

MPSC

INTEGRATED BATCHES 2018-19

CURRENT AFFAIRS

JUNE - 2018

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The **UNIQUE**
academy

UNIQUE INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING PVT. LTD.

INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND INDIA

President Ram Nath Kovind approves Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir :

- A day after BJP pulled out of its alliance with PDP, the state of Jammu and Kashmir has come under Governor's rule with immediate effect.
- Last evening, Governor NN Vohra had forwarded a report to President Kovind for imposing Governor's rule in J&K under Section 92 of the Constitution, after holding widespread consultation with all the political parties. This will be the fourth time in the last 10 years that a Governor's rule is imposed in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The BJP's decision to break away from the alliance apparently came after its chief Amit Shah held a meeting with the party's Jammu and Kashmir cabinet ministers in Delhi.
- Both the parties had formed a coalition government in 2015 after the state elections threw up a hung assembly. However, both of them were ideologically divided on a variety of issues.
- The 81-year-old governor, NN Vohra will now be running the state for a fourth time since his appointment in 2008.

Governor's Rule in Jammu & Kashmir:

- In case of failure of constitutional machinery in any other state of India, President's Rule is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution. But in case of J&K, as per Section 92 of state Constitution, Governor's Rule is imposed in the state only after the consent of the President of India in case of failure of constitutional machinery for period of six months.
- During the Governor's rule, State Assembly is either suspended or dissolved. If the Constitutional machinery is not restored before the expiry of this six month period, the provision of Article 356 of the Constitution of India are extended to J&K and the President's rule is imposed in the State.

What led to BJP-PDP split?:

- As per BJP General Secretary Ram Madhav "It has become untenable for the BJP to continue in the alliance government in Jammu and Kashmir". BJP blames the Peoples Democratic Party for the challenging security conditions in the Valley.
- He also pointed that, "Terrorism, violence and radicalisation have risen and fundamental rights of the citizens are under danger in the Kashmir Valley."
- He also cited the killing of senior journalist Shujaat Bukhari in Srinagar by unidentified gunmen, which took place a few days back. And only two days before Eid, an army soldier was abducted while going on Eid leave and was killed.
- Considering all these factors and to control the prevailing situation in the state, BJP decided to pull out of the alliance and hand over the reins of J&K to the Governor.

India hosts World Environment Day 2018 on 'Beat Plastic Pollution' theme 5 June: World Environment Day

- The World Environment Day was observed across the world on June 5, 2018 with an aim to encourage worldwide awareness and action for the protection of environment.

- The Day was first celebrated in 1974 and since then, it has grown to become a global platform for public outreach.
- Theme : Beat Plastic Pollution.
- There is a call to action to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution on natural places and wildlife.
- 'Beat Plastic Pollution' urges governments, industry, communities and individuals to reduce the production and excessive use of single-use-plastic polluting the oceans and damaging marine life and threatening human health.
- Plastic is a huge environmental and health issue and the day was observed with the main focus on creating mass awareness about the hazards of plastic pollution.

Brahmaputra river data and supply of non-Basmati rice

- In a significant move, China agreed to provide India hydrological data of the Brahmaputra River in flood season, months after Beijing stopped the practice, crucial to predict floods.
- The two countries also signed an agreement under which China has agreed to import non-Basmati rice from India which is likely to bridge the ballooning trade deficit to a certain extent.
- The two Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were signed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held detailed discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping on bilateral and global issues which will add further vigour to the India-China friendship after their informal summit in Wuhan.
- Modi arrived in the picturesque coastal city of China's Shandong province on a two-day visit to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- Last year, China had stopped sharing data soon after the 73-day long stand-off between Indian and Chinese troops at Doklam over Chinese military's plans to build a road close to India's Chicken Neck corridor connecting North-Eastern states.
- The first MoU was inked between China's Ministry of Water Resources and India's Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation upon provision of hydrological information of the Brahmaputra river in flood season by China to India.
- The agreement enables China to provide hydrological data in flood season from May 15 to October 15 every year. It also enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data if water level exceeds mutually agreed level during non-flood season.

NITROGEN EMISSION : a big problem:

Why in News?

- Recently, Indian Nitrogen Assessment report highlighted the nitrogen emission scenario in Indian Environment.

Salient features of the report :

- In India nitrogen emissions grew at 69% from 2001 to 2011 and has replaced methane as the second largest Greenhouse Gas (GHG) from Indian agriculture.

- Agricultural soils contributed to over 70% of nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions, followed by waste water (12%) and residential and commercial activities (6%).
- As fertilizer, nitrogen is one of the main inputs for agriculture, but inefficiencies along the food chain mean about 80% of nitrogen is wasted.
- Annual nitrogen emissions from coal, diesel and other fuel combustion sources are growing at 6.5% a year currently while emission from poultry industry is growing at the rate of 6%.

Effects of nitrogen pollution :

- Through the phenomena of Nitrogen cycle, it is transferred from soil and water to the atmosphere through denitrification. Denitrification completes the nitrogen cycle by converting nitrate (NO₃⁻) back to gaseous nitrogen (N₂). Denitrifying bacteria are the agents of this process. These bacteria use nitrate instead of oxygen when obtaining energy, releasing nitrogen gas to the atmosphere. Excess of Nitrogen in the atmosphere has various impacts-
- On Economy- India loses nitrogen worth US \$10 billion per year as fertiliser value (through subsidy).
- On health- Its health and climate costs are pegged at US\$ 75 billion per year. It is a major cause of Baby Blue syndrome.
- On Agricultural Productivity- Excessive nitrogen in the form of fertilizer brings down the carbon content of the soil, result in diminishing returns in terms of crop yield.
- On Environment: Excessive eutrophication which turns water body into Dead Zone, substance like nitric acid is a component of acid rain. Further, Nitrogen particles make up the largest fraction of PM_{2.5}, class of pollutants.

Centre forms Cauvery Water Management Authority:

On June 2, 2018, Under the Supreme Court's order of February 13th the Centre formed a Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)

Objective: To address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.

Salient features :

- The CMA would comprise a Chairman, a Secretary and **8** members. Out of the 8 members , 2 each will be full and part time members and the rest would be part time members from the four states concerned
- The chairman would either be a senior and eminent engineer with an experience of water resource management or an IAS officer with experience in water resource management.
- He will have a tenure of **5** years until he reaches 65 years of age .
- It would formulate schemes and supervise operation of reservoirs and regulation of water releases and if any member state is found guilty of non cooperation and shortfall the authority would take appropriate action.
- The authority at the beginning of the water year (June 1 each year) would determine the total residual storage in the specified reservoirs.
- The authority would also advise the member states to suitable measures to improve water use efficiency by micro-irrigation, change in cropping pattern , improved agronomic practices etc.
- The total corpus allotted for the functionality of the authority is Rs.2 crore.
- The authority will meet every 10 days during the months of June and October when the South-West and North-East monsoon arrives.

Mauritius to host 11th World Hindi Conference:

On June 11, 2018, As part of the visit of the South African nations by the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj , she stopped by Port Louis to inspect the work on the 11th World Hindi Conference which will be hosted by Mauritius Government from August 18- 20 2018. The main theme of the Conference is “Hindi Vishwa Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti”.

Salient features :

- i. The Event is organized by the Indian External Affairs Ministry every 3 years.
 - ii. This year the organizing authority is World Hindi Secretariat located in Mauritius .
 - iii. The government has been suggested to support major Hindi scholars as this might be a public relations exercise before the 2019 general elections.
 - iv. Special focus of this year’s event will be on Bollywood and the global reach of Hindi through movies.
 - v. The Conference will cover both the classical and modern elements of Hindi.
 - vi. The 10th World Hindi Conference was held in Bhopal in September 2015.
- Since then, ten such Conferences have been held in different parts of world. In the first conference, then Prime Minister of Mauritius Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was Chief Guest and it was attended by 122 delegates from 30 countries.
- In remembrance of the first conference, every year 10th January is being observed as World Hindi Day. The 10 edition of World Hindi Conference was held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (India) in 2015 with the theme of “*Hindi Jagat-Vistar and Sambhavnaye*”.

India records 22 per cent reduction in Maternal Mortality Ratio

- India recorded 22 per cent reduction in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) since 2013, as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin that was released by the Office of the Registrar General of India on June 6, 2018.
- According to the bulletin, the Maternal Mortality Ratio in India declined from 167 in 2011-2013 to 130 in 2014-2016. The MMR is defined as the proportion of maternal deaths per 1, 00,000 live births.

Salient features :

- The decline in the ratio was most significant in Empowered Action Group (EAG) states from 246 to 188.
- Among the southern states, the decline was from 93 to 77 and in other states from 115 to 93.
- Kerala topped the list with 46 MMR, followed by Maharashtra with 61 and Tamil Nadu with 66.
- The highest maternal death ratio was recorded by Assam at 237, though the number is down from 300 in 2011-13.
- UP and Uttarakhand registered the second-highest MMR at 201, down from 285 in the last three years.
- Besides, three states including Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were able to meet the SDG target for MMR of 70 per 1, 00,000. Two other states, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, are not very far behind.
- According to SRS Bulletin, there were nearly 12,000 fewer maternal deaths in 2016 as compared to 2013, with the total number of maternal deaths reducing to 32,000 for the first time.

- The figures mean that every day 30 more pregnant women are being saved in India as compared to 2013.

To understand the maternal mortality situation in the country better and to map the changes that have taken place, especially at the regional level, the government has categorised the states into three groups:

EAG states:The EAG states include Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Assam and Uttar Pradesh.

Southern states: The southern states include Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Other states:The category covers the remaining states and Union territories.

Background

- Reduction of mortality of women is an area of concern for the Governments across the globe.
- The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 had recommended reduction in maternal mortality by at least 50 percent of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and further one half by the year 2015.
- The survey for the current bulletin covered 62,96,101 pregnant women, of whom 556 died.

Haryana Government launches 7 Star Gram Panchayat Rainbow Scheme

- The 7 star Gram Panchayat Rainbow scheme was launched under the unique initiative of Haryana Government. Under this, it has been decided to give Star ranking on the basis of seven social norms to the State Panchayats.
- An official release said that under the scheme, about 1,120 villages of the state got the star rank. In Haryana, 1120 villages will now be called 'Star Village'. The Government has decided to promote progressive villages on the basis of development and better social parameters in the state.

Base of selection:

- In a meeting of State level Panchayat Performance Assessment Committee (SPPAC), Haryana Agriculture Minister OP Dhankar said that Panchayats will be judged on the basis of gender equality, education, crime free, sanitation, environment protection, good governance and social participation.
- The selected villages will be honored in the prize ceremonies in Panchkula, Gururgram and Rohtak next month. The Agriculture Minister announced that one lakh rupees will be given for each criterion to get the award.

Key points of 7 star plan:

- Of the 6,204 gram panchayats in Haryana, 1120 villages have been given the status of Star Village for the first time, which is 18 percent of the total panchayats.
- All the three villages receiving the six star rating are from Palwal district, in which the Jainpur village of Hathin block and Janachauli and Nangalan Bikhawal village of Pithala block are included.
- In the three villages of the five star, the villages of Hasanoli, Bhandoli, District Palwal, Hathin block of village Palwal, and Kohnor village of Rohtak district are in the village.

- In 9 villages receiving four stars, Akbarpur and Harbo villages of Narayangarh section of Ambala district, Maddalpur of Faridabad district, Banawali Sautar and Malhar in district of Fatehabad, Wazirpur in Gurgaam district, Bahalpur and Palwal districts of Barwala block of Hisar district. Ramgarh and Karna village of Hasanpur section are included.
- In the 407-star ranking, Ambala district is in first place whereas Karnal district is ranked third with 199 star villages, Gurgram is number two and Karnal district with 75 star villages.
- Better Education No. 2 has been declared as 109 Star Village on the number three in the number of daughters in 567 star villages, sex ratio improvement.

Rewards:

- Villages for achieving each parameter will be rewarded Rs 1 lakh. Villages having equal or more girl population will be given Rs 50,000 as bonus with their reward money.
- Similarly, villages which adopt Swachhta Mission will be given additional Rs 50,000 as reward.

India's forest cover stood at 21.34 percent in 2015: report:

- On 4th June 2018, Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan released 'Status of Environment Report, India 2015' at the state environment ministers's conference held in New Delhi, as per which, India's forest cover was 21.34 % in 2015.

Status of Environment Report, India 2015:

- i. Forests and tree cover jointly contribute nearly 24.16 % of India's geographical area.
- ii. According to the recent estimate by Forest Survey of India (FSI), in 2015, the forest cover was 21.34 % of India's total geographical area. This is an increase of 1.29 % from 20.05 % in 2009.
- iii. Mizoram with 89 % has the highest forest cover compared to other states and Union territories in India.
- iv. It is followed by Lakshdweep (84.56 %), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (82 %), Arunachal Pradesh (80 %).
- v. Assam has the lowest forest cover with 35 % among the listed 15 states and Union territories (UTs) having over 33 per cent forest cover.
- vi. The forest cover of India has increased from 692,027 square kilometres in 2010 to 701,673 square kilometres in 2015.
- vii. An overall increase of forest cover in hill states has been witnessed. The northeastern states contribute for one-fourth of India's forest cover.
- viii. Degraded forest land with canopy density less than 10 % is classified as scrub. The area under scrub is 41,362 sq km, which is 1.26 % of the total geographical area of India.
- ix. Overall decline of 628 sq km in forest cover and an increase of 112 sq km in mangroves was registered, compared to 2009. Madhya Pradesh has the maximum forest cover of 72,462 sq km in India.

STATES :

The Andhra Pradesh government on Saturday launched a zero based natural farming scale out scheme:

On June 2, 2018, The government of Andhra Pradesh has launched a Zero Based Natural Farming (ZBNF) scheme for benefitting the farmers by 2024.

Salient features :

- i. The scheme was launched by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N.Chandrababu Naidu.
- ii. MOU was signed between the state's agriculture department and Sustainable India Finance Facility (SIFF).
- iii. The investment for the ZBNF scheme is Rs. 16,134 crores over the next 6 years.
- iv. Presently 1,63,034 farmers are practicing ZBNF and the state wants to incorporate all the farmers by 2024.

About SIFF:

It is an initiative with the partnership of United Nations Environment Program, The World Agroforestry Center and the BNP Paribas. It will be financing the farmers for the scheme .

Shilling (Meghalaya) gets selected as the 100th Smart CITY UNDER Smart City

Mission:

On June 20, 2018, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation announced Shillong, capital city of Meghalaya as the 100th Smart City .

Salient features :

With the selection of Shillong, the total proposed investment in the finally selected 100 cities under the Smart Cities Mission would be Rs.2,05,018 crores.

About Smart Cities Mission:

- 1-Smart Cities Mission, sometimes referred to as Smart City Mission, is an urban renewal and retrofitting program by the Government of India with the mission to develop 100 cities across the country making them citizen friendly and sustainable.
- 2-It was launched in 2015.Till now, 99 smart cities were selected in four rounds of competition and with this announcement, the selection of 100 cities has been completed under the Smart Cities Mission.
- 3-Previously, 20 cities were selected in January 2016, 13 cities in May 2016, 27 cities in September 2016, 30 cities in June 2017 and nine cities in January 2018.
- 4-With the selection of Shillong, the total proposed investment in the finally selected 100 cities under the Smart Cities Mission would be Rs 205,018 crore.
- 5-As many as 91 cities have incorporated special purpose vehicles and 948 projects are under implementation. As many as 994 lakh crore urban population will be impacted by the Smart Cities Mission.
- 6-The Smart Cities Mission was launched on June 25, 2015 with the objective of strengthening urban infrastructure through application of smart solutions and give a decent quality of life to citizens.

Gujarat: Surat Smart City selected for 'City Award' for Implementation of Projects Under 'India Smart Cities Award' 2018:

- Surat Smart City Selected for 'City Award' for showing great momentum in Implementation Projects Under 'India Smart Cities Award' 2018 .
- Bhopal and Ahmedabad Selected for 'Innovative Idea' Award for their Transformative Approach Towards Sustainable Integrated Development 9 Cities Selected for Project Awards for 13 Innovative and Successful Projects in Seven Categories
- Nine awards in three categories, i.e., Project Award, Innovative Idea Award and City Award have been announced under the India Smart Cities Awards, which was launched on June 25, 2017 by Hon'ble Housing and Urban Affairs Minister.
- **The city award** is being given to Surat for showing great momentum in implementation of projects especially in the categories of urban environment, transport and mobility and sustainable integrated development.
- **The Innovative Idea award** is being given to a project/idea particularly remarkable for its innovative, bottom-up and transformative approach towards achievement of sustainable integrated development. Joint winners in this category are Bhopal for their Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) and Ahmedabad for Safe and Secure Ahmedabad (SASA) Project.
- **The Project awards** are being given to most innovative and successful projects in seven categories that have been completed by April 1, 2018.

The Projects selected are

1. PMC Care from Pune under 'Governance' category,
2. Smart Place Making from Pune under 'Built Environment',
3. Smart Class rooms from NDMC and Jabalpur, Smart Campus from Visakhapatnam, Lighthouse from Pune under 'Social Aspects' category,
4. B Nest Incubation Centre from Bhopal and Conservation of Rajasthan School of Arts from Jaipur under 'Culture and Economy' category,
5. Public Bike Sharing from Bhopal, Pune, Coimbatore and Waste to Energy Plant in Jabalpur under 'Urban environment' category,
6. Integrated Transit Management System (TMS) from Ahmedabad and Surat under 'Transport and Mobility' category and
7. Smart Water Management through SCADA from Ahmedabad under 'Water and Sanitation' category.

The use of LED bulbs and tube lights made mandatory in offices of Haryana government by August 15

- The use of LED bulbs and tube lights has been made mandatory in all offices of Haryana.
- In this direction, all Administrative Secretaries, Head of Departments and Managing Directors of Boards, Corporations and Public Undertakings have been directed through a written communication to ensure replacing all inefficient lighting with LED lamps or tube lights by August 15, 2018, said a spokesman of New and Renewable Energy Department.
- As per directions of the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, all halogen, sodium bulbs and tube lights will be replaced with energy-efficient LED bulbs and tube lights.

- He said that the use of incandescent lamps and purchase of sodium vapour lamps by government sector, government aided sector, boards and corporations and autonomous bodies have already been banned.
- The spokesman said the officers have been directed to ensure compliance of these orders and a report on the present level of compliance may be sent to the office of Director, New and Renewable Energy Department within one month.
- They have also been directed to again verify compliance and send a report in this regard to the office Director, New and Renewable Energy Department by September 15, 2018 so that the government may be apprised of the status, he added.

Queen Pineapple declared as State Fruit of Tripura:

- President Ram Nath Kovind has declared Tripura's queen variety pineapple as state fruit. Tripura is one of the largest pineapple growing states in country.
- There are more than 100 commercial scale pineapple plantations spread throughout the state.

Queen pineapple:

- Queen pineapple is spiny, golden yellow in colour. It has pleasant aroma and flavour.
- Its sweetness and unique aroma differentiates it from pineapples of other states of Northeast region. It had received Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2015 and was helped by North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation, a central public sector unit in getting it.
- APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), an apex organization under Ministry of Commerce and Industry has helped export Kew variety of pineapples from Tripura to West Asia.

MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra government, Quebec province sign pact to increase economic co operation, welfare of tribals:

An MoU has been signed by the Maharashtra government and Canada's Quebec province to enhance economic cooperation, mainly in areas namely information technology, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and welfare of the tribal community.

Maharashtra government, Quebec province sign pact:

- i. The agreement was signed by Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and Philippe Couillard, prime minister of Quebec province of Canada.
- ii. Discussion was held on ways to increase collaboration in knowledge-sharing on ports as Maharashtra has the strength of majority of youngest population.
- iii. Devendra Fadnavis also met Pierre Beaudoin, chairman of the Board Corporate office of Bombardier Inc. This company is a multinational aerospace and transportation company. It is the world's leading manufacturer of aircraft and trains in Quebec.
- iv. Devendra Fadnavis and a delegation of bureaucrats are on a tour to Dubai, Canada and USA to get business for Maharashtra. The tour will last for a week.
- v. Devendra Fadnavis also met Michael Sabia, President and CEO of CDPQ. CDPQ is Institutional Fund Manager. It manages funds more than \$298 billion.
- vi. The meeting was aimed to attract more investment in Pension Fund from Canada. CDPQ agreed to tie

up with some companies in India.

vii. It also expressed interest in working with retail partners. Devendra Fadanvis put forth Maharashtra Samruddhi Corridor, logistic parks and few other projects as great options for investment.

viii. He said that Bombardier Inc has offered support to the Maharashtra Metro and Monorail Transport Infrastructure.

Committee to study for 1000mw floating solar power plant in Ujani Dam:

Maharashtra government:

On June 26, 2018, The Maharashtra government set up a committee to study issues related to the development of a 1,000-MW floating solar power plant at Ujani dam in Solapur district of Maharashtra.

i. Director (Commercial) of Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (MSEDCL), Satish Chavan, has been appointed as the head of the committee.

ii. The committee will study the environmental impact of the project and monitor the month-wise water level of the dam.

iii. It will study the possibilities of using the water bed of the Ujani Dam for the floating solar power plant due to unavailability of large lands.

iv. It will study the water levels of Ujani dam every month, total fluctuation in its water levels and obtain necessary permissions required for the project.

About Ujani Dam:

i. Ujani, located in Madha taluka of Solapur, around 300 kms from Mumbai, is among the largest dams in Maharashtra.

ii. The dam was built on a flat land and is easily accessible from all sides, which is an advantage as the solar panels required to be monitored.

iii. Ujani dam has a total capacity of **110 TMC** and compared to other dams in the state, it has been constructed on a flat land with less depth.

India to host 1st BIMSTEC Military Exercise:

- India will host first military exercise of the BIMSTEC Countries in September 2018 in **Pune**, Maharashtra. The theme of the exercise includes counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain and cordon and search.
- The main aim of this military exercise is to promote strategic alignment among the member-states and to share best practices in the area of counter-terrorism. Each participating member country will bring in some 30 soldiers. BIMSTEC countries had held disaster management exercise in 2017 in New Delhi, but this will be the first military exercise of the grouping.
- **BIMSTEC** stands for Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- Member countries: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka from South Asia and Myanmar, Thailand from South East Asia.

Salient features :

- In it, the chiefs will debate challenge of terrorism and transnational crime, which is major concern among all states and on how they can promote collective cooperation.

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Objectives:

- In it, the chiefs will debate challenge of terrorism and transnational crime, which is major concern among all states and on how they can promote collective cooperation.
- BIMSTEC countries had held disaster management exercise in 2017 in New Delhi, but this will be first military exercise of the grouping.

Social activist Pushpa Bhave selected for Rajarshi Shahu award:

On 26th June 2018, Pushpa Bhave, an eminent scholar and social activist was awarded the 'Rajarshi Shahu Puraskar' at an event in **Kolhapur, Maharashtra**.

Pushpa Bhave – 'Rajarshi Shahu Puraskar':

- i. The function was organised on 26th June 2018 on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Rajarshi Shahu, a former ruler of the erstwhile princely state of Kolhapur.
- ii. The 'Rajarshi Shahu Puraskar' award is given in the memory of Rajarshi Shahu, a well-known social reformer. The award consists of a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh.
- iii. The award honours remarkable contribution of an individual in social work, science, fine arts, education and sports sectors.
- iv. Pushpa Bhave is a resident of Mumbai. She has been active in several fields. She is 79 years old. She is also a thinker and an author.
- v. She has been honoured with this award for her contribution to several fields. She has fought for the empowerment of Dalits, women head loaders, sweepers, women beedi workers etc.
- vi. She had involved in many political struggles. She also participated in the Samyukt Maharashtra Movement that started in 1956 to fight for a separate state for Marathi-speaking people.
- vii. She also supported the Narmada Bachao Andolan for rehabilitation of dam-affected people.

6 reactors for Jaitapur nuclear plant to be built by France's EDF and General Electric:

On June 28, 2018, French utility **EDF and General Electric** have signed a pact to jointly build **six** reactors for India's most ambitious nuclear power plant at **Jaitapur in Maharashtra**. This pact was signed between French President Emmanuel Macron during his visit to India.

- i. The 9,900 megawatt (mw) plant at Jaitapur is being built by State run-Nuclear Power Corporation of India.
- ii. This will be the world's largest nuclear power unit .
- iii. The plant will have six nuclear reactors of capacity 1,650 mw each.
- iv. GE Power will design the conventional island for the Jaitapur plant and supply its main components. It will also provide operational support services and a training programme to as per the requirements of NPCIL .
- v. EDF will be responsible for engineering integration for the entire project and will provide all the requisite input data.

Background:

India aims to have nuclear power generation capacity of 22,480 mw by 2031, and the Jaitapur power plant would be crucial to achieving this target.

About Jaitapur nuclear plant:

The layout of nuclear power plant comprises two major parts — the nuclear island and the conventional (turbine) island. The nuclear island is the heart of the nuclear power plant, while the conventional (turbine) island houses the key component which extracts thermal energy from pressurized steam and converts it into electrical energy.

Kanya Van Samruddhi Yogna's: scheme to disburse plant saplings announced by Maharashtra govt:

On June 30, 2018, The Maharashtra government in the weekly cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced a new scheme called 'Kanya Van Samruddhi Yojana', wherein farmers families where girl children are born, will be given saplings for plantation.

Objective:

It is aimed at empowering women and promoting tree plantation.

Salient features :

- i. A farmer family blessed with a girl child between April 1 and March 31 can make an application with the gram panchayat after which they will get 10 saplings free of cost from the forest department.
- ii. Beneficiaries will have to plant the saplings between July 1 and 7.
- iii. The income from these trees will be utilised for safeguarding the future of the girls.
- iv. The scheme will be applicable for maximum two girls.
- v. The beneficiaries will also be helped under the horticulture scheme.
- vi. At least two lakh farmers families will benefit from the scheme every year.
- vii. The saplings will be of different varieties, including teakwood, mango, jackfruit, black plum and tamarind.

Maharashtra Plastic Ban:

- Recently, **Maharashtra** Government enforced plastic ban in State.

Issues with such plastic ban:

- **Loss of jobs and revenue:** According to an study, state-wide ban in Maharashtra will result in loss of up to Rs 15,000 crore and nearly 3 lakh job.
- **Implementation Issues:** Uttar Pradesh Government has reintroduced plastic ban in state from July 15, 2018, third time since 2015, reflecting poor implementation of previous ban due to:
 - o Confusion among manufacturer, business entity and consumer over what's banned and what's not.
 - o Poor awareness among various stakeholder about the ban
 - o Hasty decision taken, leading to poor planning and enforcement
 - o cases of smuggling and the rise of black markets for plastic bags leading to widespread availability of and demand for polythene bags.

- Taj Decrelation - It aims at gradual phasing out of single-use plastic water bottles and cutlery in the 500-metre radius of the Taj Mahal in the next five years and to make the monument litter-free.

Nashik's Vishwas Mandlik, Mumbai's Yoga Institute win PM awards:

- New Delhi, June 20 (IANS) The Ayush Ministry on Wednesday said Vishwas Mandlik of **Nashik** and The Yoga Institute in Mumbai are the recipients of the Prime Minister's Award for outstanding contribution to promotion and development of yoga.
- Mandlik won the award in the category Individual - National and The Yoga Institute won in the category Organisation - National. The selection was done from among 186 nominations received under different categories for the year 2018, the Ministry said in a statement.
- Mandlik acquired in-depth knowledge of authentic Patanjali and Hatha Yoga, Bhagwad Gita and Upnishad by study and research of ancient scriptures over the last 55 years. In 1978, he set up first branch of Yoga Vidya Dham, which today has 160 centres in India.
- Mandlik set up Yoga Vidhya Gurukul in 1983 for yoga education. Yoga Chaitanya Seva Pratisthan, a trust, was set up by him in 1994 to propagate yoga in remote parts of India. He has written 42 books and developed 300 CDs to cover various training courses, said the Ministry.
- The Yoga Institute in Mumbai, set up in 1918 by Yogendraji, has completed 100 years producing more than 50,000 yoga teachers and has over 500 publications to its credit. It has contributed to the promotion and development of holistic yoga for over 10 decades.
- "The winners will be felicitated with a trophy, certificate and a cash award each. The value of each cash award would be Rs 25 lakh," the Ministry said.
- Nomination for the awards were invited through open advertisement. The Screening Committee chaired by Ayush Secretary drew up a shortlist from the 186 applications, and a jury chaired by the Cabinet Secretary examined the recommendations and made its own analysis.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the institution of these awards on second International Day of Yoga on June 21, 2016.
- The award for 2017 was won by Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune.

Plastic ban in Maharashtra: What is allowed, what is banned

- Maharashtra plastic ban: As per the notification, violators will be fined Rs 5,000 and Rs 10,000 for the first and second-time offense. A third-time offender will have to shell out Rs 25,000 and may also face imprisonment for a period of three months.
- From June 23, India's second-populous state Maharashtra has started penalising all those found using plastic products, including single-use disposable items.
- The Devendra Fadnis-led state government enforced the ban after issuing the Maharashtra Plastic and Thermocol Products (manufacture, usage, sale, transport, handling, and storage) notification in March this year.
- The government had given the manufacturers, distributors, and consumers a period of three months to dispose their existing stock and come up with alternatives to plastic usage.

- While environmentalists welcomed the cabinet's decision, the plastic industry has slammed the government calling it "retrograde step."
- With its huge dependence on plastic and lack of alternatives to the banned products, many also wonder if the plan would be a success. Here is all you need to know about the Maharashtra plastic ban:

What is the plastic ban about and when was it implemented?

- The Maharashtra government on March 23, 2018, banned the manufacture, usage, sale, transport, distribution, wholesale and retail sale and storage, import of plastic bags with or without handle, and disposable products made out of plastic and thermocol.
- Citing the environmental risks and harm caused to wild animals from ingestion or entanglement in plastic, the government enforced the ban with immediate effect.

Who will implement and monitor the ban?

- Officials from Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) and district and local administration have been authorised to implement it. For regulating this law at tourist locations, tourism police, or Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation has been made responsible.
- The government has also formed an association comprising of plastic manufacturers, ministry officials and environmental experts to oversee the implementation of the ban.

Maharashtra: Legal heir or wife of martyred soldier to get two hectares land

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has announced that the state will give two hectares of agricultural land to the legal heir of martyred soldiers, in case their spouses are not alive, as compensation.
- A decision to give two hectares of land to the wives of martyred soldiers was taken on March 20 this year and a statement from the Chief Minister's office said that legal heir had also been included in the list. The statement added that changes, required in land allotment rules to implement this decision, were approved by Mr Fadnavis yesterday.
- The decision would apply to the Army as well as other armed forces of the Union, the statement said.
- The district collector has been vested with the right to provide such land free of cost to the wife or legal heir of a soldier martyred in war, terror attacks or in missions abroad

POLITY

WOMEN IN PRISONS

Why in news?

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has published its report titled 'Women in Prisons.'

Condition of women prisoners in India (based on 2015 data):

- There are approximately 4.2 Lakh persons in jail in India, of which, around 18000 (about 4.3%) are women. Of these, around 12000 (66.8%) are undertrial prisoners.
- The number of women prisoners is showing an increasing trend - from 3.3% of all prisoners in 2000 to 4.3% in 2015.

About 50% of these women are in age group of 30-50 years and the next 31% are in age group of 18-30 years.

- There are 1,401 prisons in India, and only 18 are exclusive for women which can house just around 3000 female prisoners. Thus, a majority of women inmates are housed in women's enclosures of general prisons.

Problems faced by women prisoners :

- Women are often confined to small wards inside male prisons, their needs becoming secondary to those of the general inmate population.
- While several cases of sexual harassment, violence and abuse against women in jails have been observed, the grievance redressal mechanism is still weak.
- There is inadequacy of female staff which often translates to the reality that male staff becomes responsible for female inmates, which is very much undesirable.
- Their small numbers (4.3%) ensure they remain low on policy priority and hence the coverage of facilities such as sanitary napkins, pre- and post-natal care for pregnant mothers is patchy.
- They are not provided with meals that are nutritious and according to their bodily requirements.
- Women tend to lose ties with their children over the years, due to inadequate child custody procedures (children upto 6 years are allowed in jail with their mothers, after that they are sent away to children home).
- They are abandoned or harassed post-release, mainly due to the stigma attached with incarceration.

Details and recommendations of the report :

- Care-giving mothers:
 - o They should be allowed to make arrangements for their children prior to their imprisonment
 - o They should be allowed reasonable suspension of detention.
 - o If there is no relative/friend, her child below 6 years should be put in a child care institution.
 - o Extended visits and frequent meetings should be allowed with the child.
- Undertrial women:
 - o Bail should be granted to those who have spent one-third of their maximum possible sentence in detention by amending section 436A of CrPC.
 - o A maximum time frame may be decided for release of women prisoners after bail is granted but surety is not produced.
- Post-natal stage women:
 - o A separate accommodation should be provided to them to maintain hygiene and protect the infant from contagion, for at least a year after childbirth.

- o Special provisions related to health and nutrition of such women be made.
- o Instruments of restraint, punishment by close confinement or disciplinary segregation should never be used on pregnant and lactating women.
- Pregnant women: o They must be given information and access to abortion during incarceration, to the extent permissible by law.

RESERVATION IN PROMOTION

Why in news?

The Supreme Court has permitted Central government for reservation in promotion to SC/ST employees working in the public sector in "accordance with law".

Background

- This direction of apex court came in the response to government's complaint that promotions were at a "standstill" due to separate orders passed by various high courts.
- The Supreme Court's decision will permit the government to fill a large number of vacancies in various departments.
- 'In accordance with law' points towards the guidelines laid down in M Nagaraj case 2006 presently applicable as there is no specific law which deals with the reservation in promotions.
- The apex court had further that a seven-judge Constitution bench needs to be constituted to look into the Nagaraj judgement.
- In Nagaraj judgement, apex court while upholding the previous constitutional amendments regarding this issue, put some restrictions on the state that it should: o collect quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy of representation of that class in public employment.

Argument in favour of reservation in promotion :

- The makers of the Constitution used the reservation policy for giving protection to the deprived sections of society due to systemic deprivation of rights, social discrimination and violence. Besides, the Supreme Court has, time and again, upheld any affirmative action seeks to provide a level playing field to the oppressed classes with the overall objective to achieve equality of opportunity.
- The representation of SCs/STs, though, has gone up at various levels, representation in senior levels is highly skewed against SCs/STs due to prejudices. Over the years Institutions has failed to promote equality and internal democracy within them. There were only 4 SC/ST officers at the secretary rank in the government in 2017.
- Overall efficiency in government is hard to quantify, and the reporting of output by officers is not free from social bias. For ex. In Maharashtra, a public servant was denied promotion because his 'character and integrity was not good'.

What next?

- The case is still *sub judice* in Supreme Court. A constitutional bench will examine the issue as to whether the M Nagaraj judgement, which dealt with the issue of application of the 'creamy layer' for reservation to SC and ST categories in promotion in government jobs, should be re-examined or not.

APPOINTMENTS:

Mahesh Kumar Jain takes charge as the fourth RBI Deputy Governor:

On 22nd June 2018, Mahesh Kumar Jain took charge as the **fourth Deputy Governor** of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Mahesh Kumar Jain – fourth RBI Deputy Governor:

- i. Mahesh Kumar Jain was the MD & CEO of IDBI Bank before being appointed as Deputy Governor of RBI.
- ii. The government has appointed him as the Deputy Governor of the RBI for a term of three years. He succeeds SS Mundra who retired in August 2017.
- iii. Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan was looking over the banking supervision department after S.S. Mundra retired.
- iv. Usually, the supervisory department is handled by the Deputy Governor who has been a commercial banker.
- v. As Deputy Governor of RBI, Mahesh Kumar Jain will handle the Department of Banking Supervision, Department of Co-operative Banking Supervision, Department of Non-Banking Supervision, Central Security Cell, Department of Corporate Services including Document Management System, Rajbhasha Department, Consumer Education and Protection Department, Financial Inclusion and Development Department and Premises Department.

Arvind Saxena appointed as acting Chairman of UPSC

- Government has appointed Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) member Arvind Saxena as the acting Chairman of the commission. He will perform the duties of chairman of UPSC with effect from 20 June 2018 till further orders or till completion of his tenure in August, 2020.
- He will take over charge from incumbent Vinay Mittal who completes his term. Arvind Saxena is 1978-batch Indian Postal Service officer. He was appointed as member of UPSC in May, 2015 after he completed his stint in Aviation Research Centre (ARC).
- He has previously worked in Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) after he joined it in 1988. He is specialised in study of strategic developments in neighbouring countries.

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC):

- UPSC is constitutional body that conducts prestigious civil services examination for Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) and others.
- It has been established under Article 315 of the Constitution of India. It consists of Chairman and ten Members, who are appointed and removed by President.
- The chairman and members of the Commission hold office for term of six years or until they attain age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- Article 316 of Constitution deals with appointment and term of office of members.

SPORTS AND AWARDS:

Veteran film actor Anupam Kher to be given Lifetime Achievement Honour at upcoming IIFA awards ceremony:

- Indian actor Anupam Kher will be presented the Lifetime Achievement honour at the 19th edition of International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) awards ceremony in Bangkok on 24th June 2018.
- Anupam Kher to be given Lifetime Achievement honour at upcoming IIFA awards ceremony:
 - i. Anupam Kher is 63 years old. He has received two National Film Awards and eight Filmfare Awards.
 - ii. He has served as chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification and the National School of Drama in India.
 - iii. He has worked in more than 500 films in various languages. He is awarded for his contribution to the field of cinema.
 - iv. International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards 2018 will be held at Siam Niramit Theatre in Bangkok, Thailand.

Mithali becomes first Indian to score 2000 T20I runs:

- On 7th June 2018, Mithali Raj became the first Indian cricketer to score 2000 runs in Twenty20 Internationals (T20I).
 - i. Mithali Raj reached this mark during the match in which India won over Sri Lanka by seven wickets in the Women's Asia Cup T20 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
 - ii. Now she has 2,015 runs in 75 matches. She has become the seventh woman to reach 2,000 runs.
 - iii. The list is topped by Charlotte Edwards (2,605), Stafanie Taylor (2,582) and Suzie Bates (2,515).

Women's Asia T20 cup 2018 –cricket:

On 10th June 2018, Bangladesh won the Women's Asia T20 Cup 2018 at the Kinrara Academy Oval in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Women's Asia T20 Cup 2018 (cricket):

- i. Bangladesh defeated India by three wickets in the final and won their first Asia Cup title. Bangladesh has become the only other team to win the title apart from India.
- ii. Scores: Bangladesh 113 for 7 (Sultana 27, Rumana 23, Poonam 4-9, Harmanpreet 2-19). India 112 for 9 (Harmanpreet 56, Rumana 2-22, Tul Kubra 2-23).
- iii. Bangladesh's Rumana Ahmed was named the Player of the Match.

About 2018 Women's Twenty20 Asia Cup:

- ◆ Dates – 3–10 June 2018
- ◆ Administrator – Asian Cricket Council
- ◆ Host – Malaysia

French Open 2018:

From 21st May to 10th June 2018, French Open tennis tournament was held in Paris, France.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Player Name</u>
2018 Men's Singles	Rafael Nadal
2018 Women's Singles	Simona Halep
2018 Men's Doubles	Pierre-Hugues Herbert Nicolas Mahut
2018 Women's Doubles	Barbora Krejčíková Kateřina Siniaková
2018 Mixed Doubles	Latisha Chan Ivan Dodig

Simona Halep beats Sloane Stephens in final:

- i. Simona Halep is currently number one in the WTA rankings. She defeated Sloane Stephens 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the final and won the French Open 2018 title.
- ii. Simona Halep has won her first Grand Slam title. Simona Halep had lost in two previous French Open finals to Maria Sharapova in 2014 and Jelena Ostapenko in 2017.

Rafael Nadal defeats Dominic Thiem in the final:

- i. On 10th June 2018, Rafael Nadal defeated Dominic Thiem 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 in the final and won his 11th French Open title.
- ii. This victory has confirmed his world No 1 ranking for Rafael Nadal.

India's Sunil Chhetri becomes joint second highest international goal scorer

- India's talismanic football team captain Sunil Chhetri (33) became joint second highest international goal scorer among active players along with Argentine superstar footballer Lionel Messi.
- He achieved this feat after he scored his 64th goal in match between India and Kenya in Intercontinental Cup summit clash in Mumbai, Maharashtra. In this match, Chhetri scored two goals.

Sunil Chhetri's performance:

- It was Chhetri's 102nd international match, making him only the second Indian to feature in 100 international matches after former skipper Bhaichung Bhutia.
- In terms of goals scored, he and Messi are behind Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo who has 81 goals on his name from 150 matches.
- Chhetri and Messi are currently in joint 21st position in all-time list of goal scorers. Chhetri is just one goal below former Chelsea FC and Ivory Coast footballer Didier Drogba (65 from 104 matches). In terms of number of goals per match, Chhetri is better than Messi (who is currently considered as best player in the football world).
- Chhetri has scored 0.62 goals per match as against 0.52 of Messi (64 goals from 124 matches). He is also better goal average than Cristiano Ronaldo (0.54 per match).

ECONOMICS AND HRD

RBI's Monetary Policy Review: RBI Hikes Repo Rate to 6.25%

- On June 6, 2018, the six members Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI has decided to hike Repo (short term lending rate) to 6.25% from 6.00%. As per the second Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement, the current policy rates of RBI would be as follows:
 - Repo Rate: 6.25%
 - Reverse Repo Rate: 6.00%
 - Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate: 6.50%
- The recent rise of 25 basis points in key policy rates is for the first time in four and half years since NDA government was formed in May, 2014.

Repo Rate:

- Repo rate, or repurchase rate, is the rate at which RBI lends to banks for short periods. This is done by RBI buying government bonds from banks with an agreement to sell them back at a fixed rate.
- When RBI increases Repo Rate, the banks can borrow less at a lower cost and thus need to lend at higher rates.
- This contributes to hike of the interest rates in markets. When RBI increases the repo rate, the move is generally called a tight monetary policy stance.

Reverse Repo Rate:

- Reverse repo rate is the rate of interest at which the RBI borrows funds from other banks in the short term. This is done by RBI selling government bonds / securities to banks with the commitment to buy them back at a future date.

- The banks use the reverse repo facility to deposit their short-term excess funds with the RBI and earn interest on it. RBI can reduce liquidity in the banking system by increasing the rate at which it borrows from banks.
- Hiking the repo and reverse repo rate ends up reducing the liquidity and pushes up interest rates. When the RBI increases the Reverse Repo, it means that now the RBI will provide extra interest on the money which it borrows from the banks.
- An increase in reverse repo rate means that banks earn higher returns by lending to RBI. This indicates a hike in the deposit rates.

Marginal Standing Facility:

- Marginal Standing Facility is a new Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) window created by Reserve Bank of India in 2011.
- MSF is the rate at which the banks are able to borrow *overnight funds* from RBI against the approved government securities.
- The rate of interest on MSF is above 100 bps above the Repo Rate. The banks can borrow up to 1 percent of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) from this facility.

Mahesh Kumar Jain takes charge as the fourth RBI Deputy Governor:

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- v. As Deputy Governor of RBI, Mahesh Kumar Jain will handle the Department of Banking Supervision, Department of Co-operative Banking Supervision, Department of Non-Banking Supervision, Central Security Cell, Department of Corporate Services including Document Management System, Rajbhasha Department, Consumer Education and Protection Department, Financial Inclusion and Development Department and Premises Department.

India's ranks 113 out of 175 in childhood index, discrimination against girls remains a serious challenge:

On May 31, 2018, India ranked **113** in the Save the Children's "End of Childhood Index 2018".

Salient features :

The index is a part of a report : 'The Many faces of Exclusion'.

- The index a total of **175** countries to determine quality of childhood.
- In **2017** , India ranked **116** with a point of 754/1000 out of **172** countries and in **2018** India ranked **113** with total score of 768/1000 , with an improvement of 14 points . The cause of improvement is reducing Child marriage.
- India's child mortality rate under five years (out of 1000 live births) was 43 which is quite high and so is child stunting (age from 0-59 months) which is at 38.4%.
- On child marriages the adolescent union (girls aged 15-19 years) is 15.2% which was 21.1% in 2017.
- The parameters for measure of Childhood are :poor health, malnutrition, exclusion from education, child labour, child marriage, early pregnancy and extreme violence.
- **Globally** more than half of the children – **1.2 billion** – are threatened by conflict, widespread poverty and violence.
- More than one billion children are plagued by poverty .
- **240** million by conflict and fragility , more than **575 mn** by gender bias issues, **153 mn** affected by all three threats including South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan.
- Health care , disease and malnutrition kill 20 times more children than wars and conflicts . US ranks 36th, Russia ranks 37th, China ranks 40th . Singapore and Slovenia is at the top of the chart sharing 1st place and Niger is at the bottom.
- This has been launched to celebrate **International Children's Day in June 1.**

Marking 'Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis' birth anniversary, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu to release Rs 125 coin today

- Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu will release a commemorative coin of Rs 125 and circulation coin of Rs 5, marking the 125 birth anniversary of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis which is also celebrated as Statistics Day.
- Naidu will be chief guest at the event, conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation and Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in Kolkata. The ISI was set up by Mahalanobis in 1931.
- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, who was called 'PCM' by his colleagues, was a noted Indian scientist and applied statistician. He introduced the Mahalanobis distance, a statistical measure. He was also one of the members of the first Planning Commission of India.
- Mahalanobis was instrumental in designing the way we conduct surveys today. He introduced the concept of pilot surveys and advocated the importance of sampling methods. He also introduced a method for estimation of crop yields using statistical sampling.

What is Statistics Day?

- In 2007, the government designated June 29 as Statistics Day with the intent to create public awareness on the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formation.
- Listed under the category of 'special days', which are celebrated annually across the country, it also acknowledges the contribution of Mahalanobis.

- The theme for Statistics Day this year is 'Quality Assurance in Official Statistics'

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana: Government inks \$500 million loan agreement with World Bank

- loan agreement with World Bank to provide additional financing for Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) rural road projects.
- The loan has maturity of 10 years along with 3 year grace period. It will provide additional financing for PMGSY Rural Roads Project to build 7,000 km of climate resilient roads, out of which 3,500 km will be constructed using green technologies.

Salient features :

- World Bank has supported PMGSY since its inception in 2004. So far it has invested over US \$1.8 billion in loans and credits mostly in economically weaker and hill states across North India viz. Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.
- It has helped to built and improved about 35,000 km of rural roads and benefited about 8 million people with access to all-weather roads.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):

- PMGSY fully funded centrally sponsored scheme launched in 2000. It aims to provide single all-weather road connectivity to all eligible unconnected habitations in the rural areas with population of 500 persons and above (in plain areas) and 250 persons and above (in Hilly States , desert Areas, Tribal areas and selected Tribal and Backward Districts). Union Ministry of Rural Development is nodal ministry for implementation of Scheme.
- For this scheme, 75 paise per litre has been earmarked out of cess levied on high speed diesel.
- It considers habitation as unit for providing connectivity and not a revenue village.
- The scheme encourages use of "Green Technologies" and non-conventional materials (like waste plastic, geo-textiles, fly-ash, iron and copper slag etc) for constructing rural roads.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES:

Cabinet may decide on FAME II scheme in a month :

Union Heavy Industries Minister Anant Geete has said that, the Union Cabinet may decide on the launch of the FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India) scheme's phase II within a month, to enhance adoption of energy-efficient vehicles.

FAME II scheme:

- i. The proposal with details of the scheme would be presented in the Union Cabinet in a month.
- ii. The second phase will be for a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23. It is expected to involve financial support of Rs 9,381 crore.
- iii. It would focus on new energy vehicles utilized for public transport, commercial purposes and high-speed two-wheelers.
- iv. The scheme would also involve setting up of a Rs 500 crore venture capital fund related to electric vehicles to support high-risk startups and promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

- v. The main focus of the venture capital funding will be development of zero emission vehicles and its component manufacturing base, making prototype to manufacturing and development of R&D, and promoting work on alternative battery chemistries, etc.
- vi. The government had extended phase I till the end of September or till phase II is approved, whichever is earlier.
- vii. Phase I was initially proposed for two years till 31st March 2017. It was extended twice for six months till 31st March 2018.
- viii. The government had launched FAME India scheme in 2015. Under FAME II, demand aggregation will be implemented for city buses, electric three-wheelers and electric four-wheeler taxi segment to reduce the cost of vehicles.
- ix. Agencies like EESL, ASRTU (Association of State Road Transport Undertakings) can be considered as potential aggregators.
- x. Also under FAME II, Large EV components like motor, drive power train and controller that are not currently covered under **modified special incentive package scheme (MSIPS)** of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology have been proposed to be given capital investment subsidy at a rate of 20-25 per cent of capital investment.

About EESL (Energy Efficiency Services Limited):

- ◆ Joint venture of four National Public Sector Enterprises – NTPC Limited, PFC, REC and POWERGRID
- ◆ Set up under – Ministry of Power

Swachh Bharat Mission: Rural sanitation coverage crosses the 85% mark

- According to Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, rural sanitation coverage of India has risen to 85% under Swachh Bharat Mission. Recent survey conducted by Independent Verification Agency across 90,000 households in over 6000 villages across the country has found usage of toilets in rural India to be 93.4%.

Salient features :

- This sanitation coverage under Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), is significant as it has increased more than double since launch of mission.
- It has successfully built 7.4 crore toilets across rural India through mobilization of rural communities. As result of it, over 3.8 lakh villages and 391 districts across the country have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- Two independent surveys conducted in past by Quality Council of India (QCI) in 2017 and National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 2016 had pegged usage of these toilets at 91% and 95% respectively.

Swachh Bharat Mission:

- SBM was launched in October 2014 to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation. The mission aims to achieve Swachh Bharat or make India clean by 2019, as a fitting tribute to 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- It world's largest sanitation program that aimed bring behavioural change of people with respect to toilet access and usage.
- The SBM consists of two sub-missions Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin), implemented in rural areas, and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), implemented in urban areas. SBM-G seeks to

eliminate open defecation in rural areas by improving access to sanitation by ensuring use of toilets, besides their construction.

- It also seeks to generate awareness to motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices, and encourage the use of appropriate technologies for sanitation.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)

- PMSMA or Prime Minister's Safe Motherhood Campaign was launched by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to provide free health check-ups to pregnant women at government health centres and hospitals in both rural and urban areas.
- It is national programme that aims to provide pregnant ladies free ante-natal services (ANC) and required treatment for free on 9th of every month.
- Private practitioners will play a critical role in supplementing the efforts of the Government.

Objectives of PMSMA

- Provide healthy life to the pregnant women.
- Lowering the maternity mortality rate and infant mortality rate.
- Making pregnant women aware of their health issues and diseases.
- Making sure safe delivery and healthy life of the baby.
- **Intended Beneficiaries:** The programme is applicable *only for pregnant women in their pregnancy period of 3 to 6 months* (i.e. in their 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy). It is expected to provide free antenatal care to about 3 crore pregnant women across the country.
- **Facilities:** The programme will provide assured, comprehensive and quality *antenatal care* on 9th of every month (fixed day). Under it all kinds of medical checkups are provided completely free to pregnant women.
- Besides, free checkups including blood pressure, sugar level, weight, haemoglobin test, blood test and screening will be also provided. These checkups can take place at medical centres, government and private hospitals and private clinics across the country.

Kanya Van Samruddhi Yagna's: scheme to disburse plant saplings announced by Maharashtra govt:

On June 30, 2018, The Maharashtra government in the weekly cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced a new scheme called 'Kanya Van Samruddhi Yojana', wherein farmers families where **girl children** are born, will be given saplings for plantation.

Objective:

It is aimed at empowering women and promoting tree plantation.

Salient features :

- A farmer family blessed with a girl child between **April 1 and March 31** can make an application with the gram panchayat after which they will get **10** saplings free of cost from the forest department.
- Beneficiaries will have to plant the saplings between **July 1 and 7**.
- The income from these trees will be utilised for safeguarding the future of the girls.
- The scheme will be applicable for maximum **two** girls.
- The beneficiaries will also be helped under the horticulture scheme.
- At least two lakh farmers families will benefit from the scheme every year.
- The saplings will be of different varieties, including **teakwood, mango, jackfruit, black plum and**

tamarind.

Railways allows passengers to book their tickets from counters using VIKALP scheme:

Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has revised the VIKALP scheme, enabling wait-listed passengers who **booked tickets from counters** to choose the alternate train accommodation scheme.

Salient features :

- Passengers to book their tickets from counters using VIKALP scheme:
- VIKALP or alternate train accommodation scheme (ATAS) was launched in 2015. This scheme was introduced only for tickets booked online.
- As per this scheme, wait-listed passengers of a train can opt for confirmed accommodation in alternate trains.
- The ministry has said that, if a passenger avails Vikalp scheme, he/she should mark his/her choice of alternate train departing within 12 hours, 24 hours, 48 hours.
- The passenger is also given an optional choice to mention their Aadhaar number in the reservation form.
- Passengers will not be charged extra. They will also not be refunded for difference of fare under this scheme.
- Also, either all passengers opting for VIKALP of a PNR (passenger name record) or none will be transferred to alternate train in the same class.

Government launches 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA':

- On 4th June 2018, Union Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Road Transport & Highways, Shipping, **Mansukh L. Mandaviya**, launched the 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA', the Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA:

- i. The affordable sanitary napkins will be made available at more than 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras in 33 States/UTs in India.
- ii. He said that the average price of sanitary napkins in the market is nearly Rs. 8 per pad. The SUVIDHA napkins are offered at Rs. 2.50 per pad.
- iii. As per the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, nearly 58 percent of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons.

Government launches 'Suvidha'- affordable, biodegradable sanitary napkin

- The Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Mansukh L Mandaviya, launched the 'Janaushadhi Suvidha', the oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) in Delhi on June 4, 2018.
- The affordable sanitary napkin will now be made available at over 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras functional in 33 states and union territories across the country.

Salient features :

- The average price of sanitary napkins available in the market currently is around Rs 8 per pad, whereas the Suvidha napkins will be available at Rs 2.50 per pad.
- The initiative will make the basic hygiene requirement aid affordable for the underprivileged women.
- The product also comes with a special additive, which makes it biodegradable when it comes in contact with oxygen after being discarded.
- According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, about 58 percent of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons.
- Further, about 78 percent women in urban areas use hygienic methods of protection during menstrual period, however, only 48 percent women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban): Government approves construction 1.5 lakh affordable houses

- The Union Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has approved construction of another 1.5 lakh affordable houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) for benefit of urban poor.
- Decision in this regard was taken at 34th meeting of Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee. It approved investment of Rs 7,227 crore with Central assistance of Rs 2,209 crore.

Salient features :

Of the 1.5 lakh sanctioned affordable houses, Andhra Pradesh tops the list of houses with 56,512 units, followed by Uttar Pradesh (26,060), Madhya Pradesh (17,920), Jharkhand (14,526) and Maharashtra (13,506). With this, cumulative houses under PMAY(U) would be 47,52,751 houses. Since the launch of the scheme in 2015, over 45 lakh affordable houses have been approved for construction from 2015 to 2018.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban):

- PMAY(U) aims provide houses to all poor in urban areas by 2022. It is new version of Prime Minister's Housing For All by 2022 vision.
- Its objective is to construct two crore houses across nation. It covers entire urban area consisting of 4041 statutory towns with initial focus on 500 Class I cities.
- Intended beneficiaries of scheme are Poor people (BPL) and People living under Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and LIG (Low income Group) categories in urban establishments of country.

- It also targets people living under MIG (middle income Group). Government will provide subsidy ranging between 1 lakh to 2.30 lakh to people from above categories in order to make them secure.

Government launches 'Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan' to help farmers raise their income:

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture and farmers' welfare has launched the Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan from June 1, 2018 till July 31, 2018 to aid, assist and advice farmers on how to improve their farming techniques and raise their incomes.
- The Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan will be undertaken in 25 Villages with more than 1000 population, each in 111 Aspirational Districts identified in consultation with Ministry of Rural Development as per directions of NITI Ayog. In the districts where the number of villages (with more than 1000 population) is less than 25, all villages will be covered.

Key Highlights:

- An action plan comprising specifically identified activities under various departments of the ministry namely, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Animal Husbandry Dairying & Fisheries (DAHD&F) and Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE-ICAR) will be implemented to saturate the chosen 25 villages in each district with these activities.
- The overall coordination and implementation in the 25 villages of a district will be done by Krishi Vigyan Kendra of that district.
- Further, 111 officers have been made in-charge of one district each for overall coordination and field level monitoring.
- The officers have been selected from subordinate/attached/autonomous organisations/PSUs of the Agriculture Ministry.

FIRST IN WORLD, INDIA AND MAHARASHTRA

First deluxe train Deccan Queen completes 88 years of service:

- On 1st June 2018, India's first superfast train, Deccan Queen express from **Mumbai to Pune** marked 88 years of service.

Deccan Queen completes 88 years of service:

- i. Deccan Queen express is also known as 'Queen of Deccan'. The train began operations on 1st June 1930.
- ii. This was the first deluxe train introduced by Indian Railways. The train reduced travel time between Mumbai and Pune by nearly one hour.
- iii. This was the first train which had coaches with roller bearings, replacement of end on generation coaches with self-generating coaches with 110 volts system and first and second class chair cars.

iv. At present the Deccan Queen operates with 17 coaches including 4 AC chair car, one buffet car, 10-second class chair car and two-second class cum brake vans.

FIRST FREIGHT VILLAGE:

Why in news? :

India's first freight village is being developed in Varanasi.

Salient features :

- The objective of the project is to support economic development in the hinterland of the multimodal terminal at Varanasi and reduce logistics cost in the Eastern Transport Corridor and its influence zone.
- The village is being funded by the World Bank and it is being implemented by the inland waterways authority of India.
- The village will also have the Varanasi waterways terminal which is being developed under the Jal Marg Vikas project.
- Varanasi being a strategic location provides the opportunity to facilitate the transshipment of about 30 million tonnes of domestic freight as well as another 9 million tonnes of export import freight.
- Apart from supporting logistics and warehousing segment of the supply chain it would also bring in retailers, warehouse operators and logistics service providers supplying the regional FMCG market, together.

What is Freight Village? :

"A freight village is a defined area within which all activities relating to transport, logistics and the distribution of goods, both for national and international transit, are carried out by various operators"

Jal Marg Vikas Project :

- The project envisages the development of waterway (for commercial navigation) between Allahabad and Haldia on Ganga River that will cover a distance of 1620 km.
- The project covers Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

India's First Advanced Forensic Lab dedicated to women related cases to come up in Chandigarh

- Foundation of Sakhi Suraksha Advanced DNA Forensic Laboratory was laid in the campus of Central Forensic Science Lab (CFSL), Chandigarh.
- It is India's first advanced forensic lab dedicated for crimes related to women for timely deliver justice.

Salient features :

- The advanced lab in par with international standards will contribute to address gap in forensic DNA analysis of pending sexual assault cases in the country. The lab has been set up as model forensic lab and will be replicated in other parts of the country.
- 5 more such advanced forensic labs will come up in Mumbai, Chennai, Guwahati, Pune and Bhopal in the next 3 months bringing total minimum annual handling capacity of labs to 50000 cases.
- The labs in Chennai and Mumbai will be set up with funds from Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) while remaining 3 labs would be set up with funds by Ministry of Home Affairs.

Units of Sakhi Suraksha Advanced DNA Forensic Laboratory:

- There are four units viz. sexual assault and homicide unit, paternity unit, human identification unit and mitochondrial unit. Apart from Homicide and Sexual Assault and Unit, other three units are interlinked. They will work to examine cases related to crime against women.
- Paternity Unit: It will help in solving cases related to criminal paternity, gender selection and child swapping in hospitals.
- Human Identification Unit: It will play an important role to solve cases of missing person or children.
- Mitochondrial Unit: It will conduct mitochondrial DNA analysis in cases where regular Nuclear DNA analysis is not possible such as in case of highly degraded samples. It can also be used to better explore family relationships.

Background:

- Forensic science plays a vital role in the criminal justice delivery system by providing investigators with scientifically based evidence information through analysis of physical evidence.
- There has been increasing demand for better scientific analysis of physical evidence with increasing reports of crime against women such as sexual assault, foeticide, homicide etc.
- Even the scrutiny of difference judicial courts also demands more admissible, accurate and powerful forensic proof for human individualisation.
- At present there are 6 Central Forensic Science Labs (CFSLs) in Guwahati, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune and Bhopal and one State Forensic Science Lab in each State/UT.
- These labs are responsible for conducting forensic analysis of all cases in country including sexual assault, criminal paternity and homicide.

India receives first shipment of cheapest LNG from Gazprom Russia:

- On June 4, 2018, India received first shipment of its so far cheapest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Russian supplier Gazprom.
- The LNG has been delivered at a price close to USD 7 per million British Thermal Unit (mmBtu). This price is around 1.5 USD cheaper from the LNG imported from Qatar, which is India's oldest and largest supplier of LNG.
- This price is also 1-1.5 USD per mmBtu cheaper than the LNG sourced from Australia and United States.

India's Natural Gas Production and Import:

- According to official data, India's total natural gas production in 2017-18 was 32.64 billion cubic meter of which 22.01 BCM is offshore production while 10.63% is onshore production.
- The natural gas production in India has fallen in recent years as shown in below graphics:
- However, at present, close to half of Natural Gas demand is fulfilled by imports. India's natural gas import dependence in 2016-17 was close to 45%. At present, India is fourth largest importer of LNG.
- Natural Gas is one of the key inputs for generation of power and manufacturing products in fertilizer and steel industries.
- The current government policy also pushes towards a gas-based economy by raising the share of environment friendly fuel in the energy basket to 15 per cent from current 6.2 per cent.

India's Gas Deals:

- At present, Qatar is biggest supplier of Natural Gas to India. The recent shipment from Russia has come under a 20 year deal between India's Stateowned gas company GAIL India Ltd and Russian supplier Gazprom.
- A few weeks before India had also imported its first ever LNG cargo from US under a long-term import deal. The government policy is to expand the LNG import basket to meet any contingency due to geopolitical or economic reasons

SCIENCE AND TECH

India successfully test fires indigenously developed nuclear capable long range Ballistic missile Agni-5 off Odisha coast:

On 3rd June 2018, India successfully test-fired **Agni-5**, its indigenously developed nuclear capable long range ballistic missile with strike range of **5,000 km** from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the **Odisha coast**.

Agni-5:

- i. Agni-5 is a surface-to-surface missile. It was launched with the help of a mobile launcher from launch pad-4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Dr Abdul Kalam Island in the Bay of Bengal.
- ii. This was the sixth trial of Agni-5. It successfully covered its full distance during the trial.
- iii. Its flight performance was tracked and monitored by radars, tracking instruments and observation stations throughout the mission.
- iv. Agni-5 is the most advanced with modern technologies in navigation and guidance, warhead and engine.
- v. It features very high accuracy **Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS)**, and advanced **Micro Navigation System (MINS)**.
- vi. It has a high speed on-board computer and fault tolerant software with a robust and reliable bus.
- vii. Its path is directed by the advanced on-board computer and inertial navigation system.
- viii. It has 3 stages. It is 17 metres tall and 2 metres wide. It has the capacity to carry a nuclear warhead of 1.5 tonnes.
- ix. It also has higher reliability, longer shelf life, less maintenance and better mobility.
- x. It has been designed in a manner that after reaching the peak of its trajectory, it will turn towards the earth and continue towards the intended target with increased speed.
- xi. The increased speed is attributed to the earth's gravitational force. After it enters earth's atmosphere, the atmospheric air rubbing the missile increases the temperature over 4,000 degrees Celsius.
- xii. Apart from the Agni-5, other Agni missiles are: Agni-1 with a 700-km range, Agni-2 with a 2,000-km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range.

Russia-India military exercise 'INDRA' scheduled for late 2018

- The tri-service joint Russia-India military exercise 'INDRA-2018' is scheduled for the second half this year. According to Interfax news agency, a Russian military delegation has visited India to discuss the logistics of the exercise.

- Members of the Indian defence forces will also be involved in the planning of the exercise including practical operations of the units besides catering, consumer services and medical support for the Russian units.
- In addition, the parties will agree on the procedure for receiving and servicing of military transport aircraft in India.
- **INDRA**, a joint bi-annual military exercise was launched in 2003 to boost cooperation and interoperability between the Russian and Indian navies.

India, Japan, US: Malabar Exercise 2018 to be held off coast of Guam in Philippine Sea

- Trilateral Naval Exercise Malabar 2018 between India, Japan and United States will be held off the coast of Guam in Philippine Sea from June 6-15, 2018.
- It will be 22nd edition of the naval exercise. The exercise comes at time of increased friction between China and US along with nations bordering resource rich South China Sea (SCS) as China is militarising reclaimed islands in it to further strengthen its claim.

Salient features :

- This edition of annual exercise will focus on high-end war fighting skillsets, subject matter expert and professional exchanges.
- It will also include combined carrier strike group operations, surface and anti-submarine warfare, medical operations, maritime patrol and reconnaissance operations, damage control, helicopter operations and visit, board, search and seizure operations.
- Indian Navy participation in this year's exercises will include indigenous stealth frigate INS Sahyadri, fleet tanker INS Shakti, anti-submarine corvette INS Kamorta and P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft.
- Japan is deploying its helicopter carrier JDS Ise along with Kawasaki P-1 aircraft maritime patrol aircraft and Soryu class conventional submarines.
- US is sending its aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan along with strike complement of destroyers, nuclear attack submarines and support ships in addition to P-8A maritime patrol aircraft.

Background:

- Malabar Exercise was started as Indo-US bilateral naval war drill in 1992. Since then it is held annually. Japan had formally joined the exercise as permanent participant in 2015, making it trilateral exercise.
- The primary aim of this multilateral exercise is to increase interoperability amongst navies of three countries and develop common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security Operations and deepen defence relations between them.
- In 2007, the exercise also saw participation of Australia and Singapore. All the participating nations in the exercise have clarified earlier that the Malabar series is not aimed at any specific country.

RIMPAC 2018: 26 countries including India to participate in biennial exercise in US

- The world's largest international maritime warfare exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC-2018) will see participation of 26 countries, including India. The exercise will be held from June 27 to August 2, 2018 in and around Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.

- The theme for this year's RIMPAC exercise is "*Capable, Adaptive, Partners.*" Four countries Brazil, Israel, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are participating for first time. US had withdrawn invitation of Chinese navy in response to China's continued illegal militarisation of islands in disputed South China Sea.

Salient features :

- RIMPAC 2018 will see participation of 47 surface ships, five submarines, 18 national land forces, and more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel.
- New Zealand will be serving as sea combat commander in this edition of exercise, and Chile serving as combined force maritime component commander. This will be for the first time non-founding RIMPAC nation (Chile) will hold component commander leadership position.
- In this edition, RIMPAC for first time will see participation of land-based unit in the live fire event. It will feature live firing of Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) from US Air Force aircraft, surface-to-ship missiles by Japan Ground Self-Defence Force and Naval Strike Missile (NSM) from launcher on back of Palletized Load System (PLS) by US Army.

Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise:

- RIMPAC is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise. It was held for first time in 1971, since the held biennially near Honolulu, Hawaii (US) during June and July of even-numbered years.
- It is hosted and administered by United States Navy's Pacific Fleet (headquartered at Pearl Harbour) in conjunction with Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Hawaii National Guard forces under control of Governor of Hawaii.
- For this exercise, host country US invites military forces of countries from Pacific Rim and beyond to participate.
- The biennial exercise seeks to provide unique training opportunity to participants in order foster cooperative relationships to ensure the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

Agni 5 Missile Test Fired off Odisha Coast:

- India successfully test fired its indigenously developed Agni- 5 missile on 3rd June. The missile was launched from Dr Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast.
- Agni missile is a surface to surface missile and is launched with the help of mobile launcher of the Integrated Test Range at Dr Abdul Kalam Island formerly known as Wheeler Island.
- This is the 6th test fire of the state-of-the art Agni 5 missile. The trial was a great success. The missile hit its target with great accuracy after covering its full distance.
- The entire flight was monitored by radars, tracking instruments and observation stations.

Salient features : Agni-5 Missile

- Agni 5 ballistic missile is the brainchild of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It is the most advanced in the series. Agni-5 is a nuclear capable long range missile with new technologies in terms of navigation and guidance, warhead and engine.
- The three stage, 17- meter tall, two-meter wide Agni-5 missile has a range of Agni-5 missile is 5000 km. It can carry a nuclear warhead weighing up to 1.5 tonnes. Agni-5 uses Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System RINS.
- It is the most modern and gives very high accuracy. The Micro Navigation System or MINS helped the missile reach its target with precision.

- Other features of Agni- 5 missile include, a high speed on- board computer, fault tolerant software and a robust reliable bus. The advanced computer and the inertial navigation system are the highlights of the missile as they aid in precision of the path.
- The missile is highly reliable, has longer shelf life and enhanced mobility compared to the other versions. Agni-1 has a range

Malabar 2018: India, Japan and US start naval exercise off coast of Guam Island in western Pacific:

- Trilateral Naval Exercise Malabar 2018 between India, Japan and United States kicked off the coast of Guam in Philippine Sea.
- It will be 22nd edition of the naval exercise, which has now become an annual feature in deep military ties between India and US.
- It will be first naval wargame after US renamed its Hawaii-based Pacific command (PACOM) as Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) amid increased Chinese activities of building artificial islands in South China Sea and sending submarines into Indian Ocean.

Salient features :

- This edition of annual exercise will focus on high-end war fighting skillsets, subject matter expert and professional exchanges.
- It will also include combined carrier strike group operations, surface and anti-submarine warfare, medical operations, maritime patrol and reconnaissance operations, damage control, helicopter operations and visit, board, search and seizure operations.

Phases:

- Malabar 2018 will be conducted in two phases: ashore and at-sea training. The harbour phase will take place at Naval Base Guam and sea phase in Philippine Sea.
- The **ashore phase** in Guam will include subject matter expert and professional exchanges on carrier strike group operations, reconnaissance operations, maritime patrol, surface and anti-submarine warfare, medical operations, damage control, helicopter operations and visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) operations.
- The **sea phase** will see military-to-military coordination and capacity to plan and execute tactical operations between three navies in multinational environment. It will also see events like gunnery exercises, anti-submarine warfare, air defence exercises, surface warfare exercises, helicopter cross-deck evolutions and underway replenishments.
- **Participation:** US Navy has deployed aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, guided-missile cruisers USS Antietam and USS Chancellorsville, guided-missile destroyer USS Benfold and P-8A Poseidon aircraft. Indian Navy has deployed INS Kamorta, the first of four anti-submarine Kamorta-class stealth corvettes; INS Sahyadri, Shivalik-class stealth multi-role frigate, Deepak-class fleet tanker INS Shakti and also P-8I Neptune advanced maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft.
- Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) has deployed three ships 19,000-tonne JS Hyuga (lead ship of Hyuga-class of helicopter carriers), Takanami-class guided-missile/ASW destroyer JS Suzunami, Akizuki-class guided-missile destroyer JS Fuyuzuki and diesel-electric attack submarine and Kawasaki P-1 maritime patrol aircraft.

Background

- The Malabar exercise was started in 1992 as joint Indo-US naval drill. Since then it is held annually. But it was suspended from 1998 to 2002 after India conducted nuclear weapons tests in 1998. Japan became permanent participant in 2015.
- The primary aim of this multilateral exercise is to increase interoperability amongst navies of three countries and develop common understanding of procedures for Maritime Security Operations and deepen defence relations between them.
- In 2007, the exercise also saw participation of Australia and Singapore. All the participating nations in the exercise have clarified earlier that Malabar series of exercise is not aimed against specific country. Since last two years, Australia repeatedly requested to be part of annual exercise but India again refused after China raised its concerns.

Dhanush artillery gun clears third and final trials

- The indigenously upgraded artillery gun Dhanush has successfully completed final user trials and is ready for induction into Indian Army.
- During third and final phase of user exploitation firings conducted from May 31 to June 7, 2018 at Pokhran field firing range, six Dhanush guns were fired in battery formation with 301 rounds each. With this test, Dhanush artillery gun has been tested in all terrains.

Dhanush:

- Dhanush is upgraded version of Swedish 155-mm Bofors howitzers, which India procured in the mid-1980s, based on its original designs. It is also called desi Bofors.
- It is 155mm x 45mm calibre artillery gun. It has been developed by Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kolkata based on requirements of Indian Army and manufactured by Jabalpur-based Gun Carriage Factory (GCF).
- Its armament system comprises a barrel, muzzle brake, breech mechanism and recoil mechanism to fire 155 mm calibre ammunitions. It has strike range of 38 kilometres (11 km more than imported Bofors guns) with accuracy and precision.
- It provides greater fire power, depending on type of ammunition used. It also has night firing capability in direct fire mode.
- It has several significant advance features, including an all-electric drive, high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system and automated command and control system.
- It has six round magazine, instead of standard three round. It weighs slightly more than normal due to the larger chamber. Its 81% components are indigenously sourced and it will be scaled up to 90% by 2019.
- Its imported systems include power pack, parts of the electronic suite, and some seals and bearings. Each of this gun costs about Rs 14.50 crore while each shell costs Rs. 1 lakh. Indian Army has ordered 114 guns that will be delivered within four years.

Previous test

- The first phase of trials was conducted between July and September 2016 at Pokhran and Babina ranges. The second phase was conducted between October and December 2016 at Siachen base camp with three guns.

- Total of 1,520 rounds have been fired in all the three phases. During these trials, guns travelled extensively in towed and self-propelled mode in desert and high-altitude terrains and each gun clocked over 1,000 km, demonstrating their mobility.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES

June 17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

- The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCDD) is observed every year on June 17 across to world to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.
- The day aims to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.
- The 2018 Theme of WDCDD is "Land has true value – invest in it." It urges to move away from unsustainable land use and make a difference by investing in the future of land. The global observance of WDCDD2018 was hosted by Government of Ecuador.

Desertification:

- Desertification is degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.
- It does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one third of world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use.
- Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land.

Background:

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had designated June 17 as World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in 1994 through resolution A/RES/49/115.
- It was observed for the first time in 1995. The date marks adaptation of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) by UNGA in 1994.
- The day is observed globally to promote public awareness on the issue, and implementation of UNCCD in those countries experiencing serious desertification or drought, particularly in Africa.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD):

- UNCCD was adopted in June 17, 1994 and entered into force 1996. It is only legally binding international agreement to address problem of desertification and other land issues.
- It seeks to address desertification and land issues specifically arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as drylands.
- The convention promotes good land stewardship and its end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy.
- Its 195 parties work together to improve living conditions for people in drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.
- UNCCD is particularly committed to bottom-up approach, encouraging participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

- Its secretariat facilitates cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly around technology and knowledge transfer for sustainable land management.
- UNCCD collaborates closely with other two Rio Conventions, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected to meet these complex challenges with integrated approach.

International Yoga day: June 21

- The 4th International Yoga day was celebrated on June 21, 2018 across the world to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga.
- The theme this year was “Yoga for Peace”. The day’s celebration in India were led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- He was joined by thousands of volunteers, who performed Yoga asanas in the lawns of Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun.

International Yoga Day (IYD):

- The idea of celebrating the International Yoga Day was pitched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2014. Later in December 2014, UNGA unanimously (endorsed by record 175 member states) adopted India-led resolution (69/131) to observe 21st June as International Day of Yoga.
- This resolution was adopted under agenda of UN’s ‘Global Health and Foreign Policy’. The date 21st June was selected because it represents one of the two solstices and is the longest day in Northern Hemisphere (summer solstice) which has special significance in many parts of the world.
- The first International Yoga Day (IYD) was celebrated across the world on 21 June 2015.

Yoga:

- Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word yoga derives from Sanskrit which means to join or to unite, symbolizing union of body and consciousness.
- Yoga if it is practiced by all on daily basis in the early morning has numerous health benefits. The benefits of Yoga include increased muscle strength and tone, increased flexibility, improved respiration, energy and vitality.
- It also helps to maintain balanced metabolism, reduces weight, improves cardio and circulatory health and improves athletic performance.
- It was inscribed in the representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in December 2016.

5th JUNE -World Environment Day (WED)

World Environment Day (WED) is celebrated every year on June 5. The day is celebrated to bring environmental concerns into the mainstream of the national developmental effort and also to bring people to the front of environmental conservation.

- The day, which began in 1974, is a flagship campaign for raising awareness on emerging environmental issues from marine pollution to global warming, to wildlife crime and sustainable consumption.

- Every World Environment Day has a different global host country, where the official celebrations take place. In 2018, it is India
- For the year 2017, Canada was the Global Host country for the celebrations of World Environment Day.

National Statistics Day: June 29

- The National Statistics Day is celebrated every year on June 29 in India to create public awareness about the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation.
- The day also acknowledges notable contribution of Late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning. The 2018 theme is “Quality Assurance in Official Statistics”. It underscores importance of compliance with essential parameters of quality in statistical systems and products.

PC Mahalanobis:

- He was born on 29 June 1893 in Kolkata and died on 28 June 1972 in Kolkata. He was the first Indian statistician to receive world recognition. In 1933, he had founded the first Indian statistical journal Sankhya. He had founded the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) and contributed to the design of large-scale sample surveys.
- He had made pioneering studies in anthropometry in India. He is also best remembered for the statistical measure Mahalanobis distance. He was also a member of the Planning Commission (PC) from 1955 to 1967.
- The Second Five- Year Plan had relied on Mahalanobis’s mathematical description of Indian economy.
- This plan had encouraged the development of heavy industry in India and later became known as Nehru-Mahalanobis model or Basic Industry strategy of economic growth.

Background:

- The Union Government had designated June 29 as National Statistics Day in 2007 in recognition of notable contributions made by Late Professor PC Mahalanobis in the fields of statistics.
- Every year Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and Indian Statistical Institute selects particular theme for the day based on current national importance for focused discussions and efforts throughout year to bring about improvements in selected area.

Marking ‘Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis’ birth anniversary, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu to release Rs 125 coin today

- Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu will release a commemorative coin of Rs 125 and circulation coin of Rs 5 on Friday, marking the 125 birth anniversary of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis which is also celebrated as Statistics Day.
- Naidu will be chief guest at the event, conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation and Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in Kolkata. The ISI was set up by Mahalanobis in 1931.

- Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, who was called 'PCM' by his colleagues, was a noted Indian scientist and applied statistician. He introduced the Mahalanobis distance, a statistical measure. He was also one of the members of the first Planning Commission of India.
- Mahalanobis was instrumental in designing the way we conduct surveys today. He introduced the concept of pilot surveys and advocated the importance of sampling methods. He also introduced a method for estimation of crop yields using statistical sampling.

What is Statistics Day?:

- In 2007, the government designated June 29 as Statistics Day with the intent to create public awareness on the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formation.
- Listed under the category of 'special days', which are celebrated annually across the country, it also acknowledges the contribution of Mahalanobis.
- The theme for Statistics Day this year is 'Quality Assurance in Official Statistics'.

