

MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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INTERNATIONAL , NATIONAL AND WORLD

Nitin Gadkari to lay the foundation stone for development of Ghagra River as National Waterway

- Union Minister for Shipping, Road Transport & Highways and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari will lay the foundation stone for the development work of Ghagra River as National Waterway-40 on October 9, 2018 at Basti in Uttar Pradesh.
- The project is a part of the Sagarmala Programme of the Union Ministry of Shipping.

Ghagra river as National Waterway:

- The waterway will stretch from Manjhighat at Ganga-Gaghra river confluence to Faizabad or Ayodhya along Gaghra River for a length of 354 km.
- This stretch was declared as National Waterway (NW)-40 during the year 2016, as part of Government's renewed push to develop inland waterways sector in the country.
- Together with National Waterway-1 (on river Ganga), NW-40 will prove to be a major transport modal choice for cargo and passenger movement.
- The Detailed Project Report on the development of NW-40 envisages terminal at five locations – Ayodhya, Mahirpur (Tanda/Kalwari), Dohrighat, Tortipar and Manjhighat.

How the development is being carried out?

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), under Ministry of Shipping, has already initiated work in Phase –I with project cost of Rs 11.6 crore.
- The authority has constructed the floating terminal at Tanda/Kalwari to facilitate cargo and passenger movement on River Ghagra and River Ganga.
- Under Phase 1, the draft of 2 metre and width of 45 metre will be constructed in addition to floating terminals through Pontoon-Gangway at two locations- Tanda/Kalwari and Manjhighat.
- The first phase works are scheduled to be completed by 2019-20.
- The Detailed Project Planning (DPR) on NW-40 involves movement of various categories of cargo such as agricultural products (rice, wheat, pulses, sugar, livestock), industrial products, coal (for Tanda power plant), coarse sand, bricks, paper products, leather and other general goods through inland vessel capacity up to 1000 tonne.

Significance :

- This waterway is being classified as class-III waterway which envisages movement of up to 1000 ton capacity vessels.
- Besides cargo and passenger movement, NW-40 will provide a connectivity to tourist and pilgrimage places along river Gaghra and Ganga.

Sagarmala Project :

- Sagarmala Project is associated with maritime, waterways and coastline in India.
- The Union Government approved the Sagarmala Project on March 25, 2015 to harness India's 7,500 km long coastline and 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways.

- Approximately 95 percent (by volume) of trade of Indian merchandise occurs via seaways and there was a need for a systematic approach for development of coastline.
- Sagarmala project is an answer to that need. It provides a comprehensive development of coastline and maritime sector.
- Sagarmala Project is aimed at reducing cost and time of transporting domestic cargo and locating future industrial capacities near the coast so as to lower logistics cost of bulk commodities.

India's longest river bridge will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam

- India's longest river bridge with total length of 19.3 kilometers will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam. This bridge will connect Dhubri of Assam to Fulbarani of Meghalaya.
- This bridge will reduce the distance between these two places by 203 kms and also travel time. At present, India's largest river bridge is Dhola-Sadia bridge, its length is 9.15 kilometers.

Salient features :

- This bridge will have total length will be 19.3 kilometers and will be four-lane. Its construction will be completed by 2026-27 and will be public-funded work.
- Japanese Finance Agency (JICA) has approved the loan for this project as part of road infrastructure improvement package in the north-east after assessing the economic benefit of the big project.
- At present, the road connecting Assam and Meghalaya is about 200 kilometers long. This bridge will reduce travel time to 15-20 minutes to cross the river after it becomes operational from two and a half hours.
- Two northeastern states of Assam and Meghalaya will be connected by NH127B with the help of this bridge.
- On completion this bridge will push economic activities and development on both sides of the river. It will also improve connectivity from West Bengal to Assam.

Advantages of keeping global temperature rise within 1.5 degrees celsius

- It also lists several specific advantages of keeping the global temperature rise within 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. By 2100, global sea level rise would be 10 cm lower with global warming of 1.5 degrees compared with 2 degrees Celsius.
- Arctic Ocean free of sea ice in summer would be once per century with global warming of 1.5 degrees, compared with at least once per decade with 2 degrees Celsius.
- Coral reefs will decline by 70-90% with global warming of 1.5 degrees, whereas virtually all (over 99%) would be lost with 2 degrees Celsius.
- It also points out that climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius and increase further with 2 degrees Celsius.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC):

- IPCC is the leading international body for the assessment of climate change. It was established in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Currently 195 countries are its members. It comprises a group of several hundred scientists of different nationality who assess climate change science. Every 5 or 6 years, IPCC comes out with comprehensive periodic reports on Climate Change called Assessment Reports (AR).

- **Functions:** IPCC neither monitors climate related parameters or data nor does it conduct any research work. It merely assesses the most recent scientific, socio-economic and technical information produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of climate change.
- **Awards:** IPCC's 4th AR had helped them to win Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. During this time R.K. Pachauri was its Chairman.

SHOULD INDIA HAVE TWO TIME ZONES?

- Context: Scientists at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research's National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL), which maintains Indian Standard Time, have published a research article describing the necessity of two time zones, with the new one an hour ahead of the existing time zone.

Background:

- Over the years, various citizens and political leaders have debated whether India should have two separate time zones. The demand is based on the huge difference in daylight times between the country's longitudinal extremes, and the costs associated with following the same time zone.
- Opposition to the idea is based on impracticability — particularly the risk of railway accidents, given the need to reset times at every crossing from one time zone into another.

Need for two time zones:

- India extends from 68°7'E to 97°25'E, with the spread of 29° representing almost two hours from the geographic perspective.
- Legislators, activists, industrialists and ordinary citizens from the Northeast have often complained about the effect of IST on their lives, and pursued the issue of having a separate time zone with the Central government, without much success.
- In the Northeast, the sun rises as early as four in the morning and in winter it sets by four in the evening.
- By the time government offices or educational institutions open, many daylight hours are already lost. In winter this problem gets even more accentuated and the ecological costs are a disaster with much more electricity having to be consumed.

The proposal:

- The research paper proposes to call the two time zones IST-I (UTC + 5.30 h) and IST-II (UTC + 6.30 h). The proposed line of demarcation is at 89°52'E, the narrow border between Assam and West Bengal.
- States west of the line would continue to follow IST (to be called IST-I). States east of the line — Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Andaman & Nicobar Islands — would follow IST-II.

Concerns:

- India has a huge population; if the country were divided into two time zones, there would be chaos at the border between the two zones.
- It would mean resetting clocks with each crossing of the time zone. There is scope for more dangerous kinds of confusion. Railway signals are not fully automated and many routes have single tracks.
- Trains may meet with major accidents owing to human errors. Just one such accident would wipe out any benefits resulting from different time zones in the country.

- Partitioning the already divided country further into time zones may also have undesirable political consequences. Moreover, our research shows that the energy saving from creating two time zones is not particularly large.
- While there is merit in the argument, the potentially adverse consequences of introducing a new time zone within the country are many. Not forgetting the fact that a country like Russia has as many as nine time zones across contiguous territory, having to cope with the zones and to be forced to reset the watch each time you need to cross a domestic line could be complicated.
- With a time difference of one hour in the mornings and in the evenings, there would be nearly 25% less overlap between office timings in the two zones. This could be important for banks, offices, industries and multinational companies which need to be constantly interconnected. This will be further detrimental to productivity and to the interests of the eastern region.
- There is already a sense of alienation between the relatively prosperous and industrialised western zone and the less developed eastern zone.
- The people in the Northeast sense a distance from the mainland and a separateness in clock time may accentuate it.
- Having a separate time zone for the eastern region will provide no energy or other benefits to the rest of the country.
- Moreover, India will continue to be in off-set time zones, five and a half hours in the west and six and a half in the eastern region ahead of.

AZAD HIND GOVERNMENT

- On 21-October-2018, Government celebrates the 75th Anniversary of formation of Azad Hind Government.

Azad Hind Government :

- Subhas Chandra Bose on October 21, 1943, established the provisional Azad Hind government in Singapore. He was the leader of Azad Hind Government and also the Head of State of this Provisional Indian Government-in-exile.
- It was a part of the freedom movement, originating in 1940s outside India with a purpose of allying with Axis powers to free India from British rule.
- The existence of the Azad Hind Government gave a greater legitimacy to the independence struggle against the British.
- The role of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA) had been crucial in bequeathing a much needed impetus to India's struggle for Independence.

Indian National Army (INA) :

- The idea of INA was first conceived in Malaya by Mohan Singh.
- The Indian National Army was founded by prisoners of wars of British Indian Army captured by the Japanese in Singapore, Malaysia and other countries of Southeast Asia during the World War II.
- On 1 September 1942, the first division of INA was formed.
- The main task of gathering them and forming the INA was carried out by Rashbehari Bose, one of the stalwarts of the freedom movement. Later it was reconsolidated as an army by Subhas Chandra Bose.

- The INA was also at the forefront of women's equality, and the formation of a women's regiment, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was formed as an all-volunteer women's unit to fight the British Raj as well as provide medical services to the INA.

INA Trials :

- A joint court-martial of hundreds of captured INA soldiers, led by Colonel Prem Sehgal, Colonel Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, Major General Shah Nawaz Khan, was held during 1945- 46 at the Red Fort.
- Leaders of independence movement Jawaharlal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailashnath Katju, Bhulabhai Desai, Asaf Ali, along with Muslim league defended the comrades of Bose despite difference of ideology.
- The famous INA trial sparked off massive unrest across the country, including the strike by the ratings (sailors) and officers of the Royal Indian Navy and Air Force -- from the ports of Mumbai and Karachi to Madras, Vishakhapatnam and Calcutta in February 1946. The airmen too struck work at various places including Karachi and Kalaikunda (now in West Bengal).
- Historians termed this unrest as "the last nail in the coffin" of the British Empire.

PM Modi unveils world's tallest statue 'Statue of Unity'

Context:

- Prime Minister of India has recently inaugurated Sardar Patel's statue, colloquially known as Statue of Unity for his contribution to unity and integration of India.

The project:

- In 2010, the government of the state of Gujarat in western India announced its plan to erect a statue that would measure 182 meters, pedestal included. The statue was dedicated to Sardar Patel, who was the architect of the modern Indian state.
- The project was inaugurated exactly 5 years after its construction started.

Sardar Patel:

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is a revered name in Indian politics. A lawyer and a political activist, he played a leading role during the Indian Independence Movement.
- After independence, he was crucial in the integration of over 500 princely states into the Indian Union.
- He was deeply influenced by Gandhi's ideology and principles, having worked very closely with leader.

Statue of Unity:

- Standing tall at 182 meters, this is the tallest Statue in the world.
- The base of the Statue stands above the highest flood level recorded over a 100-year period, 237.35 m above sea level.

- It can withstand wind speed of upto 200 kmph, and earthquakes measuring 6.5 on Richter scale at a depth of 10 km and within a radius of 12 km of the Statue.
- Total project cost Rs 2,989 crore (US\$ 407 million), mostly funded by State and Central government through Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Rashtriya Ekta Trust (SVPRET).
- Metal scrap (mainly agriculture equipment scrap) was collected from the 6 lakh villages under the 'Loha Campaign' from across the country.
- Developed on the banks of River Narmada on Sadhu Bet - 3.2 km downstream of Sardar Sarovar Dam, visitors can have a view of 200 km of the Dam and the Satpura and Vindhya Mountain ranges from a viewing platform at the level of the statue's chest.
- He was the first Home Minister of Independent India and his uncompromising efforts towards consolidation of the country earned him the title 'Iron Man of India'.

Economics of the Statue:

- The statue will become one of the prime tourist destinations in India, given its colossal form and artistic marvel. It will generate revenue for the state.
- The inflow of the tourists will create employment opportunities for the people especially for the tribals living in the vicinity of the place.
- The hotel constructed within the premises of the statue will provide an alternative venue for the national and international meetings and conferences.
- Besides Statue, the site includes galleries with light and sound shows and a museum on the life and times of Sardar Patel, and auditorium. It will soon become synonymous with India.

The government will need to take the following steps:

- A sustained worldwide advertising campaign to inform and educate about the new marvel.
- A substantial internal marketing effort across India to attract visitors from not just Gujarat and Maharashtra, but all other Indian states.
- Easy connectivity by train, road and air. Also, easy transportation from the nearest train station and airport to the Statue complex.
- Easy, plentiful and comfortable arrangements for boarding and lodging at different price points to attract all kinds of tourists.
- A concerted effort to attract the Meeting, Incentives, Conference and Exhibitions (MICE) crowd. This could create a positive spiral of economic opportunities.

India elected to UN Human Rights Council

- India was elected to United Nations' Human Rights Council', the main body of UN charged with promoting and monitoring human rights for period of three years beginning January 1, 2019.

- In this secret ballot election held in 193-member UN General Assembly (UNGA) India secured 188 votes in Asia-Pacific category, the highest number of votes among all candidates.
- Total 18 new members in the five regional categories were elected by absolute majority (i.e. minimum of 97 votes are required to get elected through secret ballot).
- From Asia-Pacific region category, Fiji with 187 and Bangladesh 178 votes were also elected along with India.
- This was fifth time India has been elected to UNHRC, previously was elected 2006-2009, 2011-2014 and 2014-2017.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):

- UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within United Nations system. It is responsible for strengthening promotion and protection of human rights around globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It was created by UNGA on 15 March 2006 by adopting resolution 60/251 to promote human rights globally.
- It had replaced former UN Commission on Human Rights. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Members:** UNHRC is made up of 47 UN member states which are elected by UN General Assembly (UNGA) with specific number of seats allocated for each five region of the globe viz. African States (13 seats), Asia-Pacific States (13 seats), Eastern European States (6 seats), Latin American and Caribbean States (8 seats) and Western European and other States(7 seats). Members serve for three-year terms and can serve only two terms in a row.
- **Functions:** Members of the council work to engage countries on improving human rights. They make decisions ranging from exposing violations to recommending that UN Security Council make referral to International Criminal Court (ICC). UNHRC does not have authority to take action but can exert significant pressure on violating country. It can also set up special rapporteurs with mandate to investigate and report human-rights violations and abuses.
- United States under President Donald Trump Administration had withdrawn from UNHRC earlier this year after it questioned legitimacy of the council because of presence of several dictatorial regimes violating human rights on it.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):

- NHRC is apex statutory watchdog of human rights in the country, i.e. the rights related to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by Constitution or embodied in the international conventions.
- It was established on October 12, 1993 as per t statutory provisions of Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. It is multimember body consisting of Chairman and four members.
- President appoints Chairman and members of NHRC on recommendation of high-powered committee headed by Prime Minister. Its headquarters is located in New Delhi.
- NHRC can either take suo motu cognisance of cases through media reports or complaint filed by victim or any other person on his or her behalf or on basis of reports received from the police department.

Functions of NHRC:

- Investigate violations of human rights committed by the government. Intervene in legal proceedings related to human rights. Recommend to provide relief to the victims and their families. Review protection provided by Constitution. Study international treaties related to human rights, etc. and recommend for effective implementation on its basis. Promote

research in the field of human rights. Spread human rights education in different sections of the society.

India's and Asia's first Dolphin Research Centre to come up soon in Patna

- National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) will be set up on the banks of the Ganga river in Patna University campus in Patna, capital of Bihar.
- It will be India's and Asia's first Dolphin research centre. The announcement for the centre was made on the occasion of Dolphin day (October 5), observed in Bihar for protection and conservation of Gangetic river dolphin to create awareness to save endangered species.
- NDRC will play an important role in strengthening conservation efforts and research to save endangered mammals whose population is decreasing.
- Bihar is home to around half of the country's estimated 3,000 dolphin population.

Gangetic river dolphin:

- Gangetic river dolphin (scientific name: *Platanista gangetica*) is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in Yangtze river, Indus river in Pakistan and Amazon river.
- Gangetic river dolphin species are found in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Gangetic river dolphin is India's national aquatic animal.
- It is almost completely blind and finds its way and prey using ultrasonic echoes, with sound being everything for them to navigate, feed, escape danger, find mates, breed, nurse babies and play. Gangetic Dolphin's presence signals a healthy river ecosystem.
- Dolphins prefer water that is at least 5-8 feet deep and are usually found in turbulent waters where there is enough fish for them to feed on.
- They prefer deep water with adjoining shallow water and live in a zone where there is little or no current that helps them save energy.
- Threats: Entanglement in fishing nets, hunting for their oil and meat, poisoning of water supply of river from industrial and agricultural chemicals. They are facing the most significant threat from building of dams along the upper course of their habitable rivers. It causes the segregation of populations and has a narrowed gene pool in which dolphins can breed.
- Protection Status: Gangetic river dolphins fall under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act and have been declared an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Conservation Program: Environment Ministry had launched Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Programme in 1997 to build a scientific database of their population status and also study their habitat quality of the dolphins' distribution range. Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary located in Bihar's Bhagalpur district of Bihar is India's only dolphin sanctuary. It is spread over 50 km along the Ganges.

STATES:

UP Cabinet approves changing name of Allahabad to 'Prayagraj'

- The Uttar Cabinet on October 16, 2018 approved the proposal of the state government to rename the city of 'Allahabad' as 'Prayagraj'. The decision has been vehemently opposed by the opposition parties.

- The move, however, fulfils the long-standing demand of seers before the Ardh Kumbh Mela in January 2019. Speaking ahead of the cabinet meeting, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath had said that there was a proposal from the Akhara Parishad to rename Allahabad as Prayagraj ahead of 2019 Kumbh.
- The state's governor had already given his approval on the matter.

Why Akbar renamed Prayag as Allahabad?

- The city of Allahabad was originally known as Prayag in ancient times. Between 1574 and 1583, the 16th-century Mughal emperor Akbar founded a fort near the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, known as Sangam, as he was impressed with its strategic position.
- In fact, Akbarname states that, "For a long time [Akbar's] desire was to found a great city in the town of Piyag, where the rivers Ganges and Jamna join, which is regarded by the people of India with great reverence and which is a place of pilgrimage for the ascetics of the country and to build a choice fort there."
- Hence, Akbar named the fort and its neighbourhood as Ilahabad, which meant the "Abode of God", inspired by the religion he had founded, Din-i-Ilahi. In the later years, Akbar's grandson Shah Jahan renamed the entire city as Allahabad.
- However, the area near the Sangam, which is the site of the Kumbh Mela, continued to be called Prayag.

Significance of the name Prayag:

- The city's original name Prayag, which means a "place of offerings", comes from its position at the Sangam of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna and the mythical river, Saraswati. The place plays a central role in the Hindu scriptures.
- The city is also mentioned in the Veda as the location where Lord Brahma attended his first ritual sacrifice.
- It is also the site for historic Kumbh Mela, which is held once in every 12 years and it is also believed to be the same place where the drops of holy nectar fell.

What critics say!

- There have been mixed reactions to the rechristening with critics saying that there have been quite a few name changes over the past few years.
- According to the opposition, when there is already an area called 'Prayag', there was no need to rename 'Allahabad' as 'Prayagraj'.
- The opposition claims that the change would diminish the importance that Allahabad had in the country's freedom movement.
- They also claim that the decision is an attempt to disturb and toy with the history of the nation and a political gimmick ahead of the Lok Sabha assembly polls, which are scheduled to be held in 2019.

Sikkim wins FAO's Future Policy Award 2018 for being world's first 100 percent organic state

- North-eastern state Sikkim on October 12, 2018 won the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Future Policy Award 2018 for being the world's first 100 percent organic state.
- Sikkim defeated 51 nominated policies from 25 countries, winning the Gold Prize of the Future Policy Award 2018, also known as "Oscar for Best Policies".
- As per the press release, "Sikkim is the first organic state in the world. All of its farmland is certified organic. Embedded in its design are socioeconomic aspects such as consumption and market expansion, cultural aspects as well as health, education, rural development and sustainable tourism."
- Moreover, Future Policy Award's Silver Prize 2018 was awarded to the policies from Brazil, Denmark and Quito (Ecuador).
- All the winners received the awards in a ceremony on October 15, 2018 at FAO headquarters during the celebrations of the World Food Week in Rome.
- Sikkim implemented a phase out of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and achieved a total ban on sale and use of chemical pesticides in the state.
- The transition benefitted more than 6600 farming families.
- Sikkim tourism sector got benefitted greatly from the state's transition to 100 percent organic as the number of tourists increased by over 50 percent between 2014-2017.

Future Policy Gold Award:

- The prizes honour exceptional policies adopted by political leaders who have decided to act, no longer accepting widespread hunger, poverty or environmental degradation.
- This award is nicknamed the "Oscar for best policies". Previously it was honoured for policies combating desertification, violence against women and girls, nuclear weapons and pollution of the oceans.
- This year's award based on central focus of agroecology policies and was co-organised by FAO, World Future Council (WFC) and IFOAM – Organics International. Agroecology has potential to increase farmers' earnings and make farms more resilient to climate change as erratic rainfall and extended dry periods hamper food production.

GI TAG FOR ALPHONSO FROM KONKAN

- Context: Alphonso from Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra, is registered as Geographical Indication (GI).
- The king of mangoes, Alphonso, better known as 'Hapus' in Maharashtra, is in demand in domestic and international markets not only for its taste but also for pleasant fragrance and vibrant colour. It has long been one of the world's most popular fruit and is exported to various countries including Japan, Korea and Europe. New markets such as USA and Australia have recently opened up.

About GI tag:

What is it?

- A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

Significance of a GI tag:

- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

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.

Security:

- Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.

Provisions in this regard:

- 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, Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.

BIHAR'S 'SHAHI LITCHI' GETS GI TAG

- Context: Bihar's Shahi litchi has got the Geographical Indication (GI) tag and has become an exclusive brand in the national and international market.

Salient features :

- The famous Shahi litchi, which is famous for its sweet, juicy, unique flavour and aroma, is mostly grown in Muzaffarpur and neighbouring districts including East Champaran, Vaishali, Samastipur and Begusarai.

- The GI registration was done in the name of Litchi Growers Association of Bihar, which had applied for the tag.

Significance:

- Bihar produces 40% of the litchi grown in the country on 38% of the area. The GI tag to Shahi litchi will boost up its demand in the market and will minimise the fear of fake and poor quality litchis.
- The GI tag for the fruit will help and benefit thousands of litchi growers who will gain access to more markets and get better price in the country and abroad.

LPG SET TO MAKE KERALA THE FIRST SMOKE-FREE STATE

- Context: Kerala is now set to become the first smoke-free State in the country with public sector oil companies eyeing 100% LPG penetration here.

Salient features :

- LPG is being supplied beyond commercial considerations with the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana initiated by the Ministry of Petroleum.
- With three bottling plants at Kochi, Kozhikode, and Kollam, LPG is being brought to 49.79 lakh customers through 308 distributors.

Background:

- Kerala is one of the States with the highest penetration of LPG, which is transforming lifestyles. The target has almost been achieved in most villages, towns and cities in the Kerala.
- LPG consumption was 933.3 TMT (thousand tonnes) in the Kerala in 2017-18. It is estimated that one crore tonnes of emissions, from poisonous gases like firewood cooking, have been contained and 25 lakh trees have been saved.

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- 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.
- Identification of households: Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Some of the objectives of the scheme are:

- Empowering women and protecting their health.
- Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

Way ahead:

- The PMUY is a bold and much-needed initiative, but it should be recognised that this is just a first step. The real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas.
- Truly smokeless kitchens can be realized only if the government follows up with measures that go beyond connections to actual usage of LPG.
- This may require concerted efforts cutting across Ministries beyond petroleum and natural gas and including those of health, rural development and women and child welfare.

APPOINTMENTS:

Gita Gopinath becomes first woman Chief Economist at IMF

- India-born Gita Gopinath was appointed as the Chief Economist of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on October 3, 2018, becoming the first woman to hold the position.
- Gopinath would be succeeding Maurice Obstfeld, who is to retire at the end of 2018. She will be assuming the post of economic counselor and director of the IMF's Research Department.
- Speaking on her appointment, IMF's Managing Director Christine Lagarde said that Gopinath is one of the world's outstanding economists, with impeccable academic credentials, a proven track record of intellectual leadership, and extensive international experience.
- Gita Gopinath has also become the second Indian to hold the position, after former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan.

About Gita Gopinath:

- Born in Kolkata, India in 1971, Gopinath is a US citizen and an Overseas Citizen of India.
- She completed her graduation from Delhi University's Lady Shri Ram College and acquired a double master's degree from the Delhi School of Economics and the University of Washington.
- Gopinath completed her PhD in economics from Princeton University in 2001 and joined the University of Chicago in the same year as an Assistant Professor before moving to Harvard in 2005.
- Currently, Gopinath is the John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Economics at Harvard University.
- She is the third woman in the history of Harvard to be a permanent member of its esteemed economics department and the first Indian since the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to hold that position. She became a tenured Professor there in 2010.
- She is the co-editor of the American Economic Review and co-director of the International Finance and Macroeconomics Program at the National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Gopinath has authored around 40 research articles on exchange rates, trade and investment, international financial crises, monetary policy, debt and emerging market crises.
- In 2014, she was named one of the top 25 economists under 45 by the IMF and was chosen as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2011.

- In 2016, her appointment as financial advisor to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had generated controversy as some communist leaders questioned the CPM-led state government for roping in a person who was more into the market economy and liberal policies.

Tushar Mehta appointed as Solicitor General of India

- Senior Advocate Tushar Mehta was on October 10, 2018 appointed as the Solicitor General of India with effect from the date of assumption of charge of the office for a period till June 30, 2020 or until further orders.
- His appointment was approved by the Appointment Committee of Cabinet. Presently, Mehta is serving as the Additional Solicitor General (ASG) of India. He was appointed ASG in 2014 after the Modi government came to power.
- The post of the Solicitor General of India has been lying vacant for the last 11 months after Senior Advocate Ranjith Kumar resigned on October 20, 2017. The Solicitor General is the second highest ranking law officer of the Union Government after the Attorney General.

About Tushar Mehta:

- Tushar Mehta was serving as the Gujarat Advocate General when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was then the Chief Minister of the state.
- He moved to Delhi after the Narendra Modi government named him the Additional Solicitor General.
- Mehta has handled several controversial cases including Justice BH Loya's death and the arrest of the five activists by the Maharashtra police.
- He is also representing the UP government in the Ayodhya land dispute case pending before a three-judge SC bench.
- He was recently named special prosecutor to handle the 2G spectrum case.

Supreme Court judge Madan Bhimarao Lokur appointed Executive Chairman of NALSA

- President Ramnath Kovind has appointed senior judge of Supreme Court Madan Bhimarao Lokur (64) as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA).
- He was appointed by President in exercise of power conferred under Clause (b) of sub-section (2) of Section 3 of the Legal Authorities Act, 1987.

Madan Bhimarao Lokur:

- He is alumnus of Delhi's Moden School and St. Stephen's College. He had enrolled as Advocate in 1977.
- He has vast experience in Civil, Criminal, Constitutional, Revenue and Service laws. He got enrolled as an Advocate-on-Record in the Supreme Court in 1981.
- He had served as Additional Solicitor General of India from July 1998 to February 1999. He was appointed as additional Judge of Delhi High Court in February 1999.
- He also functioned as Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court from June 2010 to November 2011 and then as Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court.

- He was appointed as Judge of the Supreme Court in June 2012.

National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA):

- NALSA provides for free legal aid inter-alia to all persons in custody. It has been constituted under Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- It provides services of free legal aid in civil and criminal matters for poor and marginalised people who cannot afford services of lawyer in any court or tribunal.
- NALSA aims to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reasons of economic or other disabilities.
- It also identifies specific categories of marginalised and excluded groups and formulates various schemes for implementation of legal service programmes.
- It also organises Lok Adalats for amicable and speedy resolution or settlement of disputes.

Justice Ranjan Gogoi sworn in as 46th Chief Justice of India

- Justice Ranjan Gogoi was sworn-in as 46th Chief Justice of India. He was administered oath of the office by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- With this, Justice Ranjan Gogoi is the first Chief Justice of India from the north-east. He succeeded CJI Dipak Misra who retired from the office.
- He will have tenure of about 13 months, from October 3, 2018 till his retirement on November 17, 2019.

Justice Ranjan Gogoi:

- Justice Gogoi was born on November 18, 1954. He is a native of Assam and is son of former Assam Chief Minister Keshab Chandra Gogoi. He had joined Bar in 1978 and practiced mainly in Gauhati High Court.
- He was appointed as permanent judge of High Court in February 2001. He was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court in September 2010 and was appointed its Chief Justice in February 2011. He was elevated to the Supreme Court in April 2012.
- In Supreme Court, Justice Gogoi had led important benches that have dealt largely with issue of corruption in politics and public life.
- He has led apex court bench which ordered Centre to set up special courts to exclusively try MPs and MLAs as means to de-criminalise politics.
- His Bench is also monitoring progress made by government in appointment of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal. Justice Gogoi was one of the four most senior Supreme Court judges (along with Justices J Chelameswar, M B Lokur and Kurian Joseph) who held January 12, 2018 press conference bringing up issue of selective assignment of sensitive cases by recent CJIs to certain judges in the Supreme Court.

Shekhar Mande appointed as Director-General of CSIR

- Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed Dr. Shekhar Mande as the Director General of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Research (DSIR).
- He will succeed Girish Sahni who superannuated in August 2018.

Dr. Shekhar Mande:

- Dr. Mande, a structural biologist is Director of National Centre for Cell Sciences, Pune. He has worked at Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad.
- He is also top functionary of Vijnana Bharati, a swadeshi science movement affiliated with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). He is fellow of all three major science academies and

recipient of coveted SS Bhatnagar Prize (2005), most prestigious science honour in the country.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR):

- CSIR is an autonomous body and India's premier research and development (R&D) organisation. It was established in 1942.
- It operates as an autonomous body registered under the Registration of Societies Act of 1860. It is mainly funded by the Union Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Prime Minister is the chairman of CSIR. It has been ranked 9th in the world amongst 1207 government institutions, with overall global ranking of 75 in world, covering 5250 institutions.
- It runs a chain of 38 national research labs. It is headquarter in New Delhi.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Union Government launches Award Scheme under 'Saubhagya'

- Minister of State for Power and Renewable Energy RK Singh on October 15, 2018 launched an award scheme under the umbrella Saubhagya Scheme, also known as Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana.
- The Saubhagya award scheme will felicitate the power distribution companies (DISCOMs) and Power Department of the States and their employees for achieving 100 percent household electrification.
- Eight States which have already achieved more than 99 percent household electrification prior to launch of Saubhagya scheme are ineligible for participation under the award scheme. These eight states are Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu.
- All the remaining States and their Discoms are eligible for the award.

Three categories of Saubhagya award scheme:

- Award will be given in three categories. These categories are:
- DISCOMs / Power Departments of Special Category States (Seven North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K and Uttarakhand)
- **(ii)** DISCOMs / Power Departments of Non-Special Category States having more than 5 Lakh un-electrified households (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal)
- **(iii)** DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States having less than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya):

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Rs 16320-Crore 'Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana'- Saubhagya on September 25, 2017 to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

- The scheme aims to achieve the goal of universal household electrification in the country by March 31, 2019.
- The scheme envisages providing last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining households in rural as well as urban areas.
- With the support of State Power Departments and DISCOMs, more than 1.65 crore households have already been connected since the launch of scheme.
- The Eligibility for free electricity will be identified through Caste Census of 2011 and on the basis of Socio-Economic.
- The Households that do not fall under the free criteria of this scheme will be provided electricity at a sum of Rs 500.
- To identify and register beneficiaries under the Saubhagya scheme, a mobile app will be used.

Government launches SATAT initiative to promote Compressed Bio-Gas production

- Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has launched Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) aimed at providing sustainable alternative towards affordable transportation.
- The initiative was launched with PSU Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs i.e. IOC, BPCL and HPCL).

SATAT Initiative:

- The SATAT initiative has potential to boost availability of more affordable transport fuels, better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste, as well as provide additional revenue source to farmers.
- It will also benefit vehicle-users as well as farmers and entrepreneurs. Under it, Expression of Interest (EoI) have been invited from potential entrepreneurs to set up Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) production plants and make available biogas in market for use in automotive fuels.

Benefits:

- It will boost availability of more affordable transport fuels and enable better use of agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste.
- It will pave way for efficient municipal solid waste management and help in tackling problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions.
- It will boost entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment and provide additional source of revenue to farmers.
- It will also help achieve nation's climate change goals and bring down dependency on natural gas and crude oil imports and act as a buffer against crude oil and gas price fluctuations.
- It will also help to integrated CBS networks with city gas distribution (CGD) networks to boost supplies to domestic and retail users in existing and upcoming markets.
- Besides retailing from OMC fuel stations, CBS can at later date be injected into CGD pipelines too for efficient distribution and optimised access of cleaner and more affordable fuel.

Background:

- Bio-gas is produced naturally through process of anaerobic decomposition from waste and bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, municipal solid waste, sugarcane press mud, sewage treatment plant (STP) waste, etc.

- It is called CBG after biogas is purified and compressed, which has pure methane content of over 95%. CBG is exactly similar to commercially available natural gas in its composition and energy potential.
- It has calorific value (~52,000 KJ/kg) and other properties are similar to CNG. CBG can be used as alternative, renewable automotive fuel.
- It has potential to replace CNG in automotive, industrial and commercial uses in the coming years, given the abundance of biomass in the country.
- Advantages of converting agricultural residue, cattle dung and municipal solid waste into CBG on commercial scale are It results in responsible waste management, reduction in carbon emissions and pollution.
- It generates additional revenue source for farmers. It boosts entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment.
- It supports national commitments in achieving climate change goals. It also helps in reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil. It also serves as buffer against crude oil and gas price fluctuations.

MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SANITATION CONVENTION

- Context: Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation -Convention is being held in New Delhi.

Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention:

- The Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention is being organised by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to mark the beginning of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, also coinciding with the fourth anniversary of the launch of Swachh Bharat Mission.
- Ministers from over 70 countries will be invited and taken on a 'Gandhi Trail' in Gujarat.
- The government will use the occasion to "showcase its performance" and "success story" in the Swachh Bharat programme in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to share their experiences on sanitation programmes.

SDG:

- By 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG #6, aim to reach everyone with sanitation, and halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase recycling and safe reuse.
- The global sanitation crisis is reflected in the following facts, according to reports from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF):
- Around 60% of the global population – 4.5 billion people – either have no toilet at home or one that doesn't safely manage excreta.
- 862 million people worldwide still practise open defecation.
- Billions of people use an unimproved source of drinking water with no protection against contamination from faeces.
- Globally, 80% of the wastewater generated by society flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused.
- Only 39% of the global population (2.9 billion people) use a safely-managed sanitation service, that is, excreta safely disposed of in situ or treated off-site.
- Combined with safe water and good hygiene, improved sanitation could prevent around 842,000 deaths each year.

PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY)

- Government modified operational guidelines for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY).

New provisions guidelines of PMFBY

- **Provision of Penalties:** The Government has decided to **incorporate the provision of penalties for States and Insurance Companies for the delay in settlement of insurance claims**
- The farmers will be paid **12% interest by insurance companies** for the delay in settlement claims beyond **two months** of prescribed cut-off date.
- **State Governments** will have to pay **12% interest** for the delay in release of State share of subsidy beyond **three months** of prescribed cut-off date submission of requisition by insurance companies.

About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- It aims at supporting sustainable production in agriculture sector by way of:
- Providing financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage rising out of unforeseen events
- Stabilizing the income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming
- Encouraging farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practice
- Ensuring flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

New provisions guidelines of PMFBY

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- **Horticulture:** The Government has also decided to include perennial horticultural crops under the ambit of PMFBY on a pilot basis.
- **Wild Animal attack:** The scheme provides add on coverage for crop loss due to attack of wild animals, which will be implemented on a pilot basis.
- **Aadhar Number:** Aadhaar number will be mandatorily captured to avoid duplication of beneficiaries.
- **Budget allocation:** Separate Budget Allocation for Administrative expenses (atleast 2% of budget of scheme).
- **Time frame for the claim:** The farmers will get 72 hours to intimate individual claims against the existing 48 hours. This can be done through any of the channels provided under the Scheme and directly on the portal of PMFBY.
- **Grievance redressal Mechanism:** In case of any grievance, the farmers can access dedicated grievance redressal authorities. Revised operational guidelines provide for appointment of District Level Grievance Redressal Officer and creation of State and District Grievance Redressal Cells for fast redressal of grievances.
- **Use of technology:** Smartphones should be used to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce the delays in claim payments to farmers and Remote sensing to reduce the number of crop cutting experiments.

Role of Gram Sabhas :

- Gram Sabhas across the country have been asked to inform farmers about the enrolment and benefits of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) at the beginning of the Rabi season.
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare had requested the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the state governments to include this as an agenda in the upcoming Gram Sabhas.
- This is as part of the awareness initiatives taken up at various levels by the Govt and Insurance Companies.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES:

World Habitat Day observed on October 1

- The World Habitat Day was observed every year on first Monday in October all over the world.
- This year it was observed on 1 October 2018 with theme 'Municipal Solid Waste Management'.
- The purpose of day is to reflect on state of cities and towns and basic human right to adequate shelter.
- It also aims to remind world of its collective responsibility for habitat of future generations. This year's theme aims to highlight issue of solid waste management as global issue that affects everyone.
- It seeks to bring change in public attitudes to minimize waste and stop littering, regularization of informal waste pickers, increase recycling and reusing, solid waste planning including adequate landfill sites to improve current state of solid waste management in cities across the world and save money to become 'Waste-Wise Cities'.

Background:

- In 1985, the United Nations designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day.
- The day was first celebrated in 1986.
- The day intends to remind the world of its power and responsibility to shape the future of all cities and towns.
- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme in 1989 launched the 'UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour award'. It is the most prestigious human settlements award in the world.
- Every year, World Habitat Day takes on a new theme to promote sustainable development policies that ensure adequate shelter for all.

United Nations Day: 24 October

- The United Nations Day is observed every year on 24th October to mark anniversary of entry into force of UN Charter in 1945.
- With ratification of this founding document by majority of its members, including five permanent members of UN Security Council, United Nations officially came into existence. Since then, 24th October is celebrated as UN Day.
- On this day all member states of UN contribute finances to its operation to help further its goals.

Background:

- United Nations Day was established by UNGA by adopting Resolution 2782 in 1971.

- The day is devoted making people aware of achievements of United Nations Organization. This day is part of United Nations Week, which runs from 20 to 26 October.

International Day for Disaster Reduction: October 13

- International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) is observed every year on October 13 to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction.
- The observance of day seeks to encourage citizens and governments to take part in building more disaster resilient communities and nations.
- It also celebrates how people and communities around world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of reining in risks that they face.
- It also seeks to spread awareness about reining risks of disasters around world and also reduce exposure of people and communities to disasters.
- The theme of 2018 International Day for Disaster Reduction was 'Reducing Disaster Economic Losses'. It focuses on *Target C of Sendai Framework*, which aims at 'reducing disaster economic losses in relation to global GDP by 2030'.

Background:

- UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1989 had instituted International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. To promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction.
- Earlier, this day was celebrated annually on the second Wednesday of October.
- But in 2009, the UNGA formally designated 13 October and changed its name to International Day for Disaster Reduction by adopting Resolution 64/200.

World Food Day: October 16

- The World Food Day is observed globally on 16 October to mark foundation of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations in 1945.
- It is observed as day of action dedicated to tackling global hunger and aims to raise public awareness about hunger challenges and encourage people around world to take action in fight against hunger.
- It also shows commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 – to achieve Zero Hunger by 2030.
- Events organised to celebrate this day promotes worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger and for need to ensure food security and nutritious diets for all.
- The theme for this year was: 'Our actions are our future – A zero hunger world by 2030 is possible'.

Background:

- World Food Day was instituted in November 1979 by FAO's Member Countries at its 20th General Conference of to raise awareness of issues behind poverty and hunger.
- The day was observed for the first time it on 16 October 1981 and idea of celebrating the WFD worldwide was mooted by Hungarian Delegation to FAO.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO):

- FAO is specialised agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Its parent organization is UN Economic and Social Council (UNESCO).
- It is neutral forum serving both developed and developing countries where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy.
- It was established on 16 October 1945 and its headquarters are in Rome, Italy. Its motto is "Let there be bread". It has 194 member states, along with the European Union (member organization).

- FAO meet the demands posed by major global trends in agricultural development and challenges faced by member nations.
- It helps countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.

International Day of Older Persons: October 1

- The International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) is observed every year on October 1 to raise awareness about issues affecting elderly and to appreciate contributions that older people make to society.
- It also seeks to raise awareness about issues affecting elderly, such as senescence and elder abuse. The **theme** for this year is “Celebrating Older Human Rights Champions”.
- The theme reaffirms commitment to promoting full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by older persons to celebrated 70th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Background

- The International Day of Older Persons was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by adopting resolution 45/106 in December 1990 for raising awareness about issues affecting elderly, such as senescence and elder abuse.
- It is also day to appreciate the contributions that older people make to society.
- The observance of the day is also focus of ageing organizations and the United Nations Programme on Ageing.

World Post Day: October 9

- World Post Day is observed every year on October 9 to spread awareness about the postal services and their role in the everyday lives of people and businesses. The day is celebrated to mark anniversary of the establishment of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874 in the Swiss Capital, Bern.
- The 2018 **theme** is: “Imagine you are a letter travelling through time. What message do you wish to convey to your readers?”.
- World Post Day was instituted at Universal Postal Union (UPU) Congress held in Tokyo, Japan in 1969. In India, this day is celebrated by Department of Posts.
- For more than 150 years, India Post has been the backbone of the country’s communication network.
- It is the largest postal network in the world providing mail parcel, banking, money transfer, insurance and retail services.

Universal Postal Union (UPU):

- UPU is specialized agency of United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to worldwide postal system.
- It was established in 1874 and is second oldest international organization worldwide after International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was established in 1865.
- It is headquartered in Berne, Switzerland. It has 192 member countries. UPU is primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players among member countries.
- It helps to ensure truly universal network of up-to-date products and services. It sets rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations for growth in mail, financial and parcel services volumes and also to improve quality of service for customers.

SPORTS AND AWARDS:

PM Modi receives UN's Champions of the Earth award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the UN Champions of the Earth award, the highest environmental honour of the United Nations on October 3, 2018. The award was presented by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres at a special ceremony in New Delhi.
- Speaking on the occasion, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that Prime Minister Modi is a leader who realises the issue of climate change and understands the benefits of climate action.
- He said that PM Modi knows the problems and also works to solve them. He said that a green economy is a good economy and the technology is on the side of those who believe in a green economy.
- The award was announced on September 26, 2018, on the sidelines of 73rd UN General Assembly in New York.

Significance:

- Prime Minister Modi has been selected in the leadership category for his pioneering work in championing the International Solar Alliance, a global partnership to scale up solar energy.
- Through the award, the UN Environment is recognising Modi for his bold environmental leadership on the global stage.
- The award is also in recognition of Modi's unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022.

Other Awardees:

- The prestigious awards programme recognised six of the world's most outstanding environmental changemakers this year for their combination of bold, innovative and tireless efforts to tackle some of the most urgent environmental issues.
- The winners include world's first fully solar-powered airport Cochin International Airport in Kerala, Filipino environmental activist Joan Carling, Plant-based food alternative providers Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods and China's Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Programme, which was awarded for the transformation of a once heavily polluted area of rivers and streams in East China's Zhejiang province.
- French President Emmanuel Macron was jointly awarded with PM Modi in the Policy Leadership category for their efforts regarding the creation of the International Solar Alliance.

About award:

- The annual 'Champions of the Earth' prize is awarded to outstanding leaders from government, civil society and the private sector whose actions have had a positive impact on the environment.
- The award is the UN's highest environmental recognition celebrating exceptional figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society.
- The awards were established in 2005 under the United Nations Environment Programme. Since then, they have recognized 84 laureates ranging from leaders of nations to grassroots activists in the categories of policy, science, business and civil society.
- The awards recognise 5-7 laureates annually and they are invited to an award ceremony to receive a trophy, give an acceptance speech and take part in a press conference. No financial awards are conferred.
- In 2017, the 'Champions of the Earth' programme was expanded to include Young Champions of the Earth - a forward-looking prize for talented innovators, aged between 18 and 30, who demonstrate outstanding potential to create positive environmental impact.

NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSIOLOGY OR MEDICINE

- It has been jointly awarded to James P. Allison and Tasuku Honjo for their discovery of 'immune checkpoint therapy,' a cancer treatment.
- Working: By stimulating the inherent ability of our immune system to attack tumor cells by releasing the brakes on immune cells.
- James P. Allison studied a known protein that functions as a brake on the immune system. He realized the potential of releasing the brake and thereby unleashing our immune cells to attack tumors. He then developed this concept into a brand new approach for treating patients.
- Tasuku Honjo discovered a protein on immune cells and, after careful exploration of its function, eventually revealed that it also operates as a brake, but with a different mechanism of action. Therapies based on his discovery proved to be strikingly effective in the fight against cancer

NOBEL PRIZE IN CHEMISTRY

- The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2018 was divided, one half awarded to Frances H. Arnold for the directed evolution of enzymes, the other half jointly to George P. Smith and Sir Gregory P. Winter for the Phage Display of peptides and antibodies. Ms. Arnold, only the fifth woman to win a chemistry Nobel.

Application:

- **First directed evolution of enzymes**, which are proteins that catalyse chemical reactions, has been used in manufacturing of chemical substances, such as pharmaceuticals, and the production of renewable fuels for a greener transport sector.
- **Phage Display**, where a **bacteriophage** – a virus that infects bacteria – can be used to evolve new proteins. It has produced anti-bodies that can neutralise toxins, counteract autoimmune diseases and cure metastatic cancer. **Adalimumab, a first protein evolved through phage display**, is used for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel diseases.

- **Phage display allows** scientists to study protein interactions on a large-scale and select proteins with the highest affinity for specific targets. It provides a means to identify target-binding proteins from a library of millions of different proteins without the need to screen each molecule individually.

Prithvi Shaw makes history, becomes youngest Indian to score Test Century on debut

- Prithvi Shaw made history by becoming the youngest Indian to score a Test century on debut. Shaw, at the age of 18 years and 329 days, reached the historic three-figure mark in just 99 balls against the West Indies on Day 1 of the opening Test at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Rajkot.
- The previous record for the youngest Indian to make half-century on debut was held by Abbas Ali Baig, who scored a half-century against England in Manchester in 1959 at the age of 20 years 131 days.
- Prithvi is also the third-fastest centurion on Test debut. India's Shikhar Dhawan remains the fastest in this club with an 85-ball hundred against Australia in 2013 at the IS Bindra Stadium, Mohali.
- Prithvi has also become the seventh-youngest Test centurion.

Denis Mukwege, Nadia Murad win 2018 Nobel Peace Prize:

- The Norwegian Nobel Committee on October 5, 2018 awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad “for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict”.
- Both Mukwege and Murad made a crucial contribution to focus attention on combating war crimes. Both of them have helped to give greater visibility to war-time sexual violence, so that the perpetrators can be held accountable for their actions.

Irish Author Anna Burns wins Man Booker Prize 2018 for her novel 'Milkman'

- Irish Author Anna Burns on October 16, 2018 won the Britain's renowned Man Booker Prize 2018 for her third novel 'Milkman'. Burns received the award from Prince Charles' wife Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, as well as 50000 pounds (USD 65900) as the prize money.
- With this, Burns became the first writer from Northern Ireland to win the Booker Prize. The previous Irish winners were John Banville, Anne Enright and Roddy Doyle. She is also the first woman to win the award since 2013, when Eleanor Catton took the award for 'The Luminaries'.
- The judges of the annual award praised Anna Burns' work as utterly distinctive. Burns was born in the Northern Irish capital Belfast in 1962 and now lives in southern England. She had previously authored two novels - 'No Bones' and 'Little Constructions'.

'Milkman':

- Milkman is an exploration of Northern Ireland's three decades of violence told through the voice of a young woman.
- The novel chronicles the struggles of a middle sister in a family as she confronts rumour, social pressures and politics amid violent sectarian divisions in her community.
- It is a story of brutality, sexual encroachment and resistance threaded with mordant humour.
- In an interview posted by the Booker Prize foundation, Burns said that "Milkman was inspired by her own experience... I grew up in a place that was rife with violence, distrust and paranoia, and peopled by individuals trying to navigate and survive in that world as best as they could."

Man Booker Prize:

- Established in 1969, the Man Booker Prize recognises the judges choice of "the best original novel written in English and published in the UK".
- Initially, Man Booker Prize was only open to writers from Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth nations until it began permitting authors from other English-speaking countries in 2014.
- Last year's Booker Prize went to "Lincoln in the Bardo," by American writer George Saunders.

Asma Jahangir wins UN Human Rights Prize posthumously

- Asma Jahangir, late Pakistani human rights activist and lawyer was posthumously announced as one of the winners of the UN Human Rights Prize on October 26, 2018. The announcement was made through the official Twitter account of President of the UN General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces.
- Jahangir was chosen for the prize along with three other including Rebeca Gyumi of Tanzania, Brazil's first indigenous lawyer Joenia Wapichana and Ireland's human rights organisation Front Line Defenders,
- Before Jahangir only three Pakistani women, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan (1978), Benazir Bhutto (2008) and Malala Yousufzai (2013) have been accorded the honour.

About Asma Jahangir:

- Asma Jahangir, who passed away on February 11, 2018 due to cardiac arrest at the of 66, was known for her outspoken nature and unrelenting pursuit of human rights as well as for remaining undaunted in the face of extreme pressure and opposition.
- She was the first woman to serve as the president of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association.
- She vehemently opposed military strongmen in Pakistan and fought her battles both on the streets and courts, steadfastly championing the rights of women, minorities and LGBTs.
- In 1987, Jahangir co-founded the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and became its Secretary-General. In 1993, she was elevated as the commission's chairperson.
- She also co-chaired South Asia Forum for Human Rights and was the vice president of International Federation for Human Rights.

- In between 1998-2000 , Jahangir served as the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions
- From 2004 to 2010, she served as the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief of the UN Commission on Human Rights.
- In 2016, she was named as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights in Iran, remaining till until her death in February 2018.
- Overall, she is remembered as a champion of the disenfranchised and for her services towards building a democratic and more inclusive Pakistan.

Awards:

- Jahangir is the recipient of several awards including the 2014 Right Livelihood Award along with Edward Snowden, 2010 Freedom Award, Hilal-i-Imtiaz in 2010, Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2005, 1995 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders and the UNESCO/Bilbao Prize for the Promotion of a Culture of Human Rights.
- She was awarded the Legion of Honour by France, the highest French order of merit for military and civil merits, in 2014.
- In 2016, she received a honorary degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Her writings include The Hudood Ordinance: A Divine Sanction? and Children of a Lesser God.

About UN Human Rights Prize:

- The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights is an honorary award given for outstanding achievement in human rights.
- Prize was established by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and was awarded for the first time on December 10, 1968, on the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The Prize is an opportunity not only to give public recognition to the achievements of the recipients themselves, but also to send a clear message to human rights defenders the world over that the international community is grateful for, and supports, their tireless efforts to promote all human rights for all.
- The 2018 award ceremony will take place on December 10 on World Human Rights Day in New York.

Arthur Ashkin, Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland win 2018 Nobel Physics Prize

- The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has selected three scientists Arthur Ashkin (USA), Gerard Mourou (France) and Donna Strickland (Canada) for the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physics.
- They were selected for groundbreaking inventions in the field of laser physics. Arthur Ashkin (91) received the half prize and remaining half was shared equally by Gérard Mourou and Donna Strickland.
- Arthur Ashkin: He is 96 years old which makes him oldest scientist ever to be awarded a Nobel Prize.
- He received prize for optical tweezers and their application to biological systems. His optical tweezers are able to grab particles, atoms, viruses and other living cells with their laser beam fingers, allowing use of radiation pressure of light to move physical objects.

- Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland: They were jointly awarded for their method of generating high-intensity, ultra-short optical pulses.
- They have created ultrashort high-intensity laser pulses without destroying amplifying material, thus paving way towards shortest and most intense laser pulses ever created by mankind.
- Their innovative technique is known as 'chirped pulse amplification' (CPA), has now become standard for high-intensity lasers, including ultra-sharp beams used in corrective eye surgeries.
- With this, Strickland (59) became third woman to have received Nobel Prize in Physics, after Marien Curie in 1903 and Maria Goeppert Mayer in 1963.

William Nordhaus, Paul Romer awarded 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics

- American economists William Nordhaus and Paul Romer were jointly awarded 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics Sciences for integrating climate change and technological innovation into macroeconomic analysis.
- Their findings have significantly broadened scope of economic analysis by constructing models that explain how market economy interacts with nature and knowledge.
- Their studies has helped to address some of current time's most basic and pressing questions about creating long-term sustained and sustainable growth.
- William Nordhaus: He is professor at Yale University. He was first person to create economic model that describes global interplay between economy and the climate in the 1990s. This model had showed that the most efficient remedy for problems caused by greenhouse gases is a global scheme of universally imposed carbon taxes.
- Paul Romer: He is professor at New York University's Stern School of Business. He has showed that how economic forces govern willingness of firms to produce new ideas and innovations. This had laid foundations for new model for development, known as endogenous growth theory.

Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences:

- Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences is officially *called* Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.
- It was not part of original group of awards (Chemistry, Literature, Peace, Physics, and Physiology or Medicine) set out in dynamite tycoon Alfred Nobel's 1895 will.
- It was instituted in 1968 by Sveriges Riksbank (Sweden's central bank).
- It is awarded annually by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences according to the same principles as for Nobel Prizes. The five Nobel Prizes are based on fund set up from wealth bequeathed by Alfred Nobel, whereas Economic Prize is based on donation received by Nobel Foundation in 1968 from Sveriges Riksbank.
- Although not a Nobel Prize, this award is recognised as most prestigious award in the subject. It has been awarded 50 times since 1969.
- Indian economist Amartya Sen *is only Indian* so far to win this prize in 1998 for his contributions to welfare economics.
- Elinor Ostrom *is only woman* to win this award so far in 2009, she had shared it with fellow-American Paul Krugman.

New Academy Prize in Literature: Maryse Conde wins alternative Nobel Literature Prize

- Guadeloupean author Maryse Conde (81) was awarded New Academy Prize in Literature, an alternative award formed in protest to Nobel Literature Prize.

- She was selected from 47 authors who were nominated by Swedish librarians and voted on by nearly 33,000 people from around the world.
- Conde is author of some 20 novels, including *Desirada*, *Segu* and *Crossing the Mangrove*. She is considered as grand storyteller who belongs to world literature. Her writings mostly describes ravages of colonialism and post-colonial chaos in language which is both precise and overwhelming.

New Academy Prize in Literature

- New Academy Prize in Literature was formed by New Academy consisting of more than 100 Swedish writers, artists and journalists in protest to denounce what its founders called bias, arrogance and sexism of Swedish Academy, which selects Nobel laureates.
- The Swedish Academy was plunged into turmoil in 2017 over its ties to Frenchman Jean-Claude Arnault, who was jailed for two years in early October for rape after the scandal came into light as part of the #MeToo movement.

Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018: Haryana ranked Best State, Satara District of Maharashtra ranked Best District

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently conferred Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018 to top ranked states and districts.
- **Haryana** was ranked as best State, **Satara District of Maharashtra** was ranked as best district. Uttar Pradesh was rewarded for maximum citizens' participation.
- The awards were given at concluding session of Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention at Rahtrapati Bhawan Cultural Centre.
- The rankings were based on the National Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 of the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Overall Ranking:

- **Top 3 States:** Haryana (1st), Gujarat (2nd) and Maharashtra (3rd).
- **Top 3 Districts:** Satara (Maharashtra), Rewari (Haryana) and Pedapalli (Telangana).
- **States with maximum citizen participation:** Uttar Pradesh (1st), Gujarat (2nd) and Maharashtra (3rd).
- **Districts with maximum citizens' participation:** Nashik (Maharashtra), Solapur (Maharashtra) and Chittorgarh (Rajasthan).

Background:

- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation had commissioned Swachh Survekshan Grameen-2018 (SSG 2018) through an independent survey agency to develop ranking of all districts of India on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters.
- This ranking was done based on a comprehensive set of parameters including surveys of public places like schools, Anganwadis, PHCs, Bazaars, Panchayat.
- It also took into consideration citizen's perception of Swachhata and their recommendations for improvement of program and data from SBM-G.
- As part of this survey, 6786 villages in 685 districts across India were covered. 27,963 public places namely anganwadis, schools, PHCs, bazaars and religious places in these villages were visited by an independent agency for survey.

Music composer Khayyam wins Hridaynath Award for Lifetime Achievement

- Veteran composer, lyricist, writer and national award winning music director Mohammed Zahur Khayyam Hashmi, famously known as Khayya was 2018 Hridaynath Award for Lifetime Achievement.
- The award will be conferred by Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in Mumbai. This year, the award ceremony coincides with 81st birthday of Hridaynath Mangeshkar after whom award is named.

Khayyam:

- He had started his music career in Ludhiana in 1943 at age of 17. Later, he had teamed up as Sharma of music-director duo 'Sharmaji-Varmaji' to compose music for films like "Heer Ranjha" (1948) and others.
- His earliest notable solo works were for Footpath (1953), "Biwi" and "Phir Subah Hogi" (1958). The 1961 blockbuster "Shola Aur Shabnam" had firmly established Khayyam as top-notch music director followed by films with superhit music like Mohabbat Isko Kehta Hain (1965) and Aakhri Khat (1966).
- Later, he composed music for films like "Kabhi Kabhi" (1976), "Trishul" (1978), "Noorie" (1979), "Thodisi Bewafai" (1980), "Dard" and "Ahista Ahista" (1981), "Dil, Akhir Dil Hai" and "Bazaar" (1982), "Razia Sultan" (1983).
- In 1981, he composed music for the sensitive blockbuster film "Umrao Jaan", which is considered as jewel in crown of Khayyam's compositions for which he bagged National Award and also Filmfare Award and others.

Hridaynath Mangeshkar Award:

- The award was established in 2011 by Mumbai-based socio-cultural organisation Hridayesh Art in honour of music composer and singer Hridaynath Mangeshkar.
- It felicitates and recognises successful individuals across country from various walks of life. It carries monetary award of Rs 2 lakh and a memento.
- The previous recipients of the award include eminent personalities like Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Amitabh Bachchan, Hariprasad Chaurasia, A R Rahman.
- Hridaynath Mangeshkar is son of renowned musician Deenanath Mangeshkar and is younger brother of Indian music legends Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle.

Minal Patel Davis honoured with Presidential Medal for Combating Human Trafficking

- Indian-American **Minal Patel Davis** was honoured with Presidential Medal for Combating Human Trafficking.
- She was presented with award by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for her extraordinary contribution towards combating human trafficking. It is US's highest honour in the field.

Minal Patel Davis:

- She is special advisor on Human Trafficking to Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner. She was appointed to this post in July 2015 and since then she has made local impact on human trafficking in America's fourth largest city.
- She has achieved this from policy-level perspective and by helped in advancing systems change.
- She is currently implementing Mayor Turner's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategic Plan, which is first comprehensive municipal response to human trafficking by US city.

- She was also past speaker at United Nations World Humanitarian Summit. She holds MBA from the University of Connecticut and BA from New York University.

PM announces national award in Netaji's name for disaster relief workers

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced launch of national award in name of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to honour those involved in disaster response operations.
- It was announced on the occasion of 75th anniversary of Bose's declaration of formation of Azad Hind Government, India's first independent government on October 21, 1943.

Salient features :

- The national award named after Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose will be given every year to police personnel who do excellent work in rescue and relief operations during any kind of disaster. It will be announced every year on January 23 i.e. on Netaji's birthday.
- The award will help to recognize exemplary services rendered by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel in rescue and relief works during the time of any disaster.
- NDRF and SDRF are constituted with personnel from Central paramilitary forces and State police organisations respectively.
- These forces are mandated under Disaster Management Act, 2005 for effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose:

- He was great Indian freedom fighter born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, British India (now in Odisha).
- Initially, he had joined Congress and was the president of the Congress during 1938-39. Later, due to differences in Congress, he resigned from Congress and established Forward Bloc. He tried to liberate the country through the Azad Hind Fauj.
- Azad Hind Fauj was founded in Singapore on October 21, 1943. It was established by exiled Indians. The role of Ras Bihari Bose was very important in its establishment.
- It was founded by ideas of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. It was armed force, whose purpose was to free India from British control. Subhash Chandra Bose was supreme commander of this army.

US-based Dalit writer Sujatha Gidla wins 2018 Shakti Bhatt Prize

- US-based Dalit writer Sujatha Gidla (55) has won 2018 Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize for her debut book "Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India".
- Her book was shortlisted by award panel from of other six contestants. It takes readers through four generations of her family at centre and mainly her uncle K G Satyamurthy, a Maoist leader who founded Left-wing guerrilla movement called People's War Group to overthrow Indian state.
- It also showcases undramatised lives of poverty, patriarchy, and rebellion, and encounter with subaltern Communism.

Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize:

- The Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize is funded by the Shakti Bhatt Foundation. It was set up in 2008 in memory of young writer and editor Shakti Bhatti.
- It honours first-time writers from Indian sub-continent for their outstanding work of fiction or non-fiction.

- It carries cash prize of Rs. 2 lakh. Sri Lankan author Anuk Arudpragasam had won the prize in 2017 for his debut novel "The Story of a Brief Marriage" set in the backdrop of the civil war

PM Narendra Modi awarded 2018 Seoul Peace Prize

- Seoul Peace Prize Committee has decided to confer 2018 Seoul Peace Prize on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- He is the fourteenth recipient of this award. The award will be presented to him by Seoul Peace Prize Foundation at mutually convenient time.

Salient features :

- PM Modi was selected for this prestigious award in recognition of his dedication for improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating Human Development of people in India by fostering economic growth and furthering development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.
- It also recognized PM Modi's contributions to growth of Indian and global economies, credited 'Modinomics' for reducing social and economic disparity between rich and poor.
- It also lauded PM's initiatives to make government cleaner through anti-corruption measures and demonetization.
- It also credited PM for his contribution towards regional and global peace through proactive foreign policy with countries around world under Modi Doctrine and Act East Policy.

Seoul Peace Prize:

- It was established in 1990 to commemorate success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, South Korea.
- It was established to crystallize Korean people's yearning for peace on Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world.
- It is *awarded biennially* to those individuals who have made their mark through contributions to harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and world peace.
- The awardee receives diploma, plaque and honorarium of US \$200,000.
- Past laureates include distinguished global personalities like German Chancellor Angela Merkel, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and renowned international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

Government announces winners of Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony

- Union Government (Ministry of Culture) has announced winners of Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for year 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The awardees were selected by award jury headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and included Chief Justice of India Justice (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi, former chief election commissioner N Gopalaswami and national vice president of BJP Vinay Sahasrabudde.

Awardees are:

- **2014:** Rajkumar Singhajit Singh. He is doyen of Manipuri dance. He is also teacher, performer and choreographer.
- **2015:** Chhayanaut. It is cultural organization of Bangladesh established in 1961. It has played leading role in promoting Tagore's works in Bengali culture, music and literature not only within Bangladesh, but all across the world.

- **2016: Ram Vanji Sutar.** He is renowned sculptor. His first notable work was the 45-foot Chambal monument at the Gandhi Sagar Dam in Madhya Pradesh. He is also recipient of Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony:

- It is annual award instituted by Government of India in 2011 as part of commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.
- The award is given for cultural harmony and carries monetary amount of Rs. 1 crore, citation in scroll, plaque as well as exquisite traditional handicraft or handloom item.
- The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex.
- It was conferred for first time on Indian Sitar Maestro Pt. Ravi Shankar in 2012 and second time on Shri Zubin Mehta in 2013.

Global Agriculture Leadership Awards – 2018 and First World Agriculture Prize

- Since 2008, the Global Agriculture Leadership Summit & Awards are organised by Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) with support of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare; Ministry of Food Processing Industries and Ministry of Commerce. The 2018 Global Agriculture Leadership Summit was 11th in this series and it was held in Hotel Hyatt Regency, New Delhi recently in October, 2018.

Global Agriculture Leadership Awards – 2018

- ICFA had established the Agriculture Leadership Awards in 2008 to recognize the leadership roles played by individuals and institutions positively impacting the lives of farmers and rural masses. During the recent summit, the Global Agriculture Leadership Awards – 2018 were announced and presented.
- The winners are as follows: Prof. Rudy Rabbinge, who has received International Leadership Award is Special Envoy – Food Security, Government of Netherlands. He has been awarded for his contribution in the field of food security and rural development.
- Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu was awarded the Policy Leadership Award for his proactive policies for uplifting the farming community by focusing on irrigation, investment, global partnerships, marketing initiatives and zero budget natural farming.

Best States in Various Fields:

- The best fisheries State Award was given Jharkhand for efforts in augmenting the production potential of the state in fisheries segment.
- Further, Bihar is Best Animal Husbandry State, Nagaland is best Horticultural state, Gujarat is Best Agriculture State and Haryana has been conferred with Program Leadership Award.

First World Agriculture Prize – Prof. M.S. Swaminathan

- The event witnessed bestowing of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan with the first World Agriculture Prize.
- This prize instituted by the Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA) was presented by Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu at Vigyan Bhawan at a special session, named Swaminathan Global Dialogue on Climate Change and Food Security organised by the Indian Council of Food and Agriculture.

Prof. M S Swaminathan:

- Prof. Swaminathan is known as Father of Green Revolution in India and is renowned worldwide for his basic and applied research in genetics, cytogenetics, radiation and chemical mutagenesis, food and biodiversity conservation.
- The United Nations Environment Programme has hailed him as 'The Father of Economic Ecology' owing to his commitment towards the ever-green revolution movement in agriculture.
- The ICFA's World Agricultural Prize carries a cash component of \$1,00,000 and will recognise individuals who have served humanity through agriculture.
- It will be an annual prize and would be presented to any individual or institution, importantly from Asian, African or Latin American countries who have played a seminal role in transforming agriculture globally and saving humanity from the curse of hunger.

Winners of United Nations Human Rights Prize – 2018

- The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights (UN Human Rights Prize) was announced recently by María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of United Nations General Assembly.
- The winners of 2018 award are:
 - Asma Jahangir – Pakistan's late human rights activist
 - Rebeca Gyumi – A Tanzanian human rights activist
 - Joenia Wapichana – Brazil's first indigenous lawyer
 - Front Line Defenders – A human rights organisation of Ireland

About the UN Human Rights Prize:

- These awards were instituted by the General Assembly of United Nations in 1966 and are intended to honour and commend people and organizations which have done outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other United Nations human rights instruments. The first awards were given in 1968 and are given **every five years** since then.

About 2018 WinnersAsma Jahangir

- Late Asma Jahangir (died Feb. 2018) was the fourth Pakistani woman to receive the prestigious award. She was an advocate from Pakistan, known for her persistent advocating for women's rights and discrimination against minorities. She was first woman to serve as president of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan. She was critical of Pakistan's military, intelligence and armed groups. She faced death threats, imprisonments and beatings several times. She co-founded and chaired the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; helped passing of a legislation against bonded labour in Pakistan; and worked on blasphemy cases.

Rebeca Gyumi :

- Rebecca Gyumi is a Tanzanian advocate and founder of the **Msichana Initiative** in Tanzania. This is an NGO which advocates for girls' right to education.
- In 2016, Gyumi had won a landmark case on child marriages after petitioning against the 1971 Tanzania Marriage Act which allowed girls as young as 14 to get married.

Joenia Wapichana:

- Joenia Wapichana is an indigenous lawyer from northern Brazil, and she became first indigenous woman to be elected to the Congress.

- She was the first indigenous lawyer to speak in front of the Supreme Federal Court and more than a decade before that she became the first indigenous person to graduate from law school in the country.

Front Line Defenders:

- Front Line Defenders is an Ireland based charity that provides support to human rights defenders having lives and health at risk through advocacy, grants, security and training. It was founded in 2001 in Ireland's capital, Dublin.
- Trivia: So far, only one Indian personality – Baba Amte has been awarded United Nations Human Rights Prize. Baba Amte was given this prize in 1988.

ECONOMICS AND HRD

World Bank launches first Human Capital Index, Singapore tops list

- The World Bank launched its first Human Capital Index (HCI) in Bali, Indonesia on October 11, 2018, as part of the World Development Report 2019. The index ranks countries based on their success in developing human capital.
- The index ranks 157 countries based on their education and health outcomes and the impact they are having on productivity. While Singapore tops the rankings, African countries occupying the bottom spots.

About Human Capital Index:

Objective

- The human capital index, which has been modeled on the World Bank's existing doing business index that assesses national business conditions, aims to create a similar ranking for countries based on how well they look after their people.
- The index claims to seek to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18.
- The HCI index values are contended to convey the productivity of the next generation of workers, compared to a benchmark of complete standard education and full health.

The four key indicators of the index include:

1. Under-5 mortality rates
2. Expected years of Quality-Adjusted School
3. Adult survival rates
4. Rate of stunting for children aged below five years

Significance:

- The index draws attention to the fact that human capital is connected to productivity, it's connected to economic growth and it's more highly correlated than other kinds of

infrastructure investment that heads of state and ministers of finance are much likely to go for because of the sooner visible outcomes.

Key highlights:

- The index measures the Index outcomes for each country as a fraction of maximum value of 1.
- It also measures the mortality rate for children under five, early childhood stunting rates due to malnutrition and other factors and health outcomes based on the proportion of 15-year-olds who survive until age 60.
- Further, it measures a country's educational achievement based on the years of schooling a child can expect to obtain by age 18, combined with a country's relative performance on international student achievement tests.
- Overall, the index found that on an average 56 percent of children born today will forego more than half their potential lifetime earnings because governments were not investing adequately to ensure their people are healthy, educated and ready for an evolving workplace.

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX - 2018

- Context: The 2018 Global Hunger Index report has been released. The report is a peer-reviewed publication released annually by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide.
- The GHI scores are based on a formula that captures three dimensions of hunger—insufficient caloric intake, child undernutrition, and child mortality—using four component indicators:
- UNDERNOURISHMENT: the share of the population that is under-nourished, reflecting insufficient caloric intake
- CHILD WASTING: the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (low weight-for-height), reflecting acute undernutrition.
- CHILD STUNTING: the share of children under the age of five who are stunted (low height-for-age), reflecting chronic undernutrition.
- CHILD MORTALITY: the mortality rate of children under the age of five.

About GHI

- It is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national levels.
- GHI is released annually by **Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide**. (The International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI was also involved with the publication until this year.)

Findings related to India:

- India's ranking has dropped three places from 2017.
- India has shown improvement in three of the indicators over the comparable reference years. o The percentage of **undernourished people** in the population has dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 14.8% in 2018.
- **Child mortality rate** has halved from 9.2% to 4.3%, and **Child stunting** has dropped from 54.2% to 38.4% over the same period.

- However, the prevalence of **child wasting** has worsened. It stood at 17.1% in 2000, and increased to 20% in 2005. In 2018, it stands at 21%. At least one in five Indian children under the age of five are wasted.

Performance of India:

- India has been ranked at 103 out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2018, with hunger levels in the country categorized as “serious”.
- At least one in five Indian children under the age of five is wasted. The only country with a higher prevalence of child wasting is the war-torn nation of South Sudan.
- India’s ranking has dropped three places from last year, although the Index says its results are not accurately comparable from year to year and instead provides a few reference years for comparable data.
- India has shown improvement in three of the indicators over the comparable reference years. The percentage of undernourished people in the population has dropped from 18.2% in 2000 to 14.8% in 2018. The child mortality rate has halved from 9.2% to 4.3%, while child stunting has dropped from 54.2% to 38.4% over the same period.

Concerns:

- The report terms hunger and forced migration for the severity worldwide.
- Globally, the level of hunger still falls into the “serious” category, despite improvement over the last two decades.
- The Index projects that at the current rate of progress, 50 countries will fail to reach the “low” hunger category by 2030.
- This puts the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 2, which aims to end hunger by 2030, in jeopardy.

Way ahead:

- Child wasting is high across South Asia, constituting a “critical public health emergency”. Wasting rates are highest for infants aged 0 to 5 months.
- Therefore, attention to birth outcomes and breastfeeding is important. Also, child wasting in the region is associated with a low maternal body mass index. Hence, there is need for a focus on the nutritional status of the mother during pregnancy.
- Factors that could reduce child stunting in South Asia include increased consumption of non-staple foods, access to sanitation, women’s education, access to safe water, gender equality, and national food availability.

Udyam Abhilasha: SIDBI launches national level entrepreneurship awareness campaign

- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has launched **Udyam Abhilasha** (a national level entrepreneurship awareness campaign). It was launched in 115 Aspirational Districts identified by NITI Aayog in 28 States.

Udyam Abhilasha:

- The campaign will run from 3 October to 8 October, 2018 across India and reach out to around 15,000 youth.
- It will create and strengthen cadre of more than 800 trainers to provide entrepreneurship training to aspiring youths across these districts to enter admired segment of entrepreneurs.

- For implementing this campaign, SIDBI has partnered with CSC e-Governance Services India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle, (CSC SPV) under Ministry of Electronics & IT through their CSCs.
- It will also tieup with Banks, NABARD, NBFCs, SFBs, District Industries Centres, State Government etc.
- CSC Village Level entrepreneurs (VLEs) will play role of catalyst under this campaign for these aspiring entrepreneurs.
- VLEs will provide training, support aspirants to establish new units, assisting them in availing loans and make them aware about various Government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, SUI etc. and educate them in business literacy.

Objectives of Udyam Abhilasha:

- Inspire rural youth in aspirational districts to be entrepreneurs by assisting them to set up their own enterprise.
- Impart trainings through digital medium across the country, Create business opportunities for CSC-VLEs.
- Focus on women aspirants in aspirational districts to encourage women entrepreneurship.
- Assist participants to become bankable and avail credit facility from banks to set up their own enterprise.

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI):

- SIDBI is principal development financial institution for promotion, financing and development of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector in India.
- It was established on April 2, 1990 through an Act of Parliament (thus, it is statutory body).
- It is headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. It facilitates and strengthens credit flow to MSMEs and address both financial and developmental gaps in MSME ecosystem across the country.

QS Asia Rankings 2019: Eight Universities from India among top 100

- QS Asia University Ranking is an annual publication of university rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).
- Universities are assessed based on the academic reputation, employer reputation, student-faculty ratio, international faculty and students, staff with PhD, papers per faculty and citations per paper, among other parameters.

India and QS Asia rankings

- The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-Bombay) has topped the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asia University Rankings from India followed by IIT Delhi and IIT Madras.
- Eight Indian universities have figured among the top 100 in the list of Asia's top 50 universities.
- IITBombay, IIT-Delhi, IIT-Madras, IISC Bangalore, IIT-Kharagpur, IIT-Kanpur, Delhi University and IIT-Roorkee are the Indian institutions in the top 100.
- There are 75 universities from India in the top 500 Asia list No Indian University managed to come under the top 10 slot or even Top 20 slot.
- India is making good progresses with forty new universities ranked and fourteen moving up the table.
- The National University of Singapore is ranked as Asia's best university, followed by University of Hong Kong, Nanyang Technological University, Tsinghua University and Peking University.

World's largest dome inaugurated in Pune

- The world's largest dome was inaugurated at Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT)'s World Peace University (MIT-WPU) campus at Loni Kalbhor, Pune (Maharashtra).
- It was inaugurated by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu along with Peace Center on the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

World Peace Monument dome:

- The dome has been built atop MIT World Peace Library and World Peace Prayer Hall, which are named after 13th century poet-saint and philosopher Dnyaneshwar who was pivotal figure of Bhakti movement in Maharashtra.
- The dome has diameter of 160 feet, overtaking earlier record holding Vatican Dome having diameter of 139.6 feet .
- It stands 263 feet tall with bell hanging from centre and has prayer hall with area of around 30,000 sq ft. It is supported by 24 massive columns, each 63 feet tall.
- The periphery of the dome and underneath — inside and outside has bronze statues of 54 of biggest names in world history stand, irrespective of nationality or religion.

SCI-TECH

IAF successfully conducts series of flight trials of Astra Beyond Visual Range

Air-to-Air Missile

- Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully undertaken series of flight trials of Astra Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVR-AAM) from September 26 to October 3, 2018. The tests were conducted at Integrated Test Range (ITR), Balasore, Odisha as part of final development trials of the missile.

About test:

- The missile was tested in combination of complex tests for engagement of pilotless target in different modes of manoeuvring, off-boresight, medium and long ranges.
- These trials were combination of complex tests for engagement of pilotless target in different modes of manoeuvring, off-boresight, medium and long ranges.
- These tests make missile ready for induction in service in 2019.

Astra Missile:

- Astra is air to air beyond visual range air-to-air indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). More than 50 private and public sector industries are involved in development and production of different sub-systems of the missile.
- It is one of the smallest weapon system developed by DRDO, having length of 3.8-metre and weighing 154kg.
- It is single stage solid fuelled missile and has payload capacity of 15 kg conventional explosives.
- It can be launched from different altitudes and is capable of engaging targets at varying range and altitudes at both short-range targets (up to 20 km) in tail-chase mode and long-range targets (up to 80 km) in head-on mode.
- It is radar homing supersonic missile having maximum speed of Mach 4 (four times speed of sound). It possesses high Single Shot Kill Probability (SSKP) making it highly reliable.
- It is all-weather missile with active radar terminal guidance, excellent electronic counter-counter measure (ECCM) features, smokeless propulsion and process improved effectiveness in multi-target scenario. It has advance on-board electronic counter-measures that jam radar signals from enemy radar, making tracking of the missile difficult.

- It is fitted with terminal active radar-seeker and an updated mid-course internal guidance system that helps missile to locate and track targets.
- The missile can be integrated with all fighter aircraft of IAF including Sukhoi-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar and the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).

