

MPSC

CURRENT AFFAIRS March-2019

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INTERNATIONAL,NATIONAL AND INDIA

Prayagraj Kumbha Mela – makes World Records

- Prayagraj Kumbh Mela 2019 concluded on March 4, 2019 with the sixth and final "Shahi Snan" (royal bath) held on the occasion of Mahashivratri.
- The single bathing festival of Mahashivratri is among the six main bathing festivals of the Kumbh. The other 5 bathing festivals of the Kumbh concluded successfully with more than 22 crore pilgrims taking a holy dip.
- The world's largest religious and cultural human congregation, 'Kumbh 2019' began at Prayagraj (erstwhile Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh on January 15, 2019.
- This 7-week event began with the holy dip at Sangam, the confluence of three rivers - Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati. The first bathing was taken by saints and seers of different Akharas.

Prayagraj Kumbh 2019 makes it to Guinness World Records:

- This year, the Kumbh made it to the Guinness World Records in three sectors. A three member team from Guinness World Records visited the Prayagraj Kumbh for this purpose.
- The Prayagraj Kumbh 2019 entered the Guinness Book of World Records for:
 - the largest traffic and crowd management plan
 - the biggest painting exercise of public sites under paint my city scheme
 - the biggest sanitation and waste disposal mechanism
- All these Exercises were conducted before the team members of the Guinness World Records at a large scale for three days from February 28 to March 3, 2019.
- Around 503 shuttle buses were pushed on the highway of Prayagraj in one go on February 28 for showcasing traffic management. Several people participated in painting exercise on March 1 and 10 thousand workers got engaged in cleaning services at Prayagraj Kumbh.

PM inaugurates Maharashtra's second Metro Rail in Nagpur

- With the inauguration of Nagpur Metro, Nagpur has become the second city of the state of Maharashtra after Mumbai to get a Metro Rail.

Nagpur Metro:

- PM inaugurated a 13.5-kilometre stretch comprising five stations from Khapri to Sitabuldi.
- The metro railway network in the country, which was just 250 km long in 2014, has now grown to 650 km in 2019.
- The Nagpur Metro consists of two corridors with a total length of 38 kilometres.
- The two corridors will comprise of 38 stations, two depots and a fleet of 69 metro cars.
- To emphasise on Women Safety and empowerment each train will comprise of a special "Nari Shakti" women's coach.
- Nagpur Metro is also hailed as the green Metro since 65% of its electricity consumption from solar energy. With 65 percent electricity generated through solar energy, the Nagpur Metro is being hailed as the "greenest Metro" so far.

- Terming the launch as a "historic occasion", Modi said Metro Rail projects were coming up in Pune and Thane as well.
- Nagpur Metro has earned 51 crore from stamp duty and 6.87 crore from Transfer of Development rights even before the start of passenger operations.
- The population of the city of Nagpur is projected to double by 2050. Hence it was imperative to equip the city with 21st-century infrastructure, and the Metro Rail is one step in that direction.

Cabinet approves Schemes of North Eastern Council (NEC) including continuation of existing Schemes

- North East Road Sector Development Scheme launched during the Financial Year 2015-16 was conceived by the Ministry of DoNER.
- It is a centrally sponsored scheme for construction/upgradation/ improvement of 433.7 Km long State roads in the North Eastern States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Tripura.

Salient features:

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Modi has approved the following schemes of M/o DoNER for continuation till March, 2020:
- Under the Schemes of NEC - Special Development Projects, with the existing funding pattern (90:10 basis) for ongoing projects and on 100% Central funding for new projects;
- For other projects funded by NEC- both Revenue and Capital - as 100% Central funding basis, to continue with existing pattern;
- Extension of 100% centrally funded North Eastern Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS);
- Transfer to NEC for implementation, the Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources (NLCPR-C);
- Proposal to ensure optimization of resources through convergence of efforts of various Ministries/Departments.
- The projects under the existing Schemes of NEC, NLCPR (Central) and NERSDS will accrue socio-economic benefits to the people of North Eastern Region enhancing their capabilities and livelihood.
- NEC is also implementing "North Eastern Road Sector Development Scheme - Programme Component" for upgradation of the important and strategic inter-state roads. Transferred from DoNER to NEC for implementation, the scheme is 100% Centrally funded. A sum of Rs. 1000 crore has been allocated under the scheme.
- Another Scheme namely "Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources-Central [NLCPR (Central)], presently funded by M/o DoNER, provides resources to the concerned line Ministries/their agencies for projects like Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link, checking erosion in Majuli Island This Scheme will also be transferred to NEC for implementation.
- Previously, there was no fixed arrangement for distributing the funds into State or Central component.
- Now, the total funds available to NEC are proposed to be bifurcated in two components (State component - 60% and Central component - 40%).

STATES

GI TAG : Kerala-Marayoor Jaggery

- The Marayoor Jaggery, the traditional and handmade product from Idukki district of Kerala, on March 8, 2019 received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Central Government.
- The Marayoor jiggery finally managed to get the GI Tag after two years of continuous efforts by the Agricultural Department of the state.
- The GI tag will provide more windows of opportunity to the traditional sugarcane farmers in Marayoor.

Significance :

- At present, the farmers of the district receive only Rs 45 to 47 per kilo for the jiggery, instead of the expected Rs 80 to Rs 100 per kilo.
- One of the major challenges faced by the jiggery farmers is the sale of fake jaggery from Tamil Nadu, which is sold with the similar tag of Marayoor jaggery. This has led to the constant fall in the price of the original jiggery. This has even forced several farmers to give up sugarcane cultivation.
- The GI tag will help the Marayoor farmers get more market and price. Moreover with the GI Tag, only the natives of the area can now produce and market the Marayoor jaggery exclusively.

Marayoor Jaggery:

- The Jaggery is produced in Marayoor, a town in Idukki district of Kerala.
- It is one of the sweetest jaggeries produced in Idukki.
- It is made from sugarcane and no chemicals are added during the manufacturing process.
- It is dark brown in colour, high in sweetness and iron, with less sodium content and insoluble impurities.
- It is not produced in modern factories or using modern equipment. It is prepared in sheds located on the sugarcane farm.
- Workers from Onakkallur, a village in Udumalpet in Tamil Nadu, are also engaged in the production of the Marayoor jaggery.

About Geographical Indication (GI):

- A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is a name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin. It can be a town, a region, or a country.
- The use of a geographical indication acts as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods, and enjoys a certain reputation due to its geographical origin.
- It plays a very important role to increase the realm of the market.
- It boosts exports as well tourism and more importantly, it indirectly leads to sustainable development.

MAHARASHTRA - GI TAGS:

<u>GI</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>GI</u>	<u>TYPE</u>
Solapur Chaddar	Handicraft	Solapur Terry Towel	Handicraft
Nashik Valley Wine	Manufactured	Puneri Pagadi	handicraft
Pithani saree	Handicraft	Mahabaleshwar Strawberry	Agricultural
Nashik Grapes	Agricultural	Warli Painting	Handicraft
Kolhapur Jaggery	Agricultural	Nagpur Orange	Agricultural
Waigaon Turmeric	Agricultural	Mangalweda Jowar	Agricultural
Bhiwapur Chilli	Agricultural	Sindhudurg & Ratnagiri Kokum	Agricultural
Navapur Tur Dal	Agricultural	Ambemohar Rice	Agricultural
Lasalgoan Onion	Agricultural	Dahanu Gholwad Chikoo	Agricultural
Beed Custard Apple	Agricultural	Jalgaon Banana	Agricultural
Marathwada Kesar Mango	Agricultural	Jalgaon Bharit Brinjal	Agricultural
Purandar Fig	Agricultural	Solapur Pomegranate	Agricultural
Konkan Alphonso Mango	Agricultural		

Sirsi Supari gets GI Tag

- The Sirsi Supari of Karnataka has got the GI tag by the Registrar of Geographical Indications. Sirsi Supari is the first product from the Arecanut sector to get a GI tag.

Salient features :

- Sirsi Supari is cultivated in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsi taluks. Sirsi Supari is medium in size, somewhat flat and rounded in shape, somewhat ash coloured, and has a hard seed which makes it unique.
- The Arecanut grown in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsi taluks have unique features like a round and flattened coin shape, particular texture, size, cross-sectional views, taste, etc which are not seen in arecanut grown in any other regions.
- The average dry weight is 7.5 g and average thickness is 16 mm.
- Sirsi Supari has a unique taste due to differences in chemical composition and the total average flavonoids content in it is around 90 whereas in others it is around 80.
- The process to obtain the GI tag was initiated some 6 years ago in 2013 and it took six years to get it owing to scientific research proof to be submitted to prove its uniqueness.

Geographical Indication:

- Geographical Indication defines the goods as originating in the territory of a country or a region or locality in that territory, provided a given quality reputation or other characteristics of the product are attributable to its geographical origin.
- The product to acquire GI tag has to indicate that a product of a particular origin has a certain quality or reputation or some other characteristics, which is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

Uttar Pradesh to conduct first census of Otters

- For the first time, Uttar Pradesh is taking a census of otters in its protected areas. The census has begun in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR).

Otters:

- Otters live on fish and spend much of its time in or close to water bodies. A thriving population of otters means a healthy ecosystem.
- A growing or healthy population of otters means the water bodies are pollution-free. Clean water bodies mean a healthy ecosystem of the forest.
- Otters thriving and getting sufficient food to eat means the water bodies in the reserve are in a fine state and the aquatic life in them is healthy.
- India is home to 3 of the 13 species of otters found worldwide. These are : Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) – IUCN status: Near Threatened.
- Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) – IUCN status: Vulnerable.
- Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) – IUCN status: Vulnerable.

Pilibhit Tiger Reserve:

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve spreads across Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh.
- The Northern edge of the reserve lies along the India-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is home to habitat for over 127 animals, 326 bird species and 2,100 flowering plants.
- The reserve is home to a myriad of wild animals including the endangered tiger, swamp deer, Bengal florican, hog deer, leopard, etc.
- The large carnivores are supported by a very large prey base consisting of cheetal, sambar, wild boar, hog deer, swamp deer, blue bull, etc.
- The bird life is very rich and diverse and hundreds of species of birds can be seen around.

Maharashtra government launches 'Atal Aahar Yojna' for construction workers

- Maharashtra government launched a special scheme 'Atal Aahar Yojna' for construction workers in the state which will provide good quality food at a highly subsidised rate.
- The target is set to cover 20000 workers and provide them with good quality food at a nominal cost of Rs.5 in the first phase of the scheme.
- Maharashtra Food Scheme for Construction Workers will serve good Quality & hygienic food at subsidized rates. The beneficiary of Maharashtra Atal Aahar Yojana will get meal at Rs 5 only.

Salient features of Atal Aahar Yojana 2019:

- Scheme will be implemented in Phase wise Manner.
- In the first phase 20,000 workers will get benefits of the scheme.
- Food will be given at the nominal Price rate of Rs. 5.

Eligibility for Atal Aahar Yojana:

- Your Minimum age should be 18 years
- Candidate should be registered under Construction Workers Welfare Board
- ID Proof
- The Construction workers who want to avail the benefits of Maharashtra Atal Aahar Yojana 2019 first of all they have register themselves at Construction Workers Welfare Board.
- Labour welfare Board will automatically all registered construction workers under the scheme. Till now there are 10 lakh laborers registered with the Labor Board of the state.

Cloud seeding to be back in Karnataka for two monsoons

- Reeling under drought the government of Karnataka is planning for cloud seeding project to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible from the rain clouds.
- The government of Karnataka has called the tenders for cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020. The cost is expected to be Rs 50 cr per year.

What is Cloud Seeding?

- Cloud Seeding is a process of intervening chemically to induce precipitation rain or snow from clouds.
- Rain occurs when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held.
- Cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate the process by making available chemical 'nuclei' for condensation to take place.
- The agents used as nuclei are iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), or liquid propane.

Earlier Efforts of Karnataka:

- Karnataka had undertaken a similar exercise through Project Varshadhare in 2017. The project was seen as a successful as the data suggested that rainfall was enhanced by 27.9% and there was an extra inflow of 2.5 tmcft into Linganamakki reservoir.
- This was a huge success because due to procedural delays and inconsistent monsoon season, the two planes could only fly for 37 days.
- The results were able to address the scepticism about cloud seeding.

Cabinet approves development of New Greenfield Airport at Hirasar, Rajkot, Gujarat

- Union Cabinet approved the establishment of a New Greenfield Airport at Hirasar in Rajkot, Gujarat at an estimated cost of Rs. 1405 crore. Rajkot is the fourth largest city of Gujarat and existing airport of Rajkot is severely land constrained having only 236 acres of land.
- This Airport suffers from considerable capacity restraints due to presence of residential & commercial buildings around it. Railway line and State Highway located around the airport on eastern side also prohibits the extension of runway. Thus there is no feasibility to expand the airport on city or airside, hence possibility of operating wide bodied aircrafts at the existing airport location is ruled out.

- Rajkot is the fourth largest city in the state of Gujrat after Ahmedabad, Surat, and Vadodara. The city is the centre of the Saurashtra region of Gujrat and the 35th largest urban agglomeration in India with a population more than 1.2 million as of 2015. It is also the 22nd fastest growing city in the world.
- Considering the constraints and compulsions with respect to existing airport, state government desires to develop a new Greenfield Airport in Rajkot. Government has identified required land for the new airport and requested Airports Authority of India to develop, operate and maintain the new airport.

Gurugram most polluted city in the world, Delhi most polluted capital: Greenpeace report

- Gurgaon in the National Capital Region (NCR) emerged as the most polluted region in the world in 2018 as per 2018 World Air Quality Report. As per the report, Delhi is the most polluted capital in the world. In the list of polluted cities, Delhi ranked 11th.
- Greenpeace India said the report is a reminder to us, indicating that our efforts and actions to reduce air pollution are not enough and India needs to do much more than already planned and done. It said Beijing is showing us that it can be done as have many other cities in Europe and US over past decades.
- Delhi is still the most polluted capital across the world but India has much more polluted geography than the capital city with limited but increasing data availability for hazardous PM2.5 particles.
- The latest data by Greenpeace India highlights that out of 20 most polluted cities in the world, 18 are in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh while Beijing, once among the most polluted cities in the world ranked 122nd in the list of most polluted cities in 2018.
- "The database comprising of PM2.5 data for more than 3000 cities reminds us of grim health emergency the world faces from air pollution again after the WHO air quality database released last year," the report said.

Top 10 most polluted cities in the world:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>City</u>
1	Gurugram	6	Noida
2	Ghaziabad	7	Patna
3	Faisalabad	8	Hoton
4	Faridabad	9	Lucknow
5	Bhiwandi	10	Lahore

POLITICAL

Electoral Bonds – In NEWS:

- In an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India has made the following observations:
- Electoral bonds, contrary to government claims, wreck transparency in political funding. Electoral bonds coupled with the removal of the cap on foreign funding invites foreign corporate powers to impact Indian politics.
- Electoral bonds would cause a “serious impact” on transparency in the funding of political parties.
- The Election Commission of India further criticises amendments made to various key statutes through the two consecutive Finance Acts of 2016 and 2017.

What were the amendments made?:

- The Finance Act of 2017 amends various laws, including the Representation of the People Act of 1951, the Income Tax Act and the Companies Act. The Finance Act of 2016 makes changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act of 2010.
- The amendment to Representation of the People Act allows political parties to skip recording donations received by them through electoral bonds in their contribution reports to the ECI.
- The amendments introduced to the Income Tax Act allow anonymous donations. Donors to political parties are not required to provide their names, address or PAN if they have contributed less than Rs. 20,000.
- The Election Commission notes that many political parties have been reporting a major portion of the donations received as being less than the prescribed limit of Rs. 20,000.
- The Finance Act of 2016 allowed donations to be received from foreign companies having a majority stake in Indian companies.

Observations by Election Commission:

- The Election Commission of India called these measures as a retrograde step and the ECI has no way to ascertain whether the donations were received illegally by the political party from government companies or foreign sources.
- The Election commission also expressed concerns that these amendments would pump in black money for political funding through shell companies and allow unchecked foreign funding of political parties in India which could lead to Indian politics being influenced by foreign companies.

Tashigang: World’s highest polling station

- Tashigang, a small Himachal Pradesh village has got the distinction of the highest polling station in the world. Tashigang is located at an altitude of 15,256 feet.

Tashigang Polling Station:

- Tashigang polling station falls in Buddhist-dominated Lahaul-Spiti and forms part of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat, the second largest constituency in India.
- At an altitude of 15,256 feet, the world’s highest polling station will be set up in the sleepy village of Tashigang. It is located in the Spiti valley, Himachal Pradesh, less than 30 kilometres from the India-China border.
- The station will cater to 48 voters and falls under Mandi Lok Sabha constituency, which will go to the polls on May 19.

- The polling station has 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women.
- Owing to its remoteness, the village is connected with a road, which is closed most of the year for traffic due to snow. The polling station also lacks mobile connectivity and the election officials have to use a satellite phone during polls.
- The election officials intended to set up the polling booth at Gete village, but shifted to Tashigang as the school building was determined to be unsafe.
- India's previous 'highest polling station' was located in Hikkim, over 160 km away from Tashigang, in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti district. It is located at an altitude of 14,567 feet.

Why Election Commission will NOT use EVM in Nizamabad?

- While the entire Country will vote in EVMs in the Lok Sabha Polls 2019, the people of the Nizamabad in Telangana will vote through Ballot Papers.

Why Ballot Papers in Nizamabad?

- For the Lok Sabha Polls 2019 in the Nizamabad Lok Sabha seat, there are 185 candidates in contention. As one EVM can accommodate only 16 candidates and a maximum of 4 EVMs can be used in one polling booth, the Election Commission is forced to switch back to the age-old practice of ballot papers.
- Of the 185 candidates in contention 178 are farmers who cultivate Turmeric and Jowar. They are contesting polls to highlight their demand for the remunerative price for their crops.
- This was necessitated as the number of candidates is higher than what the EVMs can accommodate.
- The farmers had filed their nominations protesting the alleged failure of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi to ensure minimum support price for turmeric and red jowar (sorghum) produce.
- The Nizamabad Lok Sabha Constituency had received around 200 nominations of these some were rejected and 189 candidates remained in contention after the scrutiny of nomination papers.
- Of these 4 candidates withdrew their nomination papers. K Kavitha who is also the daughter of Telangana Chief Minister, Chandrashekhar Rao is the sitting MP from the Nizamabad seat.

INDIA'S OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT- In News:

- Attorney-General's request for "criminal action" against those responsible for making "stolen documents" on the Rafale deal public, has brought the Official Secrets Act into focus.

About Official Secrets Act:

- The Indian Official Secrets Act, 1904 was enacted during the time of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905.
- One of the main purposes of the Act was to muzzle the voice of nationalist publications.
- The Indian Official Secrets Act (Act No XIX of 1923) replaced the earlier Act, and was extended to all matters of secrecy and confidentiality in governance in the country.

The Act's Ambit:

- The secrecy law broadly deals with two aspects — spying or espionage, which is dealt with in Section 3 of the Act, and disclosure of other secret information of the government, which is dealt with in Section 5.

- The secret information can be any official code, password, sketch, plan, model, article, note, document or information.

Need for review:

- Since the classification of secret information is so broad, it is argued that the colonial law is in direct conflict with the Right to Information Act.
- Under Section 5, both the person communicating the information, and the person receiving the information, can be punished by the prosecuting agency.
- Another contentious issue with the law is that its Section 5, which deals with potential breaches of national security, is often misinterpreted. The Section makes it a punishable offence to share information that may help an enemy state.
- The Section comes in handy to book journalists when they publicise information that may cause embarrassment to the government or the armed forces.

Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose appointed as Lokpal

- President Ram Nath Kovind administered the Oath of office to Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as Lokpal.
- Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose is the first anti-corruption ombudsman of the country. Country's first Lokpal has been appointed after a long delay of five years.
- The Lokpal Act had received the assent of the President on January 1, 2014.

Salient features of the Lokpal Act 2013:

- The Lokpal Act provides for setting up of an anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level.
- The Lokpal would consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members of which 50 per cent shall be judicial members. 50 per cent of members of Lokpal shall be from SC/ST/OBCs, minorities and women.
- The ambit of Lokpal would cover all categories of public servants, including the Prime Minister with the exception of armed forces.
- The Lokpal Act mandated the states to institute Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of the Act.
- Lokpal will also have powers of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by the Lokpal.
- Lokpal is appointed based on the recommendation of the five-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice of India and an eminent jurist nominated by the President.
- President would appoint the eminent jurist based on the recommendations of the other members of the panel.
- The government has proposed an amendment to the Lokpal Act 2013 to enable the leader of the largest Opposition party to be the member of the selection panel in the absence of the leader of Opposition.
- To designate the leader as Leader of Opposition the largest opposition party must have a strength of at least 10% of the total members in the House and none of the parties managed to cross this mark in 2014 general elections.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Cabinet approves Scheme for FAME India Phase II

- The Union cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal for implementation of scheme titled 'Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME India Phase II)' for promotion of Electric Mobility in the country.
- The scheme with total outlay of Rs 10000 Crores over the period of three years will be implemented with effect from 1st April 2019. This scheme is the expanded version of the present scheme titled 'FAME India1 which was launched on 1st April 2015, with total outlay of Rs. 895 crores.

Financial Implications:

- Total fund requirement for this scheme is Rs. 10,000 crores over three years from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Impact:

- The main objective of the scheme is to encourage Faster adoption of Electric and hybrid vehicle by way of offering upfront Incentive on purchase of Electric vehicles and also by way of establishing a necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- The scheme will help in addressing the issue of environmental pollution and fuel security.

Salient features :

- Emphasis is on electrification of the public transportation that includes shared transport.
- Demand Incentives on operational expenditure mode! for electric buses will be delivered through State/city transport corporation (STUs).
- In 3W and 4W segment incentives will be applicable mainly to vehicles used for public transport or registered for commercial purposes.
- In the e-2Ws segment, the focus will be on the private vehicles.
- Through the scheme, it is planned to support 10 Lakhs e-2W, 5 Lakhs e-3W, 55000 4Ws and 7000 Buses.
- To encourage advance technologies, the benefits of incentives, will be extended to only those vehicles which are fitted with advance battery like a Lithium Ion battery and other new technology batteries.
- The scheme proposes for establishment of charging infrastructure, whereby about 2700 charging stations will be established in metros, other million plus cities, smart cities and cities of Hilly states across the country so that there will be availability of at least one charging station in a grid of 3 km x 3 km.
- Establishment of Charging stations are also proposed on major highways connecting major city clusters.
- On such highways, charging stations will be established on both sides of the road at an interval of about 25 km each.
- FAME-II is the expanded version of the present scheme titled FAME India 1 which was launched on 1st April 2015

Cabinet approves 'Pradhan Mantri JI-Van yojana' for financial support to Intergrated Bioethanol Projects

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the "Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN (Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran) Yojana" under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas to provide financial support to Integrated Bioethanol Projects using lignocellulosic biomass and other renewable feedstock.
- Cabinet approves 'Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN yojana' for financial support to Integrated Bioethanol Project.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the 'Pradhan Mantri Jaiv Indhan- Vatavaran Anukool fasal awashesh Nivaran (JI-VAN) Yojana' for providing financial support to the Integrated Bioethanol Projects.
- The scheme aims to incentivise 2G Ethanol sector and support the industry by creating a suitable ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and increasing Research & Development in this area.

Salient features of the Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana:

- The Centre for High Technology (CHT), a technical body under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, will be the implementation Agency for the scheme.
- The Project developers, interested in availing benefits of the scheme, need to submit their proposal for review by Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) of the Ministry.
- The Projects recommended by SAC shall be approved by Steering Committee of the Ministry under the chairmanship of Secretary of Ministry of Petroleum.
- The ethanol produced by the beneficiaries of the scheme will be mandatorily supplied to Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to further enhance the blending percentage under Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP).

Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme:

- The Union Government launched the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme in 2003 for undertaking blending of ethanol in Petrol to address environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning, provide remuneration to farmers, subsidise crude imports and achieve forex savings.
- Under EBP programme, Oil Marketing Companies are required to blend up to 10 percent of ethanol in Petrol.
- The present policy allows procurement of ethanol produced from molasses and non-food feed stock like celluloses and lignocelluloses material including petrochemical route.
- Presently, the EBP is being implemented in 21 States and 4 UTs of the country.

WEB- WONDER WOMEN CAMPAIGN

- The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development on March 6, 2019 honoured the 'Web Wonder Women' who have been driving social reforms through social media.
- The Minister for Women and Child Development, Maneka Sanjay Gandhi along with a panel of 10 judges finalised the names of 30 women who have impacted and influenced society through social media.

- The women were selected from over 240 nominations received under the categories media, awareness, legal, health, governmental, food, environment, development, business and art.
- Launched in collaboration with **Twitter India** and **Breakthrough (NGO) India** on January 9, 2019, the #WebWonderWomen campaign aimed to recognise the strengths of Indian women from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive campaigns, bringing about the change in society.

30 - 'Web Wonder Women':

Adhunika Prakash	Dr. Saundarya Rajesh	Nmami Agarwal	Sonal Goel	Kirthi Jayakumar
Afreen Siddiqui Sherwani	Dr Anubhuti Yadav	ParomitaBardoloi	Sonal Kapoor	Urvashi Sarkar
Ankita Anand	Dr. Debarati Halder	Parul Mathur	Srilekha Chakraborty	Sohini Chattopadhyay
Archana KR	Dr Laxmi Gautam	SaginaWalyat	Supreet K. Singh	Manu Khajuria
Chavi Vohra	JapleenPasricha	Dr Shruti Kapoor	Vinita Deshmukh	Rishika Sharma
Dr. Angela Chaudhuri	Madhulika Choudhary	Shweta Pathak	Ritu Maheshwari	Rakshita Dwivedi

PM Modi launches Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan –Dhan Yogana from Gujarat:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 5, 2019 launched the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana (PM-SYM), a mega pension scheme for unorganised sector, from Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The scheme was announced in the Interim Budget 2019.
- The PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme that will benefit as many as 10 crore workers in the unorganised sector.
- It will provide monthly pension of Rs 3000 to the employees of unorganised sector after 60 years of age.

Eligibility :

- The unorganised sector workers, with income of less than Rs 15,000 per month and who belong to the entry age group of 18-40 years, will be eligible for the scheme.

- Those workers should not to be covered under New Pension Scheme (NPS), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme or Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
- He or she should not be an income tax payer.
- PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme that will engage as many as 42 crore workers in the unorganised sector.

Benefits:

- Minimum Assured Pension: Each subscriber under the scheme will receive minimum assured pension of Rs 3000 per month after attaining the age of 60 years.
- In case of death during receipt of pension: If the subscriber dies during the receipt of pension, his or her spouse will be entitled to receive 50 percent of the pension as family pension. This family pension is applicable only to spouse.
- In case of death before the age of 60 years: If a beneficiary has given regular contribution and dies before attaining the age of 60 years, his or her spouse will be entitled to continue the scheme subsequently by payment of regular contribution or may even exit the scheme.

What are CSCs?

- Common Services Centers (CSCs) are a strategic cornerstone of the Digital India programme. They are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.
- They are multiple-services-single-point model for providing facilities for multiple transactions at a single geographical location.
- They are the access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from host of B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country.

PM-KISAN Scheme: beneficiaries crossed 2 crore

- More than 2 crore small and marginal farmers have already been benefitted till date under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme, seeking to provide income support to all Small and Marginal landholder farmers' families with cultivable land holding up to 2 hectares across the country.
- The PM-KISAN Scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 24, 2019 from Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- On the launch day itself, the first instalment for the first 4-month period, with financial benefits of Rs 2000 per farmer, was directly credited to the bank accounts of 1.01 crore selected beneficiary farmers. The first trench entailed the fund release of Rs. 2021 crore.
- The 2nd installment under the scheme would be admissible after April 1, 2019. Around 12 crore farmers are expected to benefit from PM-KISAN.
- The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana was announced in the Union Interim Budget 2019 by Finance Minister Piyush Goyal.
- NOTE: A family of a small and marginal farmer, for the purpose of the calculations of the benefit, is defined as " a family comprising of husband, wife and minor children (upto 18 years of age) who collectively own cultivable land upto 2 hectare as per land records of the concerned State".

Guidelines for states for implementation of scheme:

- Earlier on February 7, 2019, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare launched a platform named pmkisan.nic.in, under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) for uploading the details of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF).
- The Ministry also launched the guidelines for states and UTs to implement the scheme. The selection of eligible small farmer families under the scheme will be undertaken by the State Governments.
- The necessary details such as bank account details will be provided on the online portal so that the first installment of the benefits can be transferred to the eligible families.
- The States will prepare database of eligible beneficiary landholder farmer families in the villages capturing the Name, Age, Gender, Category (SC/ST) , Aadhaar Number/ Driving Licence/Voters' ID Card/ NREGA Job Card, Bank Account Number, IFSC Code.
- Though mobile number is not mandatory, but it may be noted when available so that the information related to transfer of benefit can be communicated.
- States/UTs shall ensure that there is no duplication of the payment transferred to eligible families.
- Speedy settlement in case of wrong or incomplete bank details of the beneficiary should be ensured.

IMPORTANT DAYS AND DATES**Consumers Rights day – 15 March**

- World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated on March 15 each year to spread awareness regarding consumer rights.
- It is an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the global consumer movement. Working with members and partners worldwide to achieve global impact for consumers, it works on issues that affects buyers beyond national borders.
- Celebrating consumers day is a way to protect the rights of consumers and to ensure that they are not subjected to market abuse or social injustice that may undermine their rights.
- Theme: Trusted Smart Products
- The theme aims to highlight what consumers want and need from a connected world and how important it is to put them at the heart of the development of these digital products and services.
- Significance of the day: It is an opportunity to promote the basic rights of all consumers, for demanding that those rights are respected and protected, and for protesting the market abuses and social injustices which undermine them.

What are Consumer Rights?

- Consumer rights means that every buyer (consumer) across the world has the right to have information on the quality, potency, quantity, purity, price and standard of various products, goods and services.

Basic Consumer Rights that everyone must be aware of:

- **Right to Safety:** The consumer must be protected from hazardous products/services and their marketing.

- **Right to Information:** The consumer must be well informed against dishonest, misleading advertising related to products/services.
- **Right to Redress:** The right to be compensated for misrepresentation, shoddy goods or unsatisfactory services.
- **Right to Consumer Education:** The right to get accurate and credible information on various products and services.
- **Right to Basic Needs:** This right guarantees the availability of basic and prime commodities at affordable prices and good quality.

Consumer protection act:

- India adopted the Consumer Protection Act, later in 1986, thus providing a legal face to the Indian consumers. One of the strongest campaigns for protection of consumer rights in India, is “Jago Grahak Jago” which literally translates into, “wake up consumers”!
- This multimedia campaign from Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India is aimed at creating an aware consumer.

World Wildlife Day 2019

- The World Wildlife Day 2019 aligns closely with the Sustainable Development goal 14 – Life below water and 15- halting biodiversity loss which focuses on marine species, and will be an opportunity to highlight the critical issues and values of marine wildlife to our everyday lives.
- The occasion also celebrated successful initiatives to conserve and sustainably manage these species, and to scale up support for future initiatives.
- The International Fund for Animal Welfare will also host a youth art contest to engage school-aged children and help them build a sense of connection with the marine world. Winners of the Living Oceans Film Showcase and the youth art contest will be announced at the high-level event in UN Headquarters. Objectives are :
- To remind the world of the urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime and human induced reduction of species, which have a wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impact.
- To provide an opportunity to celebrate the beautiful and varied forms of wild fauna and flora. To raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that conservation provides to people.

CITES:

- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international regulatory treaty between 183 party states.
- It was formed in 1973 and regulates the international trade in over 35,000 wild species of plants and animals.
- The focus of the convention is not solely on the protection of species. It also promotes controlled trade that is not detrimental to the sustainability of wild species.

How does CITES work?

- The convention works primarily through a system of classification and licensing.
- Wild species are categorised in Appendices I to III. This often reflects species' threat status on the Red List of the IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species first created in 1964.
- **Appendix I** prohibits trade in species classified as highly endangered.

- **Appendix II** allows trade under very specific conditions. This requires exporting countries obtain a permit, but not the importing country.
- **Appendix III** species require only a certificate of origin to be traded.
- **National CITES management authorities** may issue permits once scientific authorities show non-detriment findings. In other words, scientific evidence must demonstrate that species sustainability will not be adversely affected by trade. Where data is lacking, the precautionary principle applies.
- **CITES is legally binding** on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.

International Women's Day 2019

- International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 every year. It is a day when the world comes together to appreciate womanhood and their importance in society. The day also celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.
- International Women's Day 2019 is celebrated on 8th March every year to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.
- International Women's Day celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

History:

- Earlier, it was called National woman's day and was acknowledged by the U.S. on February 28, 1909. This was done because of the labour movement which was started in 1908 where 15000 female employees went on strike in New York City to protest against poor working conditions.
- National Women's Day was recognised as International Women's Day only in 1910 after German women's rights activist Clara Zetkin suggested at an International Conference.

Themes:

- This year the themes for International Women's Day are **#BalanceforBetter**, which is described as a "call-to-action for driving gender balance across the world" and "More Powerful Together".
- The themes stress upon the need for more men to get involved in the fight against gender equality and feminism.

MARCH 20 – International day of Happiness :

- March 20 is the International Day of Happiness and this year's theme is **Happier Together**, focusing on what we have in common, rather than what divides us.
- The International Day of Happiness 2019 was celebrated on 20th March 2019.
- The aim of this year's International Day of Happiness was to spread happiness in everyone's life. Various organizations and NGOs organized events to celebrate the occasion by urging people to share how they spread happiness.
- Further to take forward the agenda of Happiness the United Nations has launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet which are the three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.

Why March 20?:

- March 20 was chosen for International Day of Happiness 2019 for its significance as the March equinox.
- March equinox is a universal phenomenon felt simultaneously by all of humankind, and which occurs the moment when the plane of Earth's equator passes through the centre of the Sun's disk.

History:

- The United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognise the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
- In 2015, the UN launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet – three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.
- The decision to celebrate "International Day of Happiness" was made on 28th June 2012, by the United Nations General Assembly and its 193 member states. The proposal was made by Jayme Illien, United Nations special advisor.
- The first "International Day of Happiness" was observed on 20th March 2013, since then it's being celebrated annually by 193 member states, 11 territories and 2 observer states.

World Down Syndrome Day 2019

- March 21 was celebrated as World Down Syndrome Day. The theme of the 2019 World Down Syndrome Day is "Leave no one behind".

Down Syndrome:

- Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder which results in delayed physical and mental growth in individuals.
- The genetic disorder has been named after British doctor John Langdon Down who fully described the syndrome in 1866.
- In normal conditions, people have only two copies of Chromosome 21 whereas those with Down's syndrome there is a presence of a part or full of the third copy of chromosome 21.
- Even though Down's Syndrome is incurable, the quality of life of those suffering could be considerably improved by giving proper medical support and education.

World Down Syndrome Day:

- 21 March is observed as World Syndrome Day to increase global awareness about the syndrome by the United Nations since 2012.
- Since then March 21st is celebrated as World Down Syndrome Day by the governments, organisations and individuals to extend support to those suffering from Down's Syndrome.

Why March 21st?:

- March 21st is the 21st day of third month. March 21st was chosen to signify uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome.

International Day of Forests 2019

- Every 21 March the United Nations raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests. This year the International Day of Forests promotes education to Learn to Love Forests.

- Theme: Forests and Education – Learn to Love Forests
- It underscores the importance of education at all levels in achieving sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation. Healthy forests mean healthy, resilient communities and prosperous economies.
- In 2019, the International Day of Forests (IDF) will address the theme, 'Forests and Education.' It will seek to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests provide a wide array of contributions in this area.
- Healthy forests mean healthy, resilient communities and prosperous economies.

History:

- The UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 March the International Day of Forests in 2012.
- The Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.
- On each International Day of Forests, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns.
- The theme for each International Day of Forests is chosen by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), whose members agreed in 2017 that the Day's theme would provide an opportunity to highlight specific forest contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by considering topics of the annual sessions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

Key messages -2019:

- The role of trees in mitigating the impact of climate change.
- The positive effects of trees on local climate.
- Urban trees as air filters, removing pollutants and making cities healthier.
- The role of trees in reducing noise pollution in urban areas.
- The positive impact of urban green spaces.
- Forests in and around urban areas contributing to water regulating and filtering.
- How urban forests contribute to local economies through city beautification and tourism.
- The provision of renewable energy.
- How trees can provide a source of fruits nuts and leaves to local populations.

22 MARCH 2019- World water day:

- 2019 Theme: Leaving no one behind
- The theme for World Water Day 2019 is 'Leaving no one behind,' which is the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: as sustainable development progresses, everyone must benefit. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030. By definition, this means leaving no one behind.
- Today, billions of people are still living without safe water, which means 'safely managed drinking water service': water that is accessible on the premises, available when needed, and free from contamination. Their households, schools, workplaces, farms and factories struggling to survive and thrive.
- Sustainable Development Goal 6 is crystal clear: water for all by 2030. By definition, this means leaving no one behind. But today, billions of people are still living without safe water – their households, schools, workplaces, farms and factories struggling to survive and thrive.
- Marginalized groups – women, children, refugees, indigenous peoples, disabled people and many others – are often overlooked, and sometimes face discrimination, as they try to access and manage the safe water they need.

- This World Water Day, 22nd March, is about tackling the water crisis by addressing the reasons why so many people are being left behind.

Background

- International World Water Day is held annually on 22 March as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- An international day to celebrate freshwater was recommended at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day.
- States were invited to devote the Day, as appropriate in the national context, to concrete activities such as the promotion of public awareness through the production and dissemination of documentaries and the organization of conferences, round tables, seminars and expositions related to the conservation and development of water resources and the implementation of the recommendations of Agenda 21.

Why a World Water Day?

- World Water Day is an international observance and an opportunity to learn more about water related issues, be inspired to tell others and take action to make a difference.
- Each year, UN-Water — the entity that coordinates the UN's work on water and sanitation — sets a theme for World Water Day corresponding to a current or future challenge.
- The engagement campaign is coordinated by one or several of the UN-Water Members with a related mandate

Water, a human right:

- In 2010, the UN recognized “the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.”
- The human right to water entitles everyone, without discrimination, to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use; which includes water for drinking, personal sanitation, washing of clothes, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene.
- People are left behind without safe water for many different reasons. The following are some of the ‘grounds for discrimination’ that cause certain people to be particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accessing water:
 - Sex and gender.
 - Race, ethnicity, religion, birth, caste, language, and nationality.
 - Disability, age and health status.
 - Property, tenure, residence, economic and social status.
 - Other factors, such as environmental degradation, climate change, population growth, conflict, forced displacement and migration flows can also disproportionately affect marginalized groups through impacts on water.

World Tuberculosis Day 2019

- Each year, we commemorate World Tuberculosis (TB) Day on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

- The date marks the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.
- TB remains the world's deadliest infectious killer. Each day, nearly 4500 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.
- Global efforts to combat TB have saved an estimated 54 million lives since the year 2000 and reduced the TB mortality rate by 42%. To accelerate the TB response in countries to reach targets – Heads of State came together and made strong commitments to end TB at the first-ever UN High Level Meeting in September 2018.
- The theme of World TB Day 2019 - 'It's time' – puts the accent on the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to:
 - scale up access to prevention and treatment;
 - build accountability;
 - ensure sufficient and sustainable financing including for research;
 - promote an end to stigma and discrimination, and
 - promote an equitable, rights-based and people-centered TB response.

Tuberculosis

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by bacteria Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB). Tuberculosis affects the lungs and can also infect other parts of the body.
- Early symptoms of TB include bad cough which lasts for 3 weeks or longer. It causes pain in the chest and one might also end up coughing blood in case of tuberculosis.
- The theme of World Tuberculosis Day 2019 "It's time" draws attention towards the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to build accountability regarding TB and increase access of prevention and treatment of TB.
- As part of World World Tuberculosis Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has initiated "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB", a joint initiative with Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership under which communities, civil society organisations, governments and health-care providers come together to ensure that no one is left behind and everyone gets equal and fair information about tuberculosis, its causes, symptoms and risk factors.

March 7 to be celebrated as 'Janaushadhi Diwas' across India

- Mansukh Mandaviya, the Union Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers, Road Transport & Highways, and Shipping has announced that March 7, 2019, will be observed as the 'Janaushadhi Diwas' across the country.
- On the occasion of the 'Janaushadhi Diwas', the Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interacted with owners of Janaushadhi Kendras and beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) across the country through video conference.
- The Janaushadhi Diwas aims to provide further impetus and create awareness about the use of generic medicines. The day also highlights the initiatives undertaken by the Government in the direction of making quality healthcare affordable for all, like Ayushman Bharat, PMBJP, etc.
- The Janaushadhi medicines have played a big role in bringing down the out-of-pocket expenditure of patients suffering from life-threatening diseases in India. The PMBJP scheme has led to total savings of approximately Rs 1,000 crores for common citizens, as these medicines are cheaper by 50 per cent to 90 per cent of average market price.
- This included Jan Aushadhi Suvridha Oxo-Biodegradable sanitary napkins at Rs 2.50 per piece; JanAushadhi Swabhiman at Rs140 for a pack of five adult diapers; Jan Aushadhi Bachpan at

Rs 20 only for a pack of five baby diapers; Jan Aushadhi Ankur pregnancy test kits at Rs 20; Jan Aushadhi Urja energy drink at Rs 35 for a 300 ml pack, among others.

Salient features :

- Ensure access to quality medicines.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
- Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high price.
- A public programme involving Government, PSUs, Private Sector, NGO, Societies, Co-operative Bodies and other Institutions.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.

What is a Generic Medicine?

- Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value.
- The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.

Conclusion:

- No poor person should die due to non-availability of good quality affordable medicines in the country. Therefore, making quality healthcare affordable for all should be the ultimate objective of the government.

About Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyogna :

- The Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an objective of making high-quality medicines available to all at affordable prices, especially to the poor and underprivileged, through exclusive outlets such as Jan Aushadhi Medical store.
- The scheme makes quality drugs available at affordable prices through dedicated stores selling generic medicines.
- The medicines, though lesser in price, are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

Salient features of the scheme:

- To promote greater awareness about cost effective drugs and their prescription.
- To make available unbranded quality generic medicines at affordable prices through public-private partnership.
- To encourage doctors, more specifically in government hospital to prescribe generic medicines.
- To enable substantial savings in health care, especially in the case of poor patients and those suffering from chronic ailments requiring long periods of drug use.

APPOINTMENTS

Bhagwan Lal Sahni appointed Chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes

- Bhagwan Lal Sahni who hails from Bihar has been appointed as the Chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes.
- Further Kaushalendra Singh Patel and Acharya Talloju have been appointed as the members of the commission.

National Commission for Backward Classes:

- National Commission for Backward Classes is a Constitutional body set up through the 123rd constitutional amendment bill 2018 and 102nd amendment act under the provisions of Article 338B of Indian Constitution.
- The commission consists of one chairman and five Members with the term of three years. The National Commission for Backward Classes is vested with the responsibility of considering inclusions in and exclusions from the lists of communities notified as backward for the purpose of job reservations.
- The commission tenders the needful advice to the Central Government on the issues related to the backward classes and the commission has the powers of a civil court.
- The National Commission for Backward Classes is not yet empowered to look into the grievances of persons of Other Backward Classes.
- This responsibility continues to be vested with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.
- National Commission for Backward classes is the successor of the National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC).

Ajit kumar Mohanty Appointed BARC director

- The Ministry of Personnel has notified the appointment of Ajit Kumar Mohanty as Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre for the period of three years.
- Currently, he is the Director, Physics Group in BARC and Director, Saha Institute Institute of Nuclear Physics.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre:

- The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is India's premier nuclear research facility headquartered in Trombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- The Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET) was established by the government of India in 1954 to consolidate all the research and development activity for nuclear reactors and technology under the AEET.
- As a result, all the scientists and engineers engaged in the fields of reactor design and development, instrumentation, metallurgy and material science etc. were transferred with their respective programmes from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) to AEET, with TIFR retaining its original focus for fundamental research in the sciences.
- After the demise of Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha in 1966, AEET was renamed Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).

- Over the years, BARC has emerged as the multi-disciplinary research centre with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development.
- Its R&D covers the entire spectrum of nuclear science, engineering and related areas. BARC's core mandate is to sustain peaceful applications of nuclear energy, primarily for power generation.

Vice Admiral Karambir Singh appointed as next Navy chief

- The Defence Ministry has announced the appointment of Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Navy chief. He will succeed Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is retiring on 31 March.
- The government has once again broken the tradition of appointing the senior-most officer to lead the contingent forces by overlooking the seniority of Vice Admiral Bimal Verma.
- Earlier the government had appointed General Bipin Rawat as the Army Chief by overlooking the seniority. General Bipin Rawat had superseded two officers to occupy the post of Army Chief.

Vice Admiral Karambir Singh:

- Vice Admiral Karambir Singh born in 1959 commissioned to Navy in July 1980. In his long career of 37 years, he has served as the Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet.
- He has served at Naval Headquarters as the Joint Director Naval Air Staff, and as Captain Air and Officer-in-Charge of the Naval Air Station at Mumbai.
- He has also served a member of the Aircrew Instrument Rating and Categorisation Board (AIRCATS).
- He has commanded various ships, such as an Indian Coast Guard Ship Chandbibbi, Missile Corvette INS Vijaydurg as well as two Guided Missile Destroyers INS Rana and INS Delhi.
- Vice Admiral Karambir Singh has been honoured with Ati Vishist Seva Medal and Param Vishist Seva Medal (2018) for his service.

UNDP appoints Padma Laxmi as Goodwill Ambassador

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has appointed Indian-American television personality and food expert Padma Lakshmi as its new Goodwill Ambassador, in support of its fight against inequality and discrimination around the world.
- The announcement was made by UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner in a ceremony at the UNDP headquarters on March 7, 2019, on the eve of International Women's Day. In her new role, the award-winning author will help mobilise support for the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on fighting inequality, discrimination and empowering the disenfranchised.
- Speaking on the occasion, Padma Lakshmi said, "As we celebrate International Women's Day let's remember that women and girls face some of the worst discrimination and hardships in the world."
- She further added that her main focus as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador will be to shine a spotlight on the fact that inequality can affect people in rich and poor countries alike. She pointed out that though many nations have greatly reduced poverty, inequality still persists.
- She said that inequality is compounded by gender, age, ethnicity and race and added that it especially affects women, minorities and others who face unimaginable discrimination in the societies in which they live.

About Padma Lakshmi

- Padma Lakshmi is an Indian-American author, actress, model, television host, and executive producer.
- She started her career with modeling at the age of 21 and has modeled for renowned designers such as Emanuel Ungaro, Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace, Ralph Lauren, and Alberta Ferretti, and appeared in ad campaigns for Roberto Cavalli and Versus.
- Her first cookbook, *Easy Exotic*, a compilation of international recipes and short essays, was awarded Best First Book at the 1999 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards at Versailles.
- She also received an Emmy nomination in 2009 for the same in the category of Outstanding Reality Host.
- Her debut memoir 'Love, Loss and What We Ate' was released on International Women's Day, March 8, 2016.
- Besides, she is also a New York Times bestselling author, the co-founder of the Endometriosis Foundation of America, a Visiting Scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an ambassador for the American Civil Liberties Union advocating for immigrants' rights.
- In her new role as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, she would be joining a host of globally celebrated actors, athletes, musicians and other high-profile influencers such as Spanish-born international star Antonio Banderas, Award-winning actor Michelle Yeoh and legendary musician Bob Weir.

SPORTS AND AWARDS

PM confers Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes for Science and Technology

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today conferred Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) prizes for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in New Delhi today.
- The SSB prize is awarded each year on the basis of conspicuously important and outstanding contributions to human knowledge and progress, made through work done primarily in India during the five years, preceding the year of the prize.
- The SSB prize, comprising a citation, a cash award of Five Lakh rupees and a plaque is given to each person selected for the award in the following disciplines viz. Biological sciences, Chemical Sciences, Medical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Engineering Sciences and Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean and Planetary Science.
- Congratulating the award winners, the Prime Minister said that science, technology and innovation should be connected with the aspirations and requirements of the society. He said that our scientific institutions should align with future requirements and try to find solutions for local problems.
- Prime Minister asked the scientific community to take advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and develop technologies that will make India a global hub for manufacturing, knowledge and technology based industries. Talking about the need to think beyond silos, PM said that scientists and researchers should have an inter-disciplinary approach. Such an approach will help in finding faster and better solutions for the various scientific questions, PM said.

- Speaking at the award ceremony Union Science & Technology Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that today it is because of the efforts of our scientific community that out of 1207 institutions of the world, CSIR has achieved ninth place in the international ranking. He also mentioned about the various Government initiatives to foster innovation and strengthen the Science and Technology space in India.

Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize:

- Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology was instituted in the year 1957, in the memory of late Dr (Sir) Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the founder director of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research(CSIR).
- It is the most coveted national recognition bestowed upon young scientists and engineers to honour their research and developmental work in India.
- The prize is awarded each year on the National Science Day by the by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) for conspicuously important and outstanding contributions to human knowledge and progress, made through work done primarily in India during the five years.
- Prize comprising of a citation, a cash award of Five Lakh rupees and a plaque is given to the research in the following disciplines viz. Biological Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Medical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Engineering Sciences and Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean and Planetary Science.
- Any citizen of India engaged in research in any field of science and technology up to the age of 45 years is eligible to be nominated.

President Presents Swachh Survekshan 2019 Awards

- Indore has been awarded the cleanest city in the country in the Swachh Survekshan 2019 (SS 2019) awards while Bhopal has been declared as the cleanest capital.
- Ujjain has bagged the award for being the cleanest city in the population category of 3 lakh to 10 lakh. The awards were presented by the President, Shri Ram Nath Kovind at a function here today. Sh Hardeep S Puri, Minister of State (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs, Sh Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary, MOHUA and awardees from all over the country were present at the function.
- Speaking on the occasion, the President said that India has made remarkable progress towards achieving the goals of rural and urban sanitation. He said, by winning the first prize in all the four surveys so far, Indore has set an example for other urban centres.
- The President said that cleanliness should be integral to the behaviour of every citizen to make it effective and sustainable.
- Many people pay attention to personal hygiene but remain apathetic to public and community cleanliness. Change in this mentality is important for achieving the goals of Swachh Bharat.
- Sixty-four lakh citizens participated in the survey which included more than 4,000 cities in 2019. Indore has reported a 70% drop in vector-borne ailments in 2019, which is being attributed to Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- The Minister informed that we have made impressive achievements under the SBM in these four and a half years wherein Urban areas of 23 states / UTs have become ODF, and more than 94% cities are already ODF. Nearly 63 lakh individual household toilets (94% progress), and more than 5 lakh community / public toilet seats (more than 100% progress) have been constructed. Parallely, more than 42,000 public toilet blocks across 1400 cities have been

mapped and visible on Google maps. The Google toilet locator also provides an option for citizens to provide their feedback after using the toilets. Waste processing has gone up to 52% (compared to a mere 18% at the start of the Mission)

- MoHUA conducted its first survey 'Swachh Survekshan-2016' survey for ranking 73 cities (Urban Local Bodies), in January 2016, under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). In order to expand the coverage of cities, the Ministry conducted its second survey 'Swachh Survekshan-2017' in January-February 2017, to rank 434 cities. 'Swachh Survekshan 2018' saw a massive increase in both scale of survey and intensity of participation, with 4,203 cities covered in last year's survey. Swachh Survekshan 2019 has scaled even greater heights, covering 4,237 cities, and that too, in a record time of 28 days, in a completely paperless, digital format for data collection! Moreover, even in this short span of time, assessors managed to visit nearly 73,000 wards, 21,000 commercial areas, 69,000 residential areas, 75,000 community/public toilets, and more than 3100 waste to compost plants across the country!

Major Awardees of Swachh Survekshan 2019:

<u>Major Awardees of Swachh Survekshan</u>		
Category	Place (Winner)	State
India's Cleanest City	Indore	Madhya Pradesh
Cleanest Big City	Ahmedabad	Gujarat
Cleanest Medium City	Ujjain	Madhya Pradesh
Cleanest Small City	New Delhi Municipal Council	Delhi
Cleanest Capital	Bhopal	Madhya Pradesh
Best Performing State	Chhattisgarh	Chhattisgarh
India's Cleanest Cantonment	Delhi Cantonment Board	Delhi
Best Ganga Town	Gauchar	Uttarakhand
North Zone's Cleanest City	Nawashahr	Punjab
East Zone's Cleanest City	Narharpur	Chhattisgarh
North East Zone's Cleanest City	Thoubal	Manipur
South Zone's Cleanest City	piryapatna	Karnataka
West Zone's Cleanest City	Karad	Maharashtra

Ex-RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan to get Yashwantrao Chavan national award

- Rajan will be presented the award at a function on March 12 on the occasion of 106th birth anniversary of late Yashwantrao Chavan.
- Former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan has been chosen for the 'Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2018' for his contribution towards economic development.
- Rajan will be presented the award at a function here on March 12 on the occasion of 106th birth anniversary of late Yashwantrao Chavan, who was the first chief minister of Maharashtra, a release issued here said.
- Raghuram Rajan is credited with steering Indian economy during turbulent times during the post-global financial crisis period.
- During his tenure in RBI, he oversaw some key reforms in monetary policy management and in the administration of the central bank.
- Raghuram Rajan had also served as the chief economist of IMF and had famously predicted the 2008 financial crisis in 2005.
- NCP chief Sharad Pawar, who is president of the Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan, will preside over the function, it said.
- Rajan served as RBI governor between September 2013 and September 2016.
- The award is given every year by the Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan to individuals/institutions in recognition of their outstanding contribution towards national integration, democratic values, and social and economic development.

Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan:

- After the death of Yashwantrao Chavan, Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan was constituted by his followers and associates to take forward his works among different fields.
- Yashwantrao Chavan was the first Chief Minister of State of Maharashtra and has also served as Deputy Prime Minister of India in the cabinet of Prime Minister Charan Singh between 1979-1980.
- Born on 12 March 1913 in Devrashtre village of Satara District of Maharashtra, Yashwantrao Chavan was largely influenced by the Indian freedom struggle movements.
- He had participated in the Noncooperation movement and Quit India movement. During the course of time, he become closely associated with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel.
- After Independence, he held several important positions in the government of Maharashtra and in the government of India.
- Yashwantrao Chavan died of a heart attack on 25 November 1984.
- The Yashwantrao Chavan National Award constituted by the Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan honours individuals and institutions for their outstanding contribution to national integration, and social and economic development.

Chris Gayle reached 10,000 ODI runs and became 1st batsman in the world to hit 500 sixes

- In another stunning performance since returning to ODI cricket, Chris Gayle broke a slew of records during West Indies' fourth match against England on Wednesday, 27 February.

- En route to his 162 off 97 balls at St George's, the 39-year-old ticked off a shopping list of targets – 50 up in 32 balls, a 10,000th One-Day run and then his hundred in 55 balls.
- He also became the first batsman in the world to smash 500 sixes in international cricket; earlier in the series, he had toppled Shahid Afridi to record the most number of sixes by any batsman in international cricket.
- Gayle is the 14th batsman to cross the 10,000 ODI runs mark, and only the second from West Indies to do so after Brian Lara.
- The veteran Windies batsman Gayle had on 17 February announced that he will retire from One-Day International cricket after this year's World Cup in England and Wales.
- Chris Gayle, who will retire from ODIs after the World Cup, now has 506 sixes in international cricket (98 in Tests, 305 in ODIs and 103 in T20Is).
- Gayle also breached 10,000-run mark in ODIs and become only the second West Indian after Brian Lara (10,405 runs) to achieve the milestone.
- Gayle (10,074 runs) became the 14th cricketer to achieve the feat after Sachin Tendulkar (18,426), Kumar Sangakkara (14,234), Ricky Ponting (13,704), Sanath Jayasuriya (13,430), Mahela Jayawardene (12,650), Inzamam-ul-Haq (11,739), Jacques Kallis (11,579), Sourav Ganguly (11,363), Rahul Dravid (10,889), Virat Kohli (10,533), MS Dhoni (10,415), Lara (10,405) and Tillakaratne Dilshan (10,290).

Hindi writer Leeladhar Jagudi to be honoured with Vyas Samma

- Hindi writer Leeladhar Jagudi will be honoured with the Vyas Samman 2018 by the KK Birla Foundation for his collection of poems “Jitne Log Utne Prem”.
- “Hindi literature has many phases. Similarly, Mr. Jagudi’s poems represent different stages as he imbibes every turning point of his life and reflects all which are recollected in tranquillity. On the surface, his compilation appears to be a collection of simple love poems, but deep within, it is also an attempt to get liberated from the stereotyped definition of love,” the Foundation said.
- The Vyas Samman, started in 1991 is given to an “outstanding literary work” in Hindi authored by an Indian citizen which has been published in the last decade. The award carries an amount of 4 lakh.
- The book, published in 2013 was selected by a Chayan Samiti presided over by litterateur Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.
- Born in Dhangal village in Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, Mr. Jagudi was awarded the Padma Shri in 2004 apart from other awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, Akashvani National Award, Uttar Pradesh Hindi Institute and Uttarakhand Gaurav Samman.
- “Mr. Jagudi has given a new identity to Hindi poetry since 1960. In this compilation, he travels through the passages of words where the strongest of ideas are cultivated into a flexible form under its creative dominance,” the Foundation said.

Leeladhar Jagudi :

- Leeladhar Jagudi is an Indian teacher, journalist and poet of Hindi literature. He is the author of several poetry anthologies including Natak Jari Hai and Shankha Mukhi Shikharon Par and is a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, for his 1997 anthology, Anubhav Ke Aakash Mein Chand.
- The Government of India awarded him the fourth highest civilian honour of the Padma Shri, in 2004, for his contributions to Hindi literature.

- The award is given annually to outstanding literary work in **Hindi** authored by Indian citizen which has been published in the last decade.
- It was started in **1991** by the **KK Birla** Foundation.
- It carries monetary amount of Rs. 4 lakh.

President presents Nari Shakti awards on International Women's day

- President Ram Nath Kovind presented the Nari Shakti awards, 2018, the highest civilian honour for women in India, in New Delhi this evening on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- Forty One individuals and three institutions were given the award. The awardees include acid attack victim and social activist Pragya Prasun, Rani Mistri Sunita Devi, first woman marine pilot of India Reshma Nilofer Naha, woman commando trainer Dr Seema Rao, spiritual and motivational speaker Brahma Kumari Shivani and wildlife conservationist Sonia Jabbar.
- Ministry of Women and Child Development confers Nari Shakti Puraskar to women and institutions in recognition of their relentless service towards the cause of women empowerment and social welfare.
- This year, the Nari Shakti Puraskar was also awarded to One Stop Centre of Lucknow. Tamil Nadu State Social Welfare and Nutritious Meal Department got the award for exceptional progress in improving child sex ratio at birth under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme.
- Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi were present on occasion among others.

Nari Shakti Awards:

- Nari Shakti Awards, earlier known as Stree Shakti Awards was constituted by the government of India in the year 1991.
- Nari Shakti Awards are conferred on eminent women and institutions rendering distinguished service to the cause of women especially belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Nari Shakti Awards provide an opportunity to understand the contribution of women in the building of society and the nation.
- The recipients include both institutions and individuals.

EDUCATIONAL AND HRD

Quality of Living City Ranking 2019 – Mercer Report

- The Quality of Living Index 2019 was released by the Consulting Agency Mercer. The index was based on the data analysed between September and November 2018. The index ranks 231 cities.
- Globally, Vienna tops the ranking for the 10th year running, closely followed by Zurich, the runner-up. This year, Mercer provides a separate ranking on personal safety. Western Europe dominates the ranking, with Luxembourg named as the safest city in the world.

Indian Cities in the List

- Hyderabad and Pune topped the list among the Indian cities with a rank of 143.

- Bengaluru was the second best with the ranking of 149.
- Mumbai with the ranking of 154 stood third among Indian cities.
- The capital of India, New Delhi ranked at 162 in Mercer's Quality Of Living Index.
- The index is based on 39 factors such as access to public transport and traffic congestion levels, availability of housing and international schools city's cultural scene which are grouped under 10 heads like "political and social environment", "recreation".

What are Factors Determine Quality Of Living?

- These factors are evaluated in Mercer's Quality of Living Reports, which offer city-to-city comparisons for nearly 500 global assignment destinations.
- Recreation, Public transport, Public services and transport, social- cultural environment, school and education, medical and Health considerations, Political and social environment, Natural Environment, Housing, Economic environment, consumer goods availability

2019 City Ranking:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Country</u>
1	Vienna	Austria
2	Zürich	Switzerland
3	Vancouver	Canada
4	Munich	Germany
5	Auckland	New Zealand
6	Düsseldorf	Germany
7	Frankfurt	Germany
8	Copenhagen	Denmark
9	Geneva	Switzerland
10	Basel	Switzerland

ECONOMICAL

India's happiness ranking drops to 140; way behind Pakistan, China, Bangladesh

- According to reports, Finland is the happiest country amongst 156 nations surveyed by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.
- The world happiness report for 2019 has put Finland on the top spot on the most happiest country for the second consecutive year. According to reports, Finland is the happiest country amongst 156 nations surveyed by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. India has dropped down seven spots in the happiness rankings as compared to its 2018 ranking.
- In 2018, India was placed on 133 position, but this year its ranking went down to 140. In 2015, India was on 117 spot, in 2016 it was ranked on 118 spot. The position went up to 122 in 2017, according to reports.

- Various factors that determine the happiness levels of a country include life expectancy, social support, income, freedom, trust, health and generosity, amongst others.
- The immediate neighbours of India including Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are way ahead in the happiness rankings. In this report, Pakistan stands at 67th rank, China at 93, Bhutan at 95, Nepal at 100, Bangladesh at 125 and Sri Lanka at 130, leaving India way behind.

Top 10- Happiest countries:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Country</u>
1	Finland
2	Denmark
3	Norway
4	Iceland
5	Netherland
6	Switzerland
7	Sweden
8	New Zealand
9	Canada
10	Austria

Here's a list of Top 10 unhappiest countries of the world:

- South Sudan has topped the list of the unhappiest countries of the world. It is followed by Central African Republic at 2nd spot, Afghanistan at 3rd and Tanzania, Rwanda, Yemen, Malawi, Syria, Botswana and Haiti, respectively at the next spots.
- The World Happiness Report is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. It ranks the citizens of 156 countries based on how happy they perceive themselves to be. The World Happiness Report 2019 focuses on happiness and the community.

RBI governor calls for permanent status to finance commission

- Das who is also a member of the 15th finance commission said there is a need to ensure consistencies between finance commissions.
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das called for a permanent status to Finance Commission and a robust expenditure planning without compromising on fiscal consolidation as fiscal federalism gathers momentum in the era of uniform goods and services tax (GST).
- Das who is also a member of the 15th finance commission said there is a need to ensure consistencies between finance commissions so that there is some certainty in the flow of funds to states.
- "This has become even more critical in the post GST scenario. In other words, there has to be continuity and change between finance commissions. Increasingly, therefore, it is felt that there is a need to give permanent status to the finance commission.
- The commission can function as a leaner entity in the intervening period till the next finance commission is set up in a full-fledged manner. During the intervening period, it can also address issues arising from implementation of the recommendations of the finance commission," Das said in his first speech as RBI governor.

- He was introducing former RBI governor YV Reddy's co-authored book called Indian Fiscal Federalism.
- Das said the challenge for the GST Council now is to realise the full potential of GST for enhancing tax-GDP ratio and work on other areas of India's economy to enhance its competitiveness.
- Das also called for the constitution of state finance commissions every five years.

Need for permanent status:

- Finance commissions have over the past several decades adopted different approaches with regard to principles of tax devolution, grants to be given to states and fiscal consolidation issues. In other words, there has to be continuity and change between finance commissions.
- There is a need to ensure broad consistency between Finance Commissions so that there is some degree of certainty in the flow of funds, especially to the states. This has become even more critical in the post GST scenario.
- If it is given permanent status, the Commission can function as a leaner entity in the intervening period till the next Finance Commission is set up in a full-fledged manner. During the intervening period, it can also address issues arising from implementation of the recommendations of the finance commission.

What is the Finance Commission?

- The Finance Commission is constituted by the President under article 280 of the Constitution, mainly to give its recommendations on distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.
- Two distinctive features of the Commission's work involve redressing the vertical imbalances between the taxation powers and expenditure responsibilities of the centre and the States respectively and equalization of all public services across the States.

What are the functions of the Finance Commission?

- It is the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President as to:
- the distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;
- the principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India;
- the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State;
- any other matter referred to the Commission by the President in the interests of sound finance.
- The Commission determines its procedure and have such powers in the performance of their functions as Parliament may by law confer on them.

The criteria used by the 11th to 14th Finance Commissions are:

- Population is an indicator of the expenditure needs of a state. Over the years, Finance Commissions have used population data of the 1971 Census. The 14th Finance Commission used the 2011 population data, in addition to the 1971 data. The 15th Finance Commission has been mandated to use data from the 2011 Census.
- Area is used as a criterion as a state with larger area has to incur additional administrative costs to deliver services.

- Income distance is the difference between the per capita income of a state with the average per capita income of all states. States with lower per capita income may be given a higher share to maintain equity among states.
- Forest cover indicates that states with large forest covers bear the cost of not having area available for other economic activities. Therefore, the rationale is that these states may be given a higher share.
- Grants-in-Aid: Besides the taxes devolved to states, another source of transfers from the centre to states is grants-in-aid.
- As per the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission, grants-in-aid constitute 12% of the central transfers to states. The 14th Finance Commission had recommended grants to states for three purposes: (i) disaster relief, (ii) local bodies, and (iii) revenue deficit.

GLOBAL MPI 2018

- Context: The report, covering 105 countries, dedicates a chapter to India because of this remarkable progress. However, India still had 364 million poor in 2015-16, the largest for any country, although it is down from 635 million in 2005-06.
- Global MPI 2018 Report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.
- Definition of MPI poor: The report measures multidimensional poverty index, which it says can be broken down to show “who is poor” and “how they are poor”.
- This factors in two measures, poverty rate as a percentage of the population, and intensity as the average share of deprivations that poor people experience. The product of these two is MPI. If someone is deprived in a third or more of 10 weighted indicators, the global index identifies them as “MPI poor”.

Salient features :

- In India, poverty reduction among children, the poorest states, Scheduled Tribes, and Muslims was fastest.
- Although Muslims and STs reduced poverty the most over the 10 years, these two groups still had the highest rates of poverty.
- Bihar was the poorest state in 2015-16, with more than half its population in poverty. The four poorest states — Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh — were still home to 196 million MPI poor people, which was over half of all the MPI poor people in India.
- Jharkhand had the greatest improvement, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Nagaland.

SCI-TECH

Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019

- Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) has concluded a three-day ‘Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019’ as a part of ‘Confidence Building Measures’ between the two border guards.
- The exercise was named after a hill range situated 8 km west of Comilla Township in Bangladesh, which is home to an ancient Buddhist archaeological site in the region.

- The main objective of this exercise was to plan and conduct anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activity related operations with ultimate aim of achieving better joint operational efficiency and border management in the area.
- A series of joint exercises and exchanges are being held in the Tripura-Bangla frontier illegal incursions by Rohingya people.
- The main objective of this exercise was to plan and conduct anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activity related operations with an aim to achieve better joint operational efficiency and border management in the area.
- During the joint exercise held here, troops from both border guarding forces participated in joint patrolling, anti-smuggling drills on contraband goods through riverine border of River Gomati, simulated raids on suspected places of concealment inside territories of both countries, effective checking of goods and identity control of passengers at respective International Check-Posts (ICPs), holding flag meetings and other information sharing mechanism.
- The exercise ended with a debriefing of officers and men by officiating Inspector General of BSF in Tripura Frontier AK Singh and Region Commander of BGB region of Sarail.

Pinaka guided weapons system successfully test fired: Defence Ministry

- The weapon system is equipped with state-of-the-art guidance kit comprising of an advanced navigation and control system.
- The indigenously developed Pinaka guided rocket system was successfully test fired on Monday at Pokhran desert in Rajasthan, in a boost to artillery capability of the Army, the defence ministry said.
- The weapon system is equipped with state-of-the-art guidance kit comprising of an advanced navigation and control system.
- "The indigenously developed guided Pinaka, developed by DRDO, will significantly boost the capability of the artillery to make precision hits," .
- About the tests, it said the weapon systems impacted the intended targets with high precision and achieved desired accuracies.
- Telemetry systems tracked and monitored the vehicle all through the flight path. All the mission objectives have been met," the ministry said.
- The existing Pinaka systems held in the inventory of the Indian defence runs into thousands of numbers. The new guidance system will benefit them.

Pinaka Guided Weapons System:

- Pinaka rocket systems are developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The rocket system was named after Pinaka, the bow of Lord Shiva.
- Pinaka was initially a 30 to 40 km range rocket. Its range was increased 70 to 80 km with Pinaka Mark II. Pinaka rockets were used in the Kargil War with Pakistan.
- With the increased range there came a need for a more accurate. To fulfil this requirement guided version of the Pinaka is being developed by DRDO.

India's DRDO test fires indigenous Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile

- India successfully carried out trial of the Man Portable Anti Tank Guided Missile (MP-ATGM) being developed for infantry troops of the Army. The DRDO carried out the trial of the missile with 2-3 km strike range last night in Rajasthan desert.
- The MPATGM is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM), which has been under development by DRDO in partnership with Indian defense contractor VEM Technologies Ltd. since 2015.
- Fitted with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead, the MPATGM reportedly boasts a top attack capability and has a maximum engagement range of about 2.5 kilometers.
- In a bid to provide more firepower to its infantry units against enemy tank regiments, the Indian Army is planning to buy more than 3,000 Milan 2T anti-tank guided missiles from France in a deal likely to be worth over Rs 1,000 crore.

IIT-D Develops India's First Braille Laptop for Visually Impaired Persons

- The product will be manufactured, maintained and marketed by a Noida-based company. Its key component will be manufactured by a company based in Chennai.
- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-D) Delhi on Wednesday launched the country's first Braille Laptop for the visually impaired community.
- The laptop, dubbed DotBook, comes in two variants – DotBook 20P:20-Cell Braille variant with Perkins keys and DotBook 40Q:40-Cell Braille variant with QWERTY keyboard.
- The affordable laptop, exclusively created for the differently abled, also has a refreshable Braille display.
- Professor M Balakrishnan, who led the project, said that the laptop has been built using IIT Delhi's patented Shape Memory Alloy technology.
- The refreshable braille devices presently available in the market cost around Rs 1 lakh. Professor M Balakrishnan said that DotBook will bring down the cost by almost 60 per cent.

DotBook's – Salient features :

- The Professor added that they created the DotBook with the vision to enable visually impaired persons to compete and succeed independently in an office or educational environment.
- The laptop comes packed with all the applications and features that a visually impaired user would need to independently carry out their tasks with ease.
- These features include email, calculator, web browser and QWERTY keyboard.
- DotBook is a result of over four years sustained efforts by a multi-organizational team comprising academics, two industry partners and a user organisation, Professor M Balakrishnan said.
- The product will be manufactured, maintained and marketed by a Noida-based company while its key component, that is the 10-cell refreshable Braille cell modules, will be manufactured, maintained and marketed by a company based in Chennai.

DRDO test fires successfully Man Portable Anti- Tank Guided Missile:

- MPATGM incorporates advanced features, including, image infrared radar seeker with integrated avionics
- Indian defence scientists have scored a twin success in demonstrating the effectiveness of the Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).
- Pinaka and this , developed indigenously by scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), were tested in the deserts of Pokhran in Rajasthan.
- They enhance the hit and destruction capacity of the armed forces in short distance battle situations considerably.
- It works on fire and forget principle and is known for its top attack capabilities. It is effective against both stationary and moving targets. It will be deployed in infantry and parachute battalions of Indian Army.

Indo-Sri Lanka joint Exercise Mitra shakti-VI

- Exercise MITRA SHAKTI is conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of India & Sri Lanka.
- The joint exercise for the year 2018-19 will be conducted from 26 March to 08 April 2019 in Sri Lanka. Troops from 1st Battalion the BIHAR Regiment of the Indian Army and Gemunu Watch Battalion of Sri Lankan Army would be jointly undertaking the exercise.
- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command. The exercise will involve tactical level operations in an international Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorist environment under United Nations mandate. Exercise MITRA SHAKTI-VI will go a long way in further cementing relationship between both the nations and will act as a catalyst in bringing synergy and cooperation at grassroots levels between both the armies.

Young Scientist Programme (Yuvika)

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched a special programme for School Children called “Young Scientist Programme” “YUva Vlgyani KARYakram” from this year.
- The Program is primarily aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications to the younger ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of Space activities.
- ISRO has chalked out this programme to “Catch them young”. The residential training programme will be of around two weeks duration during summer holidays and it is proposed to select 3 students each from each State/ Union Territory to participate in this programme covering state, CBSE, and ICSE syllabus.
- Those who have just finished 9th standard (in the academic year 2018-19) and waiting to join 10th standard (or those who have started 10th Std just now) will be eligible for the programme.
- The selection will be based on the 8th Std marks. A few seats are left for the programme from various states. The interested students can register online from 25th March 2019 (1800 hrs) to 03rd April 2019 (1800 hrs).

- The selection is based on the academic performance and extracurricular activities. Students belonging to the rural area have been given special weightage in the selection criteria. The list of the provisionally selected candidates from each state will be announced on 06th April 2019.
- The provisionally selected candidates will be requested to send the supporting documents through E-mail to ISRO. This Email ID will be intimated to selected candidates.
- After verifying the relevant certificates the final list will be published on 13th April 2019.

Exercise Sampriti 2019:India-Bangladesh joint Military exercise begins:

- Indo-Bangladesh joint military exercise, 'Exercise Sampriti 2019' began on March 2, 2019 at Tangail, Bangladesh. This will be the eighth edition of the exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.
- The exercise will conclude on March 15, 2019. As part of the ongoing India-Bangladesh defence cooperation, Exercise Sampriti is an important bilateral endeavor between India and Bangladesh.
- The exercise is aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.

Salient features :

- The exercise began with the ceremonial salute of the participating contingents to the national flags of both the countries to the strains of "Jana Gana Mana" and the "Amar Shonar Bangla".
- The Bangladesh contingent was represented by 36 East Bengal Battalion, while Indian side was represented by 9th Battalion the Rajputana Rifles.
- A company group from Bangladesh Army and an equal number from Indian Army are taking part in the two-week long exercise.
- The experts from both the sides will also hold discussions to share each other's experiences in varied topics for mutual benefits.
- The exercise will involve tactical level operations in a counter insurgency and counter terrorism environment under the mandate of the United Nations.
- Both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered during simulated UN peace keeping operations.

About Exercise Sampriti:

- The Exercise Sampriti is a Joint Training Exercise between India-Bangladesh held alternately in India and Bangladesh every year.
- The aim of this exercise is to build, strengthen and promote positive relations between the Armies of India and Bangladesh.
- In addition to understanding each other in tactical level operations, the exercise lays emphasis on greater cultural understanding to strengthen military trust and cooperation between the two nations.
- The joint exercise was first held in Assam in 2011.

NEW RELEASED BOOKS

The book titled 'Mann Ki Baat – A Social Revolution on Radio' released by Arun Jaitley in New Delhi

- Shri Arun Jaitley, Union Minister of Finance & Corporate Affairs, today released a book titled 'Mann Ki Baat – A Social Revolution on Radio' in a function organized in National Media Centre, New Delhi.
- The book is based on 50 episodes of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's heart to heart talk with the citizens of India broadcast on All India Radio.
- The book sheds light on various aspects of Prime Minister's outreach, the remarkable response it continuously received from the people, the mass movement it has inspired and the profound impact it ingrained in the minds and hearts of the youth of India. The book also gives insight into behind the scene research work done on the massive public feedback received through various channels after every episode of Mann Ki Baat, which had aired first on 3rd October, 2014.
- The book also gives a rare and exclusive opportunity to readers to discover several unknown facets of Prime Minister's thinking and beliefs related to 'Mann Ki Baat', revealed by him to the authors of the book. The insights that emerge from the transcripts of the radio address are the most important contribution of this book.
- Interesting anecdotes shared by the members of the Prime Minister's core team and people from All India Radio and MyGov shed light over the minute but interesting details of how the idea of the radio programme came up, how the name and frequency were decided and how the format was chalked out, among other things.
- The book has been collated by BlueKraft Digital Foundation, a not for profit organization, and brought out by Rupa Publication, India, a reputed publishing house.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri Arun Jaitley said that Mann Ki Baat program has a strong power of recall which leaves deep footprints in the minds of listeners of the program. He highlighted the power of radio, recalling its impact as a source of both news and entertainment, its huge geographical reach and as a mode of learning language. He added that radio was used extensively by Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom movement to reach out to people directly.
- Shri Jaitley said that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi started using the medium of radio for governmental communication in order to establish direct communication with people by identifying its wide reach. He added that the program is a great example of crisp communication, stating that time for long winded statements is over.

Nayantara Sahgal unveiled her new novel "The Fate Of Butterflies"

- "The Fate of Butterflies", Nayantara Sahgal new novel was unveiled at a function hosted by Namita Gokhale at Oxford Bookstore, New Delhi. The novel is published by Speaking Tiger.
- The novel, Sahgal said, confronts the toxic dangers of "war, religious polarisation and authoritarian charisma -- a dystopian future that is already upon the world"

- Sahgal was introduced by author Namita Gokhale during the launch at Oxford Bookstore. "The Fate Of Butterflies" is published by Speaking Tiger
- Sahgal, a member of the Nehru-Gandhi family and one of the most vocal critics of Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP government draws inspiration from Nazi Germany.

