the conflict in Rakhine state, where human rights groups have documented widespread abuses against the minority Rohingya Muslims.
- Under the leadership, the UN introduced the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, which the countries of the world committed to ending poverty within 15 years.
- Under his leadership two intergovernmental bodies, the Peace building Commission and the Human Rights council, were established. In 2001, Kofi Annan was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace along with the United Nations.
- Mr. Annan played a central role in the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. He launched the Global Compact initiative, the world’s Largest effort to promote corporate social responsibility, in 1999.

Former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee passes away

- Former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee passed away following multi-organ failure in Kolkata, West Bengal. He was 89.
- He was Speaker of Lok Sabha (House of the People) in first five-year term (2004-2009) of United Progressive Alliance Government.

Somnath Chatterjee:

- He was born in 1929 in Tezpur, Assam. He was educated at Mitra Institution School, Presidency College and then University of Calcutta in Calcutta.
- He also attended Jesus College, Cambridge and graduating with BA in 1952 and an MA in 1957, both in Law. He was awarded honorary fellowship by college in 2007.
- He was called to bar from Middle Temple in London and took up legal practice as advocate at Calcutta High Court before joining active politics.
- He joined Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) in 1968 and was member till his expulsion in 2008.
- He was elected to Lok Sabha (Parliament’s Lower House) for ten times since 1971 (except once when he lost to Mamata Banerjee in the Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency in 1984).
- He was expelled from CPM in July 2008 for refusing to resign as Speaker after his party withdrew support from UPA government.