

UPSC

**Contemporary
Issues
&
Current Affairs
February 2019**

By Jawwad Kazi

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Contemporary Issues & Current Affairs February 2019

(Study Material)

By Jawwad Kazi

<https://t.me/jawwadkazicurrentaffairs>

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Contemporary Issues

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1

Propriety of Judges taking up post retirement Government Assignments

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure. ● Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government.
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss whether judges should take up post-retirement jobs. Give your opinion regarding constitutional validity of such appointments.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Three recent appointments have reopened the debate on the propriety of judges accepting post-retirement jobs from the government. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A.K Goel was appointed chairman of National Green Tribunal on the same day of his retirement as Supreme Court judge. (2) R.K Agrawal was appointed as the chairman of the National Consumer Redressal Commission (NCDRC). (3) Antony Dominic was appointed chairman of the State Human Rights Commission by the Kerala government.
Debate over post-retirement appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involving stakes of the respective governments: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The immediate appointments suggest that decisions regarding their post-retirement assignments had already been taken, by the respective governments even during the tenure of the judges. (2) This casts a cloud over judicial decisions rendered during their tenure in cases involving stakes of the government. ● Cloud over the sanctity of judgements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Judges had dealt with sensitive issues during the twilight of their tenure. (2) This is not to suggest that their judgements are wrong or biased. (3) The only endeavour is to underline the fact that immediate post-retirement appointments of the judges create a cloud over the sanctity of those judgements, irrespective of their merits. ● Public confidence is the greatest asset of judiciary: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Judges accepting jobs under the executive creates situations of conflicts of interest. (2) It tends to undermine public faith in judicial independence. (3) In the recent 'master of the roster case' the SC reiterated: The faith of the people is the bed-rock on which the edifice of judicial review and efficacy of the adjudication are founded.
Study over post retirement assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appointments on various organizations: 70 of over 100 retired SCJs have taken up such assignments in organizations like the National Human Rights Commission, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, Armed Forces Tribunal, Law Commission of India etc ● several reasons for appointment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Statutes laid down that only candidates with specific qualifications will be considered for important organizations.

	<p>(1) At least 56 per cent of the appointments were made because they were required by law, implying a structural problem.</p> <p>(2) About 36 per cent of the appointments were made by the central government, mainly to tribunals, commissions, ad hoc committees and positions like Lokayukta.</p> <p>(3) Since 1950, 44 Chief Justices of India have accepted post-retirement jobs.</p>
<p>Concerns and solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cooling period: Justice B. Kemal Pasha spoke against this practice that no judge should accept any salaried job under any government at least for a cooling period of three years from his or her retirement. ● Squandering the experience is not ideal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) At least 56 per cent of the appointments were made because they were required by law, implying a structural problem. (2) About 36 per cent of the appointments were made by the central government, mainly to tribunals, commissions, ad hoc committees and positions like Lokayukta. (3) Since 1950, 44 Chief Justices of India have accepted post-retirement jobs. ● Views of former CJI R M Lodha: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Judges should not take post-retirement government posts for at least two years of demitting office. (2) Before a judge retires, the government should ask him whether he wanted to be a pensioner or continue to draw his existing salary. (3) If opts for pension, he is out and can do what he wants, but not any engagement or post under the government. (4) If opted for full salary, that name should be put in a panel. (5) When a vacancy arises, appoint the man in consultation with the CJI, who can be appointed with the government's consultation. (6) Thus all allegations of appeasement, favouritism, allegations that somebody was trying for a post will come to an end. ● Recommendations by first Law Commission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Headed by M C Setalvad, had recommended that judges of the higher judiciary should not accept any government job after retirement. (2) Judges must not forget that their conduct even post-retirement was crucial to preserve people's faith in the judiciary. (3) Appointment of retired judges to various posts must be amended to ensure they are not given post-retirement benefits. ● What Does Constitution Say? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Article 124 states that no person who has held office as a judge of the Supreme Court shall plead or act in any court or before any authority within the territory of India. (2) Article 220 bars High Court judges from pleading before any authority in India except the Supreme Court and the other High Courts.
<p>International Practices :</p>	<p>(1) UNITED STATES: No Supreme Court judge retires lifelong. Done to prevent conflict of interest.</p> <p>(2) UNITED KINGDOM: Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 70. No law stopping judges from taking post-retirement job, but no judge has taken such a post.</p>

Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive impact: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Post assignments will help to sustain over the issue of vacancies judges in the Indian judiciary. (2) It is the most efficient way to channelize the potential of retired judges back into the system. ● Negative impact: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) May occur the situation of conflict of interest with governments. (2) Perception of bias, founded on grounds which are not too far-fetched and hypothetical, taints the judicial process. (3) Questions may arise over the sanctity of judgements.
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Tribunals should not be heaven for retired persons and appointment process should not result in decisions being influenced if the Government itself is a litigant and appointment authority at the same time.
Source	The wire, Indian express, pib.



2

Forest Right Act 2006

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies. ● Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors. ● Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes. ● GS3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Forest Rights Act (FRA) stands as a powerful instrument to protect the rights of tribal communities. Comment. What changes can be introduced to make it more effective?
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Supreme Court directed states to evict Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD) whose claims over forest land have been rejected.
More about the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The order came in connection with a PIL filed by the NGO Wild Life First, which challenged the validity of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. ● The petitioners sought the eviction of all forest-dwellers whose claims to land under the law had been rejected. ● For wildlife protection groups, the issue is of India's forests being relentlessly eroded by humans encroaching on animal habitats. ● There have been innumerable cases of villagers illegally living on protected forests meant exclusively for animals. ● The total number of rejected claims from 16 states that have reported rejection rates so far to the apex court add up to 1,127,446 tribal and other forest-dwelling households.

FRA 2006	<p>Introduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (FRA) aims to redress the historical injustice that forest-dwellers have experienced. ● Particularly the denial of their rights to forest land and resources. ● Act recognizes individual rights to homestead and agricultural. ● Recognizes community rights to access non-timber forest produce (NTFP) and manage and conserve forest resources. ● Act include individuals and communities of both Scheduled Tribes (STs) as well as non-tribal, know as Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs). ● Land recognised under this Act cannot be sold or transferred. ● Section 6 of the Act provides a three steps procedure for deciding on who gets rights.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Gram Sabha makes a recommendation. (2) Then goes through two stages of screening committees at the taluka and district levels. (3) The district level committee makes the final decision. ● Three rights have been given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Land rights: To those who are cultivating prior to December 13, 2005. Can claim upto 4 hectares, when don't have documents. (2) Use rights: can use tendu patta, herbs, medicinal plants etc, excluding timber. (3) Right to Protect and Conserve: Section 3(1) (i) provide a right and a power to conserve community forest resources. Section 5 gives the community a general power to protect wildlife, forests.
Issues with judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forced eviction: Judgment leads to forced eviction of over one million people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and other forest communities. ● Forced eviction: Judgment leads to forced eviction of over one million people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes and other forest communities. ● Against the FRA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Forest Rights Act contains no clause for eviction of rejected claimants and, in fact, section 4(5) specifically prohibits eviction until the process of implementation of the law is fully complete in an area. (2) In Samata judgement SC upheld the constitutional right of tribal people and forbid government from any eviction of tribal population. ● Against the fundamental right: Article 19(5) in the Fundamental Rights chapter of the Constitution specifically enjoins the state to make laws "for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe". Many columnists argue that SC order is against this very right. ● Weaken the FRA: It may weaken the FRA, which exist to protect tribal rights and ensure the socioeconomic development of these communities. This could further alienate tribal communities from the mainstream.
Samata judgement 1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supreme Court gave a clear message that if any state government allowed the transfer of land in favour of non-tribals and/or leased land in scheduled areas for mining projects it would completely destroy the legal and constitutional fabric made to protect the tribal communities.
Flaw in FRA/ challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Procedural flaws in processing claims (The encroachment logic): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Origin :

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ With the advent of British imperial bureaucracy, India began to consolidate state forests. ➤ Forests were clearly demarcated and ownership of forests was vested in.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Due to partly to ensure smooth supply of timber for the colonial economy. This is when the category of encroacher first emerged. <p>(2) Present situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encroachment in the prevailing public discourse is conceived in an ahistorical, permanent manner. ➤ It is looked at in isolation: only whether a person is an encroacher today matters, irrespective of whether he/she might have had any claims to the land before. ➤ This is controversial as it establishes a historicity that is based in the present rather than in real history. <p>(3) FRA is diluted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ FRA has been consistently diluted. ➤ To become either a land (re)distribution programme (e.g. through the inordinate state focus on individual rights claims) Or a regularisation programme (e.g. through illegal rejection of claims by twisting the FRA procedures) <p>Differentiated eligibility of ST and OTFD claimants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● OTFDs are required to prove continuous residence or dependence in the areas being claimed for three generations (75 years). ● This dates to a period when most of these areas were under princely states or zamindars, with no survey and no government records. ● Thus, these equally deserving communities are unable to produce documentary evidence to support their claims. ● Non-tribal: have been a low priority for the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). ● They are also viewed as ecologically insensitive by the other big stakeholder in the process, the Ministry of Environment.
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government should recognize the role played in the FRA's meagre implementation by the forest bureaucracy's resistance. ● Also recognize the acute lack of awareness of FRA's community rights provisions in State administrations and forest communities. ● There is a need to strengthen the nodal tribal departments, provide clear instructions to the State and district administrations, and encourage civil society actors. ● Without a strong political will, this historical transformation is unlikely to take place. ● Besides, any law by the government should be brought in only after wide discussions.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SC must safeguard the rights of tribal, especially those guaranteed by the Constitution, and must not set any precedent that would erode these rights in any way ● Only the claim of illegal claimants should be rejected in order to protect forest from illegal encroachments. ● In spite of its inadequacies, there can be little doubt that the FRA stands as a powerful instrument to protect the rights of tribal communities.
Sources	The WIRE, Indian express,



3

Education Qualification criteria for civic polls

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There has been demand for making minimum education qualification mandatory for panchayat elections. Critically Analyze this provision.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rajasthan government has approved to do away with the minimum education qualification required to contest panchayat and urban bodies' elections.
What is the issue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The education criteria were introduced by the previous government, which stipulated that for contesting the zila parishad or panchayat samiti polls, a contestant must have a minimum qualification of secondary education (Class X). ● To contest the sarpanch elections, an aspirant from the general category must have passed Class VIII and a SC/ST aspirant must have passed Class V. ● Construction of toilets in their homes as mandatory for contesting polls to the panchayati raj institutions in the state.
SC judgements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Background: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Haryana also had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions. (2) The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court. ● SC's verdict: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state. (2) SC ruled that it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad. (3) The Supreme Court's interpretation is based on the fact that uneducated or illiterate people getting elected to the local bodies can easily be misled by officials if they don't know to write and read. (4) In such cases, administrative actions that they are going can pose many challenges. (5) The Court has further observed that it is only the education which can give people the power to differentiate between right and wrong, and good and bad.
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restore Right to contest for all: This is a progressive move and will restore the right to contest to a large section of the population in the State, where the literacy rate, according to the 2011 Census, was 52% for women and 79% for men. ● Against liberal democracy: Previous law was an act of paternalism that militated against the basic assumptions of a liberal democracy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State's responsibility to provide education facility: It penalise the people for failure to meet certain social indicators, when in fact it is the state's responsibility to provide the infrastructure and incentives for school and adult education. ● It defeated the very purpose of the panchayati raj institutions: to include citizens in multi-tier local governance from all sections of society.
Why this law is not correct?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No evidence of education shows good governance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There is no evidence to demonstrate that people with a formal education can do a better job as elected representatives than those without. ● Voters must decide: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Because we live in a democracy, and at the heart of our democracy is the concept of representation. (2) Voters decide who will best represent their interests and elect them to legislative bodies accordingly. ● Arrogant and presumptuous: It questions the ability of voters s to decide who will best represent their interests. ● Two sides of the same coin: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There is no distinction between the right to vote and the right to stand for election. (2) Such a criteria effectively curtails the right to vote, by pre-emptively selecting the pool of people from whom the voters can decide. ● Sense of discrimination: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It discriminates on lines of gender and caste, because those who have been deprived of access/opportunities to education, are the most vulnerable members of society. (2) Deprivation is function of social discrimination, not individual character flaws.
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a liberal democracy, governments must desist from putting bars on who may contest, except in exceptional circumstances, such as when a candidate is in breach of particular laws. ● To mandate paternalistically what makes a person a 'good' candidate goes against the spirit of the attempt to deepen democracy by taking self-government to the grassroots.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Though in present day at the grassroot level, minimum education criteria are threat to liberal democracy, in future it may have potential to become the main pillar for the sustainability of liberal thought.
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The hindu, livemint, the WIRE, The Indian Express, PIB.



4

Minimum Income Guarantee

Syllabus Relation	GS 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. GS 1: Indian Society, Social empowerment.
Question	The Minimum Income Guarantee is better alternative to Universal Basic Income. Critically Analyze.
Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Interim Budget has promised an assured income to farmers in the form of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi. ● The Congress president Rahul Gandhi assured Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) if voted to power.
Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land up to 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year. ● This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal installments of Rs. 2,000 each. ● The complete expenditure of Rs 75000 crore for the scheme will borne by the Union Government in 2019-20.
Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) would be targeted at low-income households. ● In developing countries, the unconditional direct cash transfer scheme is looked at as a poverty alleviation programme. ● The cash is directly deposited in the beneficiaries' bank account.
UBI and MIG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The MIG is a social welfare system that guarantees a basic income to households, provided they meet certain conditions. ● This is different from Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme, which is an unconditional cash transfer to all citizens. ● To that extent, the MIG is a conditional UBI or a quasi UBI (targeted). ● As per the Economic Survey, the fiscal cost of a UBI pegged at Rs 3,370, at 75% universality, would be 2.1% of the GDP. ● A UBI of Rs 7,613, at 75% universality, would still cost a massive 4.9% of the GDP. ● MIG programme will put fewer fiscal pressures, as it is a claimed to be a bottom-up scheme. ● MIG is designed to select and target an smaller population- the most deserving of the beneficiaries from India's economically downtrodden.
Why Minimum income needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor condition of farmers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Economists Ashok Gulati in his study of India's farm policies for ICRIER-OECD, found among 52 major economies, Indian farmers got a negative 14% price support from government between 2000-01 and 2016-17. (2) Thus, cultivators were taxed by depressed farm-gate prices, limited marketing, storage and credit opportunities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclusion of Many from existing schemes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) According to the IMF, lower income groups would see substantial benefits through a basic income scheme. (2) Nearly 20% of this underprivileged population is excluded from the existing Public Distribution System (PDS). ● Subsidisation Issue: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Subsidisation often suffers from exclusion errors where the wrong materials are subsidised, and very often, the wrong kind of people benefit out of it. (2) It could also lead to inclusion errors where many essential materials, as well as deserving people are left out.
Possible Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The macro implications will depend on the exact contours of the package announced. ● However, in general, the following could be the Implications: <p>Positives Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food Security: The minimum income would ensure will ensure food security and fulfil other basic needs of the poor. ● Demand led Growth: It would also boost consumption at the grassroots, which would lead to a massive spurt in demand, kickstarting a new growth cycle. <p>Negative Impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fiscal Risks: The monetary entitlement without adequate revenues would raise medium-term fiscal risks and threaten debt sustainability. ● Inflationary Risks: For a supply-constrained economy like India, this could worsen the macro imbalances as rising consumption tends to stoke inflationary pressures.
Cost and Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Former finance minister P. Chidambaram has indicated that the cost of the programme is expected to be about 1.5% of the GDP. ● At 2019-20 prices, 1.5% of the GDP adds up to around Rs 2.82 lakh crore per year. ● Raising tax and Rationalizing Expenditure: some proposals on raising taxes and/or reducing government expenditures have already been explored by economists ● By curbing tax concessions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In fiscal 2016-17, government gave away a staggering Rs. 1,56,000 Cr to businesses under incentives, relief, concessions. (2) If India scrap all the subsidies / tax concessions for companies, it can divert this to the poor families. (3) This can be done without subtracting one paisa from existing farm or food subsidies. ● Wealth Tax: The wealth tax which the government abolished in 2015 can be reintroduced to tax the super-rich.
Issues/ Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear of cutting existing Social schemes: Any government may implement this scheme only on the condition that the existing social welfare schemes are foregone. ● Lack of fresh data: Experts have pointed out that it is necessary for India to first correct the basic issues like correcting the poverty line to successfully implement Basic Income scheme. ● Creation of quality jobs is undermined:

	<p>(1) Such promises may distract attention from the more pressing task at hand—creating high-quality jobs.</p> <p>(2) This would probably yield a short-term political dividend.</p> <p>(3) Welfare can never be a substitute for productive employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Populism: Overall, the threat of competitive populism, if it materialises, could have important macro implications.
Previous Attempts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The first ever pilot in India to test the feasibility of a basic income programme was carried out in a West Delhi slum, prompted by complaints over a “clogged” PDS scheme. ● The participants had Rs 1,000 transferred to their accounts per month for 2011, to spend anyhow they liked. ● Soon, nine villages in Madhya Pradesh were picked for the Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfers Project, the 18-month trial the only large-scale basic income programme conducted in India. ● In the first, recipients were given money in exchange for PDS. In the second, 6,000 people (all members of a household) got money over and above the schemes. ● The results, in both cases, the organisers say, were “positive”.
Way Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appropriate Targeting: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It is imperative that the funds are effectively transferred to the well-defined target population. (2) It is must ensure that those who are currently excluded from the existing public distribution and banking systems are fully included. (3) This would require almost 100 per cent penetration of the unique identification, and last mile banking services. ● Strengthening the Institutions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To deliver the services, the State must strengthen the institutions. They are public safety, justice, basic education and health. (2) The micro and macroeconomic impact of this complex restructuring process has to be studied in detail, with its execution carried out in planned phases.
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, Tol, The Week.



5

Employment Data

Syllabus Relation	<p>GS 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.</p> <p>GS 2: Constitution and Polity Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.</p>
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to a report in the Business Standard, a leaked copy of the NSSO's findings showed that unemployment hit a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18. ● The government's failure to release the NSSO report was the latest sign of a complete lack of transparency regarding jobs data. ● The NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman said at a press conference that the survey "is not finalised and is at a draft stage". ● However, the National Statistical Commission (NSC)'s acting chairman and a member had resigned from their post, alleging that the government has withheld the release of the NSSO's jobs survey after its approval. ● A former chairman of the NSC, said on condition of anonymity, that the report once approved by the NSC is the final version, which should be put up in public domain, ideally within a week. ● Withholding the NSSO report raised fundamental questions on the independence of statistical agencies. ● The interference of NITI Aayog undermines the autonomy of NSC.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The NSSO report was based on data collected between July 2017 and June 2018 and is the first official survey post-demonetisation. ● Findings of the Report (Leaked NSSO): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The unemployment rate was at its highest level since 1972-73 - a period from when the jobs data is comparable. (2) The report further said that unemployment was higher in urban areas (7.8%) as compared to 5.3% in rural areas of the country. (3) The unemployment rate among youth reached a record high level in 2017-18 as compared to previous year.
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The unemployment rate measures the proportion of the labour force willing to work but are unable to find a job. ● The participation rate is the measure of the proportion of the working-age population that has a job or is actively seeking one.
National Statistical Commission (NSC)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) National Statistical Commission was established in 2005 based on the recommendations of the Rangarajan Commission. (2) The commission was established through an executive order and it works under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (3) NSC was the apex body for all statistical matters. (4) NSC is supposed to submit annual reports and are required to be placed in Parliament along with action taken report by the Ministry of Statistics.

<p>Present Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Labour market data was typically collected by the NSSO's Employment-Unemployment Surveys (EUS) conducted once every five years. ● It comprises of the inputs like: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Employment and unemployment rates. (2) Women's labour-force participation. ● Indicators generated from these surveys are critical inputs for policy formulation. ● The most recent round of employment survey should have occurred in 2016-17, as per the five-year schedule. ● However, the survey was discontinued and an annual survey of households on jobs was started from 2017-18. ● Other Sources of employment data: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Data from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) (2) Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). (3) General Provident Fund. (4) National Pension System (NPS).
<p>Limitations to employment data</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Duplication: One key limitation in these databases is the duplication across the various schemes. ● Partial coverage is another limitation. ● Policy changes also influence the numbers in these databases. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) For instance, the government is now actively trying to increase enrolment on the EPFO database. (2) The EPFO has formed special squads to carry out inspections on firms to prevent under-reporting of employees. (3) Consequently, increases in EPFO numbers may simply be because of better enrolment of existing employees rather than creation of new jobs. ● Government's decision to discontinue the NSSO's five year surveys, failure to regularly release Labour Bureau data and delay in releasing the NSSO's periodic labour force survey had led to "an atmosphere of uncertainty and confusion. ● Instead, the government kept citing job numbers based on EPFO's payroll data and the Mudra loans, which are not so helpful.
<p>Concerns/ Issues (Of having no reliable data)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of data: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reliable data is important for policy making as well as ensuring accountability. (2) It is required not only for national Governments, but also for multilateral agencies for inter-country comparisons. ● Speculations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Lack of it leads people to speculate regardless of what the actual situation on the ground is. ● Non-Democratic: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reliable labour data and reports are absolutely critical for active citizenry. (2) Lack of proactive transparency in such important decisions is not only suspicious but also regressive for a democracy.
<p>Way Ahead</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Openness: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The only solution is to recognize that we need more openness about data coupled with deeper analysis. (2) Given the rapid changes in the Indian labour market, there is an urgent need to have current, accurate and publicly available data through regular, dynamic and comprehensive surveys.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A sound policy framework requires the support of robust institutions that collect and transmit good data regularly. ● Each major data collection activity should be augmented by an analytical component led by domain experts, recruited from diverse sources, including academia. ● Quality jobs: Also, along with appropriate data, the focus should be on creating well-paying quality jobs. ● Critical for Policy making: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It is extremely critical for the government to have a national survey-based employment/unemployment data.
Source	The Hindu, The Wire, Indian Express, Business Standard.



6

USA-Taliban Talks

Syllabus relation	GS-2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India and its neighbourhood-relations. ● Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine why Taliban Peace process gaining prominence in recent months and how India should proceed on Taliban talks?
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recently, United States and the Taliban have concluded two days of marathon peace talks in the United Arab Emirates and promised to meet again for another round "to complete the Afghanistan reconciliation process."
Brief timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● July 2018:The US reversed its longstanding policy that any peace process would be 'Afghan owned and Afghan led'. ● September 2018:The US appointed Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad as the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation. ● November 2018:Khalilzad held three days of talks with the Taliban at Qatar. ● December 2018:Third meeting between US officials and the Taliban took place at Abu Dhabi. Apart from Khalilzad, representatives from Pakistan, UAE, and Saudi Arabia attended this Pakistan sponsored meeting.
The Taliban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is Taliban? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Taliban is the plural for student. (2) It is a Sunni Islamic organization that operates in Afghanistan. (3) It also refers to itself as Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. (4) The Taliban emerged in 1994 taking advantage of the power vacuum created aftermath of the Afghan Civil War Mapping Militant Organizations (5) Most members of the Taliban group are Pushtan, the largest Ethnic group in Afghanistan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taliban’s demands: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Taliban’s demands for peace in Afghanistan have been that all foreign troops must leave, full Islamic law and customs must be implemented, and the political system must not conflict with the Sharia. (2) Taliban does not consider the current government in Afghanistan as legitimate.
<p>Why peace talks now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USA policy shift: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Trump government focusing to draw conclusion on Afghan Taliban issue to fulfil its election campaign promise as 2019 presidential elections are coming (2) As a result, U.S. has decided to pull out its troops from Afghanistan. ● Weakening position of Afghanistan’s government: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Afghanistan 2014 elected government losing its legitimacy among its people. (2) Also in recent years there is increase in casualties and inability to gain new recruits in its army weakening its territory holding capacity. (3) Thus, any delay in peace talks will weaker its negotiating position against Taliban. ● Strong Taliban position in Afghanistan: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It has 60,000 + army of Talibanis and controlling near about 30% of Afghanistan’s districts. (2) Its reach in other regions of Afghanistan also rapidly increasing. ● Taliban’s shift: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Taliban has also shown its readiness to negotiate a power-sharing agreement with the Afghan government. (2) It is also for the first time, they have started clarifying their vision for Afghanistan.
<p>Ongoing issues in talk process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan government exclusion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In recent talks, Afghanistan was not party. (2) India opposed it and took stand that peace talks should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled and with participation of the government of Afghanistan. ● Deteriorating USA-Iran relations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) USA’s ongoing heavy sanctions on Iran taking heavy toll on Iran’s trade with other countries. It, thus, created anti-USA sentiments in Iranian people. (2) USA accused Iran that it supplying arms to Talibanis against USA forces in Afghanistan to counter USA’s influence in Afghanistan. ● Incoherent Taliban: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In Afghanistan, over the years Taliban has got divided into number of splinter groups and there are conflicts of interests among them. (2) Given internal rivalries between various factions and terror groups, it is difficult to have consensus among all stakeholders. (3) It also thus creates doubt that how long will it help in ending terror and bring peace to the country.
<p>Recent Moscow talks outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objective:To create “favourable conditions” for the start of direct peace talks with the Taliban. ● No geopolitical games in Afghanistan : All participant countries agreed that after all foreign forces withdrawal, Afghanistan should not turned into a field for competition between external players which has drastic consequences both for the Afghans and their neighbours.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only political solution: All participant countries have agreed that issues Afghanistan has been facing can be resolved only through political means. ● Direct talks : Moscow talks intended to make an important contribution to efforts to create conditions for direct talks between the government, the Taliban movement, public and political circles. ● India's position in talks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India supports all efforts that will preserve unity and plurality, and bring security, stability and prosperity to the country. (2) India's consistent policy has been that the peace talks should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled and with participation of the government of Afghanistan.
<p>Recent US-Taliban talks outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Both concluded draft peace deal. ● The agreement included apparent concessions from both sides: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It includes a commitment that foreign forces would be scheduled to withdraw 18 months after a deal was signed. (2) The departure of western troops is a core Taliban demand. (3) In return the Taliban would commit that it will keep international terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS, off Afghan soil or from using it to launch attacks abroad. ● The Taliban have said that it will not talk to Afghanistan officials to whom it denounces as a puppet government, until a ceasefire is struck.
<p>How India should proceed on Taliban talks?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding practical situation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All stakeholders in Peace talk acknowledged that it is impossible to have peace in Afghanistan without Taliban on board. (2) India should also need to acknowledge this as early as possible to avoid complete isolation or exclusion from peace talks and to secure its national interests. ● Maintaining effective diplomatic channel: India should maintain effective intelligence and diplomatic channel with Afghanistan to stay aware of all ground realities and agreements to secure its investment, citizen and interests in Afghanistan. ● Persuading USA: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) From Iranian revolution onwards, USA and Iran are against each other. (2) India, having good relations with both, can play a mediating role by persuading USA to bring Iran on board for Peace process talks so to have early, effective conclusion to Afghan Taliban issue.
<p>Possible implications of talks failure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in terrorist activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Instable Afghanistan would have adverse impact on security of all neighbouring countries like China, India, Russia, and Iran. (2) It will increase insurgency and terrorists' activities in all nations especially India. ● Breeding ground for world terrorism: After failure of talks and retreating US's role in Afghanistan, it is likely that Taliban will get control on it and previous experience in realm of Taliban government indicates that it would act as safe zone for international terrorists' groups like ISIS, Al-Qaeda, etc. ● INSTC: It would impact security of long drawn dream connectivity project International North-South Transport Corridor project.

<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pakistan-Russia-China nexus: Some analysts said that the Pakistan-Russia-China nexus will control Afghanistan through the Taliban as proxy. This may be true in the initial stages. ● Addressing Iran's concern: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Iran has fear that US's forces in Afghanistan can be used against it. (2) Recently, to relieve Iranian fears, Afghanistan said that it would not allow the U.S. to use its bases in the country to conduct any act of aggression against Iran. ● 6+1 process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It included representatives from Afghanistan, India, Iran, China, Pakistan, Russia, and the U.S. (2) The 6+1 process is the most possible inclusive solution to have early and effective solution to Afghan peace process and to achieve political settlement in Afghanistan. ● Independence in real terms: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Afghanistan people should not be forced to choose between an imposed peace or independence and a constitutional order. (2) An imposed peace will achieve brief victory for one party and cause long-term suffering for another. (3) It should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled in Afghanistan.
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India by its soft power and peaceloving nation stature can act as important stakeholder in the peace process. It will also help India to boost its global image as peace-promoting nation. ● If anyhow Taliban gets control over Afghanistan politics, it would help India to maintain good relations with it, thus, will help in maintaining peace, stability and growth of region as whole. ● Peace can only come with all the major powers and neighbours of Afghanistan on board and thus cooperation between big powers is necessary.
<p>Sources</p>	<p>The Hindu, Indian express, RSTV, Financial express, Gaurdian, nytimes</p>



7

India-Saudi Arabia relations

Syllabus relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss the significance of bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia. List issues of concern and suggest way forward for stronger bilateral relations.
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman recently had come on a one-day state visit to India.
Brief timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2006: Historic visit of King Abdullah to India and signed "Delhi Declaration". ● 2010: "Riyadh Declaration" signed during then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia for cooperation on information exchange on terrorism. ● 2016: Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia further cemented the Indo-Saudi partnership.
Recent developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Imp MoUs/Agreements signed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) MoU on investing in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund. (2) MoU on Cooperation in the field of Tourism, Housing. (3) Framework Cooperation Program between Invest India on Enhancing Bilateral Investment Relations. (4) Agreement for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched by Honourable Prime Minister Modi.
Why Saudi Arabia is important for India?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Saudi Arabia's growing regional profile: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Saudi Arabia is an important regional player in the Gulf and West Asia region owing to its huge petroleum reserves, and its growing military power among other factors. (2) It has substantial influence on the regional politics, especially on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and has cultivated ties with major powers such as the US, Russia, China and the EU. ● Saudi Arabia as a gateway to the Arab and Islamic world: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Saudi Arabia enjoys considerable influence in the Arab and Islamic worlds owing to the presence of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. (2) It also enjoys influence in organisations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). ● India's stakes in the security of the Gulf region: Gulf region as falls within India's security parameter and India intends to contribute to the security and stability of the region through sharing its own experiences in the areas of counter-terrorism, maritime security and military training. ● Cooperation against terrorism: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Although both countries have been victims of terrorism in the past, Saudi Arabia has faced questions over its alleged funding of religious extremists and the spread of the Wahabism. India has indicated its concern on this issue. (2) Following the 9/11 attacks, Saudi Arabia has taken steps to check the flow of money and disrupting terrorist networks.

	<p>(3) It has condemned extremism and has been preaching moderation including through religious leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fighting piracy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and surrounding regions remains a threat to Sea Lines of Communication and thus to the security of the trans-shipment of goods. (2) Deepening the Indian Navy's cooperation with its Saudi counterpart will contribute significantly to the fight against piracy. ● Energy security: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India ranks as the fourth largest oil consuming country in the world after the US, China and Japan. (2) Securing long term energy supplies has been a dominant objective for India in the Gulf region. (3) Saudi Arabia is currently the largest supplier of crude oil to India. (4) With particular reference to the 'Strategic Petroleum Reserve', India needs to move beyond mere commodity trade and engage with Saudi Arabia through energy interdependence. ● Soft power diplomacy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Approximately two million strong Indian diaspora in Saudi Arabia have acted as a medium through which the Saudis have shaped their perception of India and its people. (2) India has also recently pledged to assist Saudi Arabia in setting up an ICT Centre of Excellence, as well as institutions of higher learning. (3) India needs to build on portraying itself as a major education hub in Asia that can provide quality education.
<p>Bilateral relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Geostrategic position and cultural links: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The geostrategic position of Saudi Arabia makes it an important neighbour for India, with trade and cultural links dating back thousands of years. (2) It was manifested in recent event where India was selected the 'guest of honour' at the 2018 Janadriyah Festival—a prestigious annual 'National Heritage and Cultural Festival' of Saudi Arabia. ● Trade and Energy cooperation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Trade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bilateral trade was US \$27.48 billion during the last financial year 2017-18, making Saudi Arabia India's 4th largest trading partner after China, the US and the UAE. ➤ It recorded about 10% growth compared to 2016-17. (2) Energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Saudi Arabia is the key pillar of India's energy security as India imports a fifth of its crude oil requirement from Saudi Arabia. ➤ It is a source of 17% or more of crude oil and 32% of LPG requirements of India. ➤ Recently, Saudi ARAMCO has agreed to partner in Ratnagiri Refinery and Petro-Chemical project Ltd. ➤ Riyadh conveyed its decision to join the International Solar Alliance. ● Economic cooperation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The two governments have been working to develop two-way business agreements. For instance, establishment of an Indo-Saudi joint commission to promote economic and technical collaboration.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Security cooperation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India showed increased willingness to cooperate with Saudi Arabia on a variety of security issues such as joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism, anti-money laundering, and countering terror financing. ● Counter-terrorism cooperation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The rise of terrorism and extremism has been a matter of particular concern for both India and Saudi Arabia. (2) Saudi government has been regularly helping India apprehend key terror suspects. For instance, Abu Jundal and Abdul Salam. ● Indian diaspora: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The 2.7 million strong Indian community is the largest expatriate group in Saudi Arabia. (2) They send remittances of over US \$11 billion annually. The Kingdom also facilitates Hajj pilgrimage to over 1,75,000 Indians every year.
<p>Issues of Concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rise in Islamist extremism: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The rise of terrorism and extremism has been a matter of particular concern for both India and Saudi Arabia. ● India-Iran relations and SA-Pakistan relations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Saudi Arabia's strong ties with Pakistan and India's close links with Iran have affected India-Saudi relationship. (2) While Saudi Arabia does not feel comfortable with India's growing ties with Iran, New Delhi expects Riyadh to restrain its ally, Islamabad, from allowing its territory being used by terrorists. ● Saudi influence in radicalisation in India: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India cannot neglect its growing concerns over the Saudi influence in radicalisation among a section of India's youth. (2) More often the Gulf returnees are blamed for the rise of extremism in some Indian states. ● Other factors that brought transformational changes in India's engagements with the Gulf region: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The rise of jihadist extremism. (2) The gradual decline of American power. (3) The rise of China.
<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closer cooperation on terrorism: As the threat from terrorism is not going to diminish in the near future, India and Saudi Arabia must augment their capabilities to disrupt terrorist networks by working close together. ● Diversification of bilateral trade: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Bilateral trade has traditionally been based on Energy trade but diversification of trade portfolio is important to have greater cooperation and balancing trade deficit on Indian side. ● Moving beyond 'buyer-seller relations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There is need for both countries to engage with mutual cooperation in multiple fronts of engagement. (2) This will help translate the existing economic ties into a strong strategic partnership. ● Enhancing People-to-people relations:

	<p>(1) It was noted that India must strive to engage with countries in the region in such a manner that developments such as the Arab Spring do not impact the fundamental basis of its relations with those countries.</p> <p>(2) People-to-people relations need to be consolidated so that bilateral relations are not overly influenced by regime changes.</p>
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growing India-Saudi ties serve as an unmistakable reminder that international relations are based on national interest, and not on religious ideology.
Sources	The Hindu, Indian express, IDSA, Firstpost.



8

Pulwama terror attack

Syllabus relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS-3: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the options available before India post Pulwama attack? How easy will it be for India to isolate Pakistan diplomatically?
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Pulwama terror attack, which took the lives of over 40 paramilitary men, had sparked a raging debate on how India should respond to Pakistan.
Recent terror attacks timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2016: Pathankot attack. ● 2016: Uri attack. ● 2017: Amarnath Yatra attack. ● 2019: Pulwama attack.
Recent steps taken by India and world post Pulwama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MFN status: ● India has already withdrawn the most favoured nation treatment from Pakistan and has imposed 200% duties on Pakistani imports. ● While this is symbolic, it nevertheless sends out a powerful signal to the outside world that India means business. ● It should also persuade the international community to impose economic sanctions on Pakistan. ● It should work out a plan to offer competition to Pakistani exports in the international market. ● FATF option: ● In its endeavour to isolate Pakistan globally, India has appealed to the FATF to put it on the blacklist. ● But the FATF has decided to keep Pakistan in the 'grey list' as of now. ● India should use all its diplomatic influence to ensure that Pakistan is placed in the blacklist of the FATF for having failed to take action to stop terrorist financing. ● Water/Indus rivers option: ● India and Pakistan signed the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 under which India is allowed 3.6 MAF water use in Jammu and Kashmir. ● Recently, Centre approved implementation of the Shahpurkandi Dam project on the Ravi in Punjab.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The move will allow India full use of water of its jurisdiction which at present goes “waste” flowing through the Madhopur Headworks downstream to Pakistan. ● UNSC consensus: Despite Pakistan’s pre-emptive efforts against India in UN, UNSC condemned in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly suicide bombing in Jammu and Kashmir. ● Surgical strike 2.0: ● “Non-military, pre-emptive” counter-terror operation: Twelve days after the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force bombed the Jaish-e-Mohammad’s “biggest” terror-training camp in Pakistan’s Balakot by 12 Mirage-2000 fighter jets. ● Major shift in counter-terror responses: The aerial attack on a target inside Pakistani territory marks a major shift in India’s counter-terror responses, which have thus far been restricted to ground operations across the LoC in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. ● Pakistan’s response and chase: ● In response to Indian precision air strike in Balakot, Pakistan Air force dropped bombs in four locations of Jammu and Kashmir. ● Indian and Pakistani Air Force jets engaged in a chase over the Line of Control. One Indian MiG-21 Bison aircraft was lost and a Pakistani F-16 was shot. ● Indian Air Force pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was arrested by Pakistan and is in their custody.
<p>Options before India post Pulwama attack</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Military: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India can undertake limited strikes across the LoC to target the terrorists such as Surgical Strike in 2016. (2) But Surgical Strike failed to deter Pakistan from repeating their attack. (3) Such military strikes involve a risk of counter retaliation, escalation to a full-fledged war and casualties. ● Diplomatic: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A determined outreach to P-5 and other countries and apprise them of the facts with evidence of JeM’s links with Pakistani agencies. (2) Reaching out to the Gulf countries and Pakistan’s other friends. (3) However, convincing China, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will be the most difficult task that India will face. (4) India could consider downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan. ● Economic: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) IMF option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Pakistan is negotiating a multibillion-dollar loan with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). ➢ India should ensure that Pakistan does not get the loan because of its support to terrorism. (2) US, Japan, the EU option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Pakistan enjoys Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP)-plus concessions from European Union (EU). Under the scheme, the EU allows several Pakistan items to enter its markets on zero duty. ➢ India should lobby with the EU that these concessions are withdrawn.

	<p>(3) China option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ China is the main supporter of Pakistan who is also eyeing the Indian market. ➤ India could consider leveraging its economic relations with China to put pressure on Pakistan. ➤ Many countries are sanctioning Chinese companies on grounds of national security. India should watch these developments carefully. <p>● Other Actions:</p> <p>(1) Kartarpur Corridor security review option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ India and Pakistan have agreed to open the Kartarpur Corridor for Sikh pilgrims. ➤ The security implications of this action must be carefully reviewed.
<p>How easy will it be for India to isolate Pakistan diplomatically?</p>	<p>The reality is that Pakistan given its geostrategic location remains important for the international community.</p> <p>● USA:</p> <p>(1) Presently, the United States is pursuing negotiations with the Afghan Taliban and regards Pakistan as an important facilitator.</p> <p>(2) Although the US has condemned the attacks, it may not go as far as imposing sanctions on Pakistan because in this particular attack</p> <p>(3) No US national has been hurt.</p> <p>● China:</p> <p>(1) China is a strong backer of Pakistan and will be expected to neutralise India's efforts and block any sanctions.</p> <p>(2) It has already indicated that it will not support the declaration of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN. However, China must realise that it is also vulnerable to Uighur extremism.</p> <p>● Russia:</p> <p>(1) Russia has indicated that the perpetrators of and sponsors of terrorism must be 'punished' but whether it will go as far as imposing sanctions on Pakistan needs to be seen.</p> <p>● Gulf countries: In the last few years India has strengthened its relations with the key Gulf countries. It should persuade these countries to pressurise Pakistan not to support terrorism.</p>
<p>Reasons for the spike in local militancy in Kashmir</p>	<p>● Pakistan's Interference:</p> <p>(1) Pakistan sponsored terrorists have terrorised the J&K population and hindered political dialogue by intimidating or silencing voices of moderation that wish to engage in dialogue.</p> <p>(2) Pakistan remains a pivotal centre of ideological indoctrination (by equating Jihad with guerrilla warfare spiritual obligations) for the Kashmiri conflict.</p> <p>● Social media and response from the rest of India: Social media has provided a perceived "glory factor" and an environment of competitive extremism has stimulated the local turmoil.</p> <p>● lack of legitimate government: J& K now having governor's rule in state where People elected government is not in place and it seems like imposition from central government to people of J& K.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>● Choosing package of military, diplomatic and economic options.</p> <p>● Intelligence failure:</p>

	<p>(1) Recent Pulwama attack was partly the result of an intelligence failure, especially due to the fact that security forces could not detect the loading and movement of the explosive-laden vehicle, no warning or intelligence input about suicide bomber, etc.</p> <p>(2) This major weakness need to do away with strategic coordination between forces and intelligence agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political will and a long-term strategy: <p>(1) Political will and a long-term strategy is needed to deal with Pakistan which is based on supporting terrorism against India and is unlikely to give up.</p> <p>(2) Tracking internal lapses and the possible future consequences of the internal failures.</p> ● Initiating strong military measures: <p>(1) India's conventional deterrence has failed to deter Pakistan's proxy war and state-sponsored terrorism and it is now necessary to initiate strong military measures to prevent future terrorist strikes being launched from Pakistani soil.</p> <p>(2) These measures should be carefully calculated to minimise the risk of escalation and must avoid collateral damage to the extent possible.</p> ● Covert operations: Counter-proxy war operations should be supplemented by covert operations.
Sources	The Hindu, Indian express, VIF, ORF, Hindustan times



9 Need for Strategic Security Doctrine

Syllabus relation	● GS-3: Challenges to internal security
Question	● India needs National Security Strategy, National Security Doctrine and not ad hoc and episodic responses. Critically analyse.
Why is it in news?	● Recent Pulwama attack on CRPF convoy has exposed the gaps in our security arrangements and once again brought in front need of well-defined national strategic security doctrine.
What is National Security Doctrine?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Doctrine is a stated principle of government policy mainly in foreign or military affairs. ● Difference between doctrine and strategy: <p>(1) The doctrine is only prescriptive in nature whereas strategy is descriptive. Strategy gives perspective on use of resources to achieve certain goal.</p> <p>(2) Doctrine guides the actions at both strategic and operational levels. Thus, Doctrine is applied through strategy and tactics as well as through specific operations.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Factors that determine National security doctrine: It is determined by many factors, including external threats, geography, political culture, military capabilities, economic needs, popular opinion (in democracies) and its leaders' perceptions of the country's interests. ● India's position on National Security Strategy or National Security Doctrine: Unlike many other countries, India does have its formal, well-articulated National Security Strategy or National Security Doctrine.
<p>Why we need National Security Doctrine?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Future readiness for tackling threats: One of the first instances of a vehicle-borne IED being used in J&K, the success of this tactic could mark a new phase in the ongoing counter-insurgency operations. ● Need for urgent review: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Recent big incidences such Pathankot, Uri where massive damage was received which in turn highlights serious loopholes in existing SOP, intelligence inputs, etc. (2) Thus, there is need of an urgent review and introspection about our management of crisis situations and of Pakistan's role in Kashmir, in particular. ● No accountability: There is no accountability of any particular department or ministry in place in case of failure of agency to respond efficiently which is evident from recent incidences like 26/11 attack, Pathankot attack, etc. ● Delays and problems in decision making: There is delay and chaos in decision making because of non-coherent, improper co-ordination among security establishments which results into inconsistent security response at the time of insurgencies. ● Room for Politicisation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Absence of a clearly articulated consensus resulting into Indian response which is qualitatively linked to the government of the day, its key leaders and their personal ability, or inability, to understand and appreciate security challenges. (2) It ultimately results into politicization of incidences and use for political agendas. ● To avoid ad hoc and episodic responses:
<p>Government initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation of Defence Planning Committee (DPC). ● Additional budget and allocation for the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). ● Reconstitution of Strategic Policy Group (SPG) under National Security Advisor (NSA) instead of earlier provision where Cabinet Secretary coordinates the activities of the SPG. ● 2 deputy national security advisers (NSAs) instead of 1 under National Security Adviser (NSA). ● Establishment of National Counter Terror Centre (NCTC), National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the National Intelligence Grid (Natgrid).
<p>What doctrine should involve?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clear civil and military command structure: At the level of strategy, it will have to have a clear command structure with the civil control at policy level and a clear military command structure at operational level. ● Strong deterrent capability: It will have to acquire a strong deterrent capability to be able to strike in depth by means of air, naval and armed power and will be in perpetual defense preparedness.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Efficient Intelligence machinery, management and mechanism: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Its Intelligence machinery will have to be professionally efficient so that vital inputs will flow to one intelligence management point at policy and strategy level. (2) At tactical and operational levels, there has to be a mechanism to share intelligence amongst security agencies involved in operations. ● Integration of technological capabilities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The integration of country's technological capabilities is needed as per its national security interests. (2) As India has already taken a no-first-use policy position in case of nuclear attacks, it should develop a capability to strike hard in retaliation. ● Simultaneous focus Indian Ocean region: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India's policy has to keep the Indian Ocean free from dominating presence of any power/power block and increasing its maritime presence in the region. (2) Therefore, India needs to adopt appropriate defense and foreign policy initiatives to ensure that Indian Ocean region remains a zone free from great power domination. ● Adoption of inclusive institutional mechanisms: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India provides a great example of democratic stability and developmental success derived from its institutional mechanism to the non-western countries. (2) But its nation-building has remained an arduous task and many ethno-national, sub-national, caste-hierarchical, religious and linguistic counter-national factors and aspirations. (3) Thus, all institutional mechanisms shall have to be strengthened for empowerment of weaker sections of Indian society so that all feel their worth as stakeholders of a vibrant nation.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflection of transparency, challenges and political consensus: The immediate requirement is for the Union Government to put together a National Security Doctrine that should have political consensus, publicly transparent and should reflect the complex challenges facing the country. ● Accompanied by a national security strategy: The doctrine must be accompanied by a national security strategy that spells out the command and control structures for meeting eventualities such as terror strikes. ● Constitutional values in mind: The proposed security doctrine must be anchored in the foundational values of the Constitution.
Sources	The Hindu, Indian express, Indianreview, Defencereview, ORF



10

India-South Africa Relations

Syllabus relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Critically analyse India-South Africa relations. Give your opinion on how India should take existing India-South Africa relation to new level?
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa was the Chief Guest at the 70th Republic Day celebrations. ● This is the second time a South African Head of State is Chief Guest for Republic Day- the first occasion was in 1995 when the late Nelson Mandela visited.
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1946: India became 1st country to sever trade relations with the apartheid government. ● 1994: Both countries established diplomatic relations after the end of apartheid. ● 1995: Nelson Mandela, was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade. ● 1997: Red Fort Declaration for Strategic Partnership signed. ● 2003: Both along with Brazil signed Brasilia Declaration for establishing "South-South" cooperation. ● 2016: PM Modi paid an official visit to South Africa. ● 2019: President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade.
Recent developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Catch-all document over MoUs: Instead of signing more MoUs, the two sides signed one "catch-all" document. ● Three-year roadmap: It's a three-year roadmap to implement joint agreements on a host of areas - defence and security, political relations, trade and investment, blue economy, tourism, science & technology, IT, agriculture. ● Discussions: Discussions were held over covering new security areas like maritime security, terrorism, FATF and cyber-security. ● Gandhi-Mandela Freedom lecture: After the official discussions, Ramaphosa delivered the Gandhi-Mandela Freedom lecture at the Indian Council of World Affairs.
Bilateral relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Special relationship: India's relationship with South Africa dates back several centuries and is attached in common ideals, ideas, interests, and icons- like Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. ● Common world view: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Both share a common vision on a range of global issues and closely cooperate in various multilateral forums: UN, BRICS, G-20, Commonwealth, IORA and the IBSA. ● Political ties: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In the last 5 years, India's long-standing ties with Africa had acquired vibrancy and dynamism through multiple bilateral political engagements. (2) It reflects in 29 visits to African countries at the level of President, Vice President and Prime Minister, apart from several other ministerial visits.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trade and economic ties: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Bilateral trade: South Africa had emerged as an important trade and investment partner for India with India-Africa bilateral trade \$ 10.65 billion in 2018-19. (2) Investment: India is the 5th largest investor in South Africa with cumulative investments of \$54 billion. (3) FTA: Recent signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area provides another opportunity to boost trade and economic ties with South Africa. (4) India declared Africa as top priority in India's foreign and economic policy, which would be guided by South African priorities. ● Defence ties: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) South Africa is Africa's most thriving defence industry and both sides are keen to explore partnership in joint production. (2) South African defence firm Denel, which had been blacklisted prior to September 2018, will explore joint ventures with Indian firms under the Make in India programme. ● Engagement in multilateral forums: South Africa's active involvement in multilateral organizations, such as the IBSA Forum (IBSA), the New Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership (NAASP), the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IORARC), and the annual BRICS Summits has helped in recovery in bilateral trade and boosting bilateral relations. ● Indian diaspora: South Africa has a 1.5 million strong Indian-origin community, which accounts for about 3% of the country's population which ultimately forms great source for remittances. ● Assistance and Line of credit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A total of 189 projects in 42 African countries for nearly \$11.4 billion were being implemented under Indian lines of credit.
<p>Issues of concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slow progress on agreed projects: New Delhi and Pretoria had signed a large number of agreements, but their implementation progress has been slow. ● China Factor: China's rapid expansion in South Africa through its check book diplomacy is challenging India's aid and investment in its scale. ● Inhibiting factors in bilateral trade and investment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Small size of the South African economy and its slow rate of growth. (2) Lack of direct air connectivity. (3) South Africa's rigid business visa regime. ● Racial discrimination- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) No efforts by India to curb racial discrimination unlike China which undertaken educational projects to address it. (2) Several reports in the past have highlighted that the propensity of Indians to discriminate on grounds of race is quite high.
<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strategic partnership between India and South Africa has many important dimensions beyond the bilateral facets. Three of them deserve special attention: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) IBSA Forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This unique grouping of three democracies – India, Brazil and South Africa – from three continents – developed well in the past but now seems neglected by its members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Its leaders had agreed at Fortaleza, Brazil in 2014 to convene the much-postponed IBSA summit, but this did not happen yet. <p>(1) BRICS : The New Development Bank of BRICS should be strongly encouraged and enabled to finance infrastructure development projects in the neighbourhood of South Africa and India i.e. in the SADC (Southern African Development Community) and BIMSTEC regions respectively.</p> <p>(2) IORA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is an urgent need to establish and operationalise the Working Group on Blue Economy and Maritime Safety and Security. ➤ At a time of complex flux in world politics and economy, IORA has the potential to provide clear leadership.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extensive dialogue with all stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Both countries should hold an extensive dialogue, involving governments and other stakeholders on various connectivity initiatives in progress and originating in Asia. ● Proactive strengthening of bilateral economic relations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Indian investment in South Africa had already crossed the USD 10 billion mark and was growing further. (2) Some sectors which had great potential for Indian companies included IT and ITeS, Renewable energy, Gems and Jewelry and skill development among others.
Sources	The Hindu, Indian express, Economic times, Business standard



11

India & UN Convention against Torture

Syllabus relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the context of law commission report on implementation of United Nations Convention against Torture, discuss what is UN convention against torture? Why India needs a strong anti-torture law in place?
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India is yet to ratify the 30-year-old 'United Nations Convention against Torture' by making a law on it despite signing it way back in 1997. ● India is among the only nine countries worldwide which are yet to ratify this crucial convention, an essential condition for a signatory state to ratify the international human rights treaty.
UN convention against torture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is an international human rights instrument aimed to prevent torture and cruel, inhuman degrading treatment or punishment around the world. This convention is in force since 1987. ● In honour of the Convention, 26 June is recognized as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. ● Key Provisions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Prohibition on deportation/extradition: Of person to another State where there is danger of person being subjected to torture. (2) Universal Jurisdiction: Must be established to try cases of torture where an alleged torturer cannot be extradited. (3) Criminal liability for torture: States need to ensure that all acts of torture are offence under their criminal law. (4) Education and information: For prevention of torture to law enforcement, civil and military, public officials etc. (5) Procedures: For prompt investigation for allegations or victims of torture must be established. Courts must ban the use of evidence produced by use of torture. (6) Protection, Compensation and rehabilitation: To victims and witnesses and providing a system of effective remedies.
Ethical arguments regarding torture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The basic ethical debate is often presented as a matter of deontological versus utilitarian viewpoint. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Utilitarian viewpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It believed that when the overall outcome of lives saved due to torture are positive, torture can be justified. ➢ Here the intended outcome of an action is held as the primary factor in determining its merit or morality. (2) Deontological viewpoint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ It's an opposite view to utilitarian viewpoint. ➢ It proposes general rules and values that are to be respected regardless of outcome.

<p>Why is there need of an Anti -torture legislation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-comprehensiveness and inadequacy of IPC: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) IPC does not specifically and comprehensively address the various aspects of custodial torture and is grossly inadequate in addressing the spiralling situation of custodial violence. (2) NHRC highlighted that although Police has to report a custodial death but they need not report custodial violence under current provisions. ● Violation of Human, Minority rights: It is important in context of human rights violations, minority rights, use of AFSPA in Jammu-Kashmir and Northeast, misuse of anti-terror laws by Police to torture innocents and human rights in business. ● Difficulty in securing extraditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There is a fear within the international community that the accused persons would be subject to torture in India. (2) For e.g. UK refused to send 2 persons to India to face trial, Denmark denied extradition of Kim Davy in Purulia Arms case due to risk of “torture or other inhuman treatment” in India. ● Strengthening of Fundamental rights and democratic tradition: The legislation will also strengthen India’s vibrant democratic tradition and in context of Article 21 (fundamental right to life and dignity). ● To get in line with international treaties: In an era of increasing international cooperation on criminal matters, India will be better served if it is seen as adhering to international treaties.
<p>Arguments by the opponents of torture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tool in hand of state: Torture is used as a tool by the State to silence people and suppress their voice against injustice. i.e Violation in name of exception to Article-19. ● Not in line with International conventions/laws: Torture is against the principles and conventions of UN and they tend to negate the inalienable rights of all members of human family. ● Unreliable and forged information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Information provided by the prisoners under torture is unreliable and forged as they tend to say anything to escape undue pressure or torture. (2) For instance, recent example of a bus conductor being forced to confess to murdering a schoolchild. ● Degradation and corruption of society: Torture tends to degrade and corrupt the society.
<p>The Law Commission report on</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ratification of convention: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Commission observed India should rectify treaty as soon as possible for speedy extradition process. (2) The convention prevents extradition to a country where there is danger of torture. ● Punishment for acts of torture: In order to deter the use of torture, the Commission recommended stringent punishments for individuals who commit such acts. ● Protection for individuals: The Commission recommended that an effective mechanism be put in place to protect victims of torture, complainants, and witnesses against possible violence and ill-treatment. ● Compensation for torture:

<p>implemen- tation of United Nations Convention against Torture</p>	<p>(1) The Commission recommended amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 to allow for payment of compensation in case of torture. (2) The Commission recommended that courts should determine compensation on the basis of nature, purpose, socio - economic background of the victim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Custodial injury: <p>(1) The Commission recommended amendments to the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 to ensure that in case a person sustains injuries in police custody, it will be presumed that these have been inflicted by the police. (2) The burden of proof shall lie on the police authorities to explain such injuries.</p> ● Sovereign immunity: <p>(1) Sovereign immunity is the principle that the government is not responsible for the actions of its agents (such as police forces). (2) The Commission states that courts have rejected this principle in various cases and therefore agents of the government cannot engage in torture. (3) The Commission reiterated that citizens are entitled to constitutional rights such as the right to life and personal liberty (Article-21).</p>
<p>Current provisions in place against torture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sections 330 (grievous hurt) and 348 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 do not particularly criminalize torture instead it penalizes certain acts that involve torture. ● Also, it covers only situations where specific kinds of physical injuries inflicted and fail to cover the other ways in which torture is committed.
<p>Other international conventions against torture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 5) ● The Geneva Conventions ● The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 7) ● Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1975).
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Given the inadequacy of present IPC system in place to prevent torture in a country it is necessary to have stringent, all-encompassing anti-torture law in place. ● Considering it a matter of both Article 21 (fundamental right to life and dignity) and of international reputation, the government should consider promulgating a comprehensive law to define and punish torture as an instrument of “human degradation”. ● Biggest challenge in India is of enforcement which SC itself acknowledged. Thus, even after legislation of adequate law, stringent enforcement need to follow.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu, Indian express, UNHRC, Outlook, economic times</p>



12

Railway Accidents in India

Syllabus relation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS 3: Infrastructure- Railways.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In recent years there has increase in train accidents. Discuss factors behind it and also list out government majors with effective way forward to reduce future accidents.
Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Six people died and several were injured after nine bogies of Delhi-bound Seemanchal Express derailed in Bihar's Sahdai Buzurg area. ● It thus once again brought railway accidents, safety issue in debates and discussions. ● The instances of accidents have increased by 10% percent in India from last five years.
Recent major rail accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2018: New Farakka Express accident: 7 Killed as Engine, 9 Coaches Derail in UP's Raebareli. ● February 2019: Seemanchal Express accident: 7 killed as 11 coaches derailed near station about 50km from Patna.
Reasons for the rail accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government apathy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Up till now 3 high level committees constituted on the Railways Viz. Bibek Debroy Committee on Restructuring of Railways, Sam Pitroda Committee on Modernization of Railways, Anil Kakodkar Committee on Railway Safety review, but, all report recommendations are not accepted or implemented by government. ● Political Interferences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Politicians because of their vested interests and vote bank politics reduced fares and tariffs, introduced new trains on unviable routes, etc. (2) It thus burdening existing limited railway infrastructure beyond its bearing capacity. ● Poor maintenance: Manual or trackmen led maintenance, lack of definite guidelines, protocols on maintenance, direct discharge of toilets on tracks (lead to corrosion and weakening of tracks) led to rail fractures and thus, accidents. ● Understaffing and vacancies: Many important departments related to safety remained understaffed and vacant because of slow, tedious process of recruitments. ● Slow technology adaption rate: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Kakodkar committee in 2012 had recommended switching from ICF (Integral coach factory) to Link Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches but still it remains incomplete.

	<p>(1) LHB coaches have anti-climbing features which prevent the rolling stock from piling over each other in case of accidents, thus reducing the number of casualties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small maintenance window: Because of high burden on existing infrastructure, frequency on each route is very high which in turn reduces maintenance time to carry out repairs. ● Lack of funding: Less budgetary allocations, less availability of funds in Depreciation Reserve Fund (DRF) and Development Fund of railways. ● Other reasons: Unmanned level crossings, deficiency in tracks, incorrect signalling, irresponsible acts of a passenger, railroad employees falling asleep, using brakes improperly, damage to tracks from rain or other natural conditions like fog, flood, worn out rails, etc causes accidents.
<p>Various committees' recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anil Kakodkar Committee on Railway Safety: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Creation of a statutory Railway Safety Authority under the government with outside chairman and experts. (2) A robust and powerful Safety Architecture in place to have a safety oversight on the operational mode of Railways. (3) Restructuring of Research Design and Standards Organization (RDSO), the apex technical wing of the Railways. (4) Time bound complete elimination of both manned and unmanned level crossings. (5) Adoption of advanced signalling system with continuous track circuiting and cab signalling on lines of European train control system. ● Sam Pitroda Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A centralized train monitoring system. (2) GSM-based mobile train control communication system. (3) Modernisation of existing tracks. (4) Strengthening of bridges to sustain higher load at higher speed. (5) Elimination of all level crossings. (6) Increase budgetary support to sustain the modernization drive. (7) Implementation of automatic block signalling on major routes. (8) Commercialization of surplus land to generate additional revenue for railways. ● Bibek Debroy Committee on Restructuring of Indian Railways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Recruitment by single entity instead of both SSC and UPSC. (2) Reducing cross subsidization with balance between passenger and freight fares. (3) Creation of separate tariff regulator in order to keep politics away in railway working and functioning. (4) More private sector participation. (5) Merger of railway budget with annual financial budget. (6) Decentralisation of railway operation so as to increase efficiency. (7) Switching to online platforms for procurement and auctioning so as to increase transparency.
<p>Steps taken by government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Budget merger: Government merged railway budget with the general budget following recommendations of Bibek Debroy Committee to reduce cash crunch to railways.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in capital expenditure: Budget 2019-40 has one of the highest capital expenditures on railways. ● Interconnection of routes: Through quadrilateral concept, government connecting East to West, North to South so as to share equal burden and reducing loading, unloading time consuming practices which in turn reducing time in goods and services delivery. ● Creation of Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In Budget 2017-18, government announced it with a funding of Rs.1 lakh crore spanning over five years for use. (2) Fund will be utilised for bridge rehabilitation, and rolling stock replacement, track improvement, improved inspection system and safety work at level crossing, human resource development etc. ● Rail Development Authority (RDA): Government formed an independent railway regulator called Rail Development Authority (RDA) with initial corpus of Rs50 crore. ● Mission Raftaar: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) With the introduction of it, government aimed to increase the speed and safety of transportation. (2) For it, government launched various new high-speed, relatively safe trains like Tejas, Antyodaya, Humsafar, UDAY (Utkrisht Double-Decker Air-conditioned Yatri) with advanced planning on introduction of bullet trains and hyperloop. ● Faster commissioning of new lines: Railways is connecting India at a faster pace with a 59% increase in the average pace of commissioning new lines from 4.1 km (2009-14) to 6.53 Kms per day (2014-18). It will reduce current excessive burden on infrastructure. ● Increase in electrification: Railways has embarked on transitioning to sustainable rail transport with a six times increase in electrification from 610 RKM during 2013-14 to 4,087 RKM during 2017-18. ● Effective waste management: There has been a major focus on cleanliness, Swacchata including third party independent surveys, introduction of Integrated Mechanized cleaning, bio-toilets, Automatic Rail-mounted machine to clear muck etc. ● Digitisation: E- reverse auction policy which could help save approximately Rs. 20,000 crore with increase in transparency and accountability.
<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reducing human intervention with increasing use of advanced technologies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It will reduce human errors which are major causative factor for accidents. (2) For instance, use of ultrasound flaw detection machines, signalling and interlocking systems, anti-collision devices, artificial intelligence, GPS and GSM based location services, digitisation of tracks, etc. ● Integration of government initiatives: 'Make in India'-FDI, bullet trains, 'Digital India'-IRCTC reforms, e-auction, 'Swachh Bharat'-bio-toilets, food hygiene. ● Time bound replacement of aged infrastructure: Scheduled, planned inspections and maintenance cycles need to carry out to identify faults in assets. It will reduce accidents to a great extent. ● Replacement of ICF with LHB coaches: LHB must be inducted earliest as recommended by the Anil Kakodkar committee.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simplified, mass recruitments: Understaffing and vacancies need to fill up rapidly with efficient training for future safety and maintenance. ● Creation of post of safety regulator: There is need of empowered safety regulator as Anil Kakodkar Committee. ● Implementation of committees' recommendations: Government should implement all possible recommendations made by above 3 committees.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Railways being lifeline of India should take the issue of safety more seriously so as to reduce unnatural accidents and deaths of our fellow citizens. ● It also needs to modernize itself to sustain competitive challenge from air travel and road transport.
Sources	The Hindu, Indian express, Financial express, the wire, govt. reports



13

Banning Unregulated Deposit Scheme Ordinance

Syllabus Relation	GS 2: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection of vulnerable sections. Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary Ministries and Departments of the Government.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the recent past, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being defrauded by illicit deposit taking schemes. Discuss with reference to the 'Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance 2019'.
Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a bid to clamp down on Ponzi and fake deposit schemes, the government has, through an ordinance, banned unregulated deposit schemes. ● The ordinance has also put in place a mechanism that will penalise the operation and advertisement of such unregulated schemes.
More in the news	<p>Salient Features of Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Ordinance 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any deposit scheme not registered with the government would be treated as an unregulated deposit scheme and would, as such, be banned. ● It bans deposit takers from promoting, operating or accepting deposits in any unregulated deposit scheme. ● Three different types of offences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Running of unregulated deposit schemes. (2) Fraudulent default in regulated deposit schemes. (3) Wrongful inducement in relation to unregulated deposit schemes. ● Penalty: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Those who solicit deposits for an unregulated scheme can face jail time of 1-5 years and a fine of Rs. 2-10 lakh. (2) Those who accept deposits for unregulated schemes can be jailed for 2-7 years with a fine of Rs. 3-10 lakh. (3) Those who accept deposits for an unregulated scheme and then default in repaying back the depositors will face jail time of 3-10 years and a fine of not less than Rs. 5 lakh and that could extend to twice the amount of deposits collected.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Ordinance also provides for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Creation of a body that maintains an online database of legitimate deposit takers and schemes operating in India. (2) The attachment of assets and their subsequent sale for repayment to depositors duped by fraudulent schemes. (3) A central repository of all registered entities which can take deposits. ● The Ordinance does not ban following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It does not ban small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from receiving loans in the course of, or for the purpose of, business. (2) Also, there is no ban on any individual taking a quick loan to tide over a crisis from relatives as prescribed under Section 2(4)(f).
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unregulated Deposit Scheme will mean a Scheme or an arrangement under which deposits are accepted or solicited by any deposit taker by way of business and which is not a Regulated Deposit Scheme. ● Regulated Deposit Scheme will essentially comprise of schemes that fall under any one of the regulators such as RBI, IRDA, State government etc.
Need of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CBI had lodged about 166 cases in the past four years related to chit funds and multi-crore scams. ● The highest numbers of such cases are found in West Bengal and Odisha. ● As per information provided by the Reserve Bank of India, between July 2014 and May 2018, 978 cases of unauthorised schemes were discussed in state-level coordination committee (SLCC) meetings. ● In the recent past, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being defrauded by illicit deposit taking schemes. ● The Finance Minister in the Budget Speech 2016-17 had announced that a comprehensive central legislation would be brought in to deal with the menace of illicit deposit taking schemes. ● The worst victims of these schemes are the poor and the financially illiterate, and the operations of such schemes are often spread over many States.
Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As per some experts who said that the law, while well-intentioned, may have unintended consequences. ● With respect to Individuals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In case of loans taken by individuals, sections 2(4)(f) only exempts loans from relatives or amount received by a firm from relatives of partners. (2) There is no explicit exemption for loans from non-relatives including friends. ● With respect to Businesses: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The ordinance does not say that a businessman cannot take a loan for business purposes. (2) It merely says borrowing from an acquaintance to meet personal obligations will be hurt. ● With respect to Charitable trusts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Loans given by a trust to a student or ailing person could be construed as unregulated deposit. (2) Charitable institutions will find it difficult to fund students or those seeking medical assistance. <p>Business:</p>

	<p>(1) A large number of businesses are constituted as proprietary concerns and partnerships.</p> <p>(2) The government needs to clarify the position of such businesses, and ensure that businesses are not unduly harassed by the authorities, and their concerns are addressed.</p>
Way Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Though the government's attempt is commendable, the real test will be the successful execution of the proposal taking into account various concerns raised. ● While the proposal will make the financial sector more organised, traceable and transparent, the fact remains, however, that such a high level of supervision will increase the difficulty for the weaker sections of the society. ● Certain exemptions can be provided by the government for such small businesses and individuals requiring funds for their day-to-day financial commitments. ● Simultaneously, relaxing the lending norms under the formal and organised financial sector can also be provided.
Source	The Hindu, Economic Times, LiveMint.



14

India's Looming Water Crisis

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS1: changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes. ● GS3: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With respect to the NITI Aayog's CWMI, explain the grave situation of water crisis at present in India and challenges which are likely to occur.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A United Nations report released on the eve of World Water Day predicted acute water scarcity for close to 3.4 billion people by 2025. ● The NITI Aayog has released the results of a study warning that India is facing its worst water crisis in history and that demand for potable water will outstrip supply by 2030 if steps are not taken.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is water crisis? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A water crisis is a situation where the available unpolluted water within a region is less than that region's demand. (2) Water scarcity is being driven by two converging phenomena: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Growing use of freshwater. ➤ Depletion of usable freshwater resources. ● Situation in India: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) UN report predicts that India will be facing the brunt of the crisis due to conflicts arising out of water-sharing issues with other stakeholders in the region.

	<p>(2) Groundwater resources, which accounted for 40% of India's water supply, are being depleted at unsustainable rates.</p> <p>(3) Up to 70% of India's water supply is contaminated.</p> <p>(4) India is currently ranked 120 among 122 countries in the water quality index.</p> <p>(5) 75% of households do not have drinking water on premise.</p> <p>(6) 84% rural households do not have piped water access.</p> <p>(7) Access to safe drinking water has been a grave problem for India, especially in rural areas where lack of usable water has resulted in decades old sanitation and health problems.</p> <p>(8) Due to increased population along with competing demand from sectors such as drinking, agriculture, industry and energy has created enormous pressure.</p> <p>(9) By 2030, water demand in India is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity which may cause 6% loss in the GDP.</p>
<p>Analysis by various institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to a 2018 report by Britain-based charity Water Aid: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Nearly 163 million of India's population lack access to clean water close to home. ● According to the report of National Commission for Integrated Water Resource Development of MoWR: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Water requirement by 2050 is likely to be a milder 1,180 BCM, whereas the present-day availability is 695 BCM. (2) The total availability of water possible in country is still lower than this projected demand at 1,137 BCM.
<p>Objectives of CWMI:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a clear baseline and benchmark for state level performance on key water indicators. ● Uncover and explain how states have progressed on water issues over time and inculcating a culture of constructive competition among states. ● Identify areas for deeper engagement and investment on the part of the states.
<p>About Composite Water Management Index (CWMI):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CWMI: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It is a composite and national-level data management platform for all water resources in India. (2) Index helps to enable effective water management in Indian states in the face of growing water crisis. (3) It also encourages competitive and cooperative federalism in the country's water governance and management. ● Index comprises 9 broad sectors covering 28 indicators: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Source augmentation and restoration of waterbodies. (2) Source augmentation (Groundwater). <p>Supply side management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Major and medium irrigation. ➤ Watershed development. <p>Demand side management (5th & 6th):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participatory irrigation practices. ➤ Sustainable on-farm water practices. ➤ Rural drinking Water. ➤ Urban water supply & sanitation. ➤ Policy and governance.

<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor water quality: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Contaminated water with bio and chemical pollutants and is unsafe for drinking. (2) Reasons for contamination are sewage and wastewater drainage in water into water bodies, release of chemicals and effluents into rivers. ● Inefficient agricultural practices: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) poor catchment area development resulting in heavy soil erosion and siltation. (2) Inefficient use of water because of distribution of water in open canals, flood irrigation. (3) Charging for water on the basis of area irrigated instead of quantity of water supplied. (4) Estimation shows that 70% of the irrigation water is wasted by depriving irrigation to other dry areas. ● Unequal Access to Water: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Access water does not ensure adequacy and equitable distribution, and the per capita availability is not as per norms in many areas. (2) Rural water supply coverage has also increased steadily in recent years, but water quality continues to be a major concern. (3) Access to water resources is governed by power relations in the society with the poor often being differentially excluded from this process. ● Poor storage: Report by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation stated that though India receives an average annual rainfall of 1170 mm, poor storage infrastructure allows it to store only 6 per cent of rainwater, compared to 250 per cent stored by developed nations.
<p>Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impact on women: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) As primary stakeholders in water resource management, in many parts women travel long distances to fetch water (2) Alarming impact of the water crisis on women's health, both mental and physical. ● Impact on health: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) One of the greatest environmental threats to health remains lack of access to safe water. (2) The World Bank estimates that 21 percent of communicable diseases in India are linked to unsafe water and the lack of hygiene practices.
<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Events such as the World Water day can help immensely. Expert opinion can be leveraged sounding a warning and to discuss ways to avert the crisis. ● Careful monitoring of the coastal areas is of critical importance as excessive extraction of ground water may induce seepage of sea water into the fresh water table. ● Local authorities must collaborate with international experts and technology partners to computerized existing pipeline layouts, with maintenance and replacement schedules built into the database. ● Rain water harvesting to conserve water is still in its infancy as 65 per cent of rain water goes into the sea. ● Changing the cropping pattern which requires less water. ● Government must give higher MSPs to less resource-intensive crops and fix its procurement policy.

Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conscious efforts need to be made at the household level and by communities, institutions and local bodies to supplement the efforts of governments and non-governmental bodies in promoting water conservation.
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB, NITI Aayog Report on water crisis.



15

Leprosy

Syllabus Relation	GS 1: Indian Society GS 2: Social Justice: Issues related to development and management of social sectors relating to Health, Education, Human resources.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite the discoveries, Leprosy still suffers from social stigma. Comment with reference to Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 which sought to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce.
Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rajya Sabha on the last day of the Budget session(2019) passed the Bill removing leprosy as a ground for divorce under five personal laws. The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in August 2018.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018sought to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce in following five personal laws: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hindu Marriage Act, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, Divorce Act (for Christians), Special Marriage Ac. The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act. The Law Commission had recommended repeal of laws and provisions which were discriminatory against leprosy affected people. Besides, India is a signatory to a UN Resolutionwhich calls for elimination of discriminationagainst persons suffering from leprosy. Supreme Court had also said that twenty-first century society cannot justify shunning persons affected by leprosy or keeping them hidden in homes and away from the mainstream.
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leprosy patients were isolated and segregated from society as the leprosy was not curable and the society was hostile to them. However, as a result of intensive healthcare and availability of modern medicine to cure the disease, the attitude of the society towards them began to change. But, the old legislative provisions discriminating the persons affected by leprosy continued in various and that becomes the reasons of the Bill. The National Human Rights Commission first put forth the suggestion in 2008 saying that it did not make sense to allow Leprosy to be ground for divorce. Following this, in 2010, India signed the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution titled 'Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members.'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2014, the apex court told the Centre and state governments to rehabilitate those affected by leprosy back into society. ● There are currently 119 provisions across various Acts passed by the Central and State Governments that continue to discriminate against people affected by leprosy (PAL). ● These are also directly at contrast with the provisions of the Rights of Person with Disabilities Act 2016 that mandates non-discrimination and equality for all irrespective of the disability. ● And the same are violative of Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution.
About Leprosy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leprosy is a chronic infection caused by the bacillus Mycobacterium leprae. ● It affects the skin, the peripheral nerves and the upper part of the airway, or the testes. ● It is transmitted by prolonged contact, usually through aerosols containing the nasal secretions, or droplets from these fluids. ● However, 95% of people are naturally immune to the infection. ● It can also be transmitted from mother to child via the placenta. ● Leprosy is fully curable if diagnosed and treated early, before permanent neurological damage sets in.
Leprosy Complications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Without treatment, leprosy can permanently damage the skin, nerves, arms, legs, feet, and eyes. ● Complications of leprosy can include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Blindness or glaucoma. (2) Disfiguration of the face (including permanent swelling, bumps, and lumps). (3) Erectile dysfunction and infertility in men. (4) Kidney failure. (5) Muscle weakness that leads to claw-like hands or an inability to flex the feet. (6) Permanent damage to the inside of the nose, which can lead to nosebleeds and a chronic, stuffy nose. (7) Permanent damage to the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord, including those in the arms, legs, and feet.
Scenario in India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India was officially declared to have eliminated leprosy in 2005 when new cases fell to less than 1 per 10,000, yet India still accounts for the largest number of leprosy affected people in the world (58 per cent) with a registered prevalence of 86,319 and 1,25,785 new detected cases. ● Lack of awareness, myths, socio-cultural beliefs, and the stigma attached to leprosy are perhaps the most pressing problems before public health activists today. ● In India, the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) is the centrally sponsored health scheme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. ● While the NLEP strategies and plans are formulated centrally, the programme is implemented by states and union territories (UTs). ● The programme is also supported by WHO, ILEP, and few other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).
Other Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Despite the discoveries, lepers continued to be treated primarily by isolation in leper camps far from settled human habitations. ● The disease has been around since ancient times, often surrounded by terrifying, negative stigmas and tales of leprosy patients being shunned as outcasts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Society maintains negative feelings toward people with Leprosy. ● Problems of divorce, unemployment and displacement from area of residence are common in people affected with Leprosy. ● The psychosocial issues that are commonly related to stigma are people's dignity, social status, employment opportunities, job security, family relationships, and friendships. ● The fear of social ostracism prevented the disclosure of disease to the community.
Way Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awareness campaigns: Government and various NGOs should carry out awareness campaigns in order to eliminate the social stigma attached to leprosy. ● Surveys: The central or state governments should carry out periodic surveys to determine new cases of leprosy, to publish in the public domain data from 2010-11 on this subject. ● The role of mental health professionals is important in tackling psychosocial issues related to Leprosy. ● Psychosocial assistance and support to the affected population of this disease will be helpful in eradication of this disease. ● The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, could be a starting step. ● An affirmative action law that recognises the rights of those affected and promotes their social inclusion will serve a larger purpose ● Collaboration: Also, there should be a collaboration between different ministries and between countries, as there is lack of comprehensive approach towards battling the disease.
Source	The Hindu, LiveMint, NCBI, Medical Net.



16

National Policy on Electronics
2019

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation. ● GS3: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Union cabinet approved NPE 2019 recently. To what extent new policy will impact on the domestic manufacturing sector in the country.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the National Policy on Electronics 2019 (NPE 2019), proposed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). ● The Policy aims positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM). ● It encourages driving capabilities in the country for developing core components, including chipsets, and creating an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally. ● NPE 2019 replaces the National Policy of Electronics 2012 (NPE 2012).
Salient Features of NPE 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting ESDM sector: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Create eco-system for globally competitive ESDM sector Promoting domestic manufacturing and export in the entire value-chain of ESDM. (2) Provide incentives and support for manufacturing of core electronic components. ● Focus on High-Tech and big investment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Provide special package of incentives for mega projects which are extremely high-tech and entail huge investments, such as semiconductor facilities display fabrication, etc. (2) Formulate suitable schemes and incentive mechanisms to encourage new units and expansion of existing units. ● R&D and emerging tech: Promote Industry-led R&D and innovation in all sub-sectors of electronics, including grass root level innovations in emerging technology areas such as 5G, IoT/ Sensors, AI, Machine Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), etc. ● Capacity building and skill development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide incentives and support for significantly enhancing availability of skilled manpower, including re-skilling. ➤ Create Sovereign Patent Fund (SPF) to promote the development and acquisition of IPs in ESDM sector.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote domestic manufacturing and export of ESDM sector to achieve a turnover of USD 400 billion by 2025. ● This will include targeted production of 1.0 billion(100 crore) mobile handsets by 2025, valued at USD 190 billion. ● Including 600 million mobile handsets valued at USD 110 billion for export.

<p>What the policy says? Impact on various dimensions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Higher value addition in the domestically manufactured products: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It will enable flow of investment and technology, leading to higher value addition in the domestically manufactured electronic products. (2) This is expected to increase electronics hardware manufacturing in the country and their export. ● Replacement of certain schemes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS) Replaced with plans that are easier to implement, such as interest subsidy and credit default guarantee, in order to encourage electronics manufacturing sector. (2) Doing away with M-SIPS would deprive investors of 20- 25% capital subsidy for electronic manufacturing in SEZs or non-SEZs depending on the projects. ● Exempting the import duty: The draft NPE 2018 talks about exempting the import duty on capital equipment not being manufactured in the country to reduce capital expenditure. ● Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Policy mentions forward looking and stable tax regime, including advance intimation to the industry to plan investments in the form of Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) in various segments of electronics. (2) Government will provide support for infrastructure development by modifying the existing Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) scheme, for supporting both greenfield and brownfield manufacturing clusters. (3) This shall include leveraging the existing and upcoming industrial clusters in the country, with provision for ready-built factories, for attracting investments.
<p>Opportunities in India</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A growing middle class, rising disposable incomes, declining prices of electronics and a number of government initiatives have led to a fast-growing market for electronics. ● Rising labour costs in other markets like China. ● India has superior design capabilities and availability of talented workforce at lower wages than china.
<p>Present Status</p>	<p>Huge outgo of foreign exchange:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2015, the industry in India was valued at USD 75 Billion, despite a weak global economy. ● India's electronics manufacturing has been unable to respond to the rising demand thereby increasing the import bill. ● The result is that India's electronics import bill has doubled in five years to \$57 billion. ● Country's total demand for electronics, between 50-60% of the products and 70-80% of the components are imported. ● Domestic value addition in manufacturing is less than 50 per cent for appliance and consumer electronics.
<p>Concerns and Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inefficiencies of the Indian system: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It is tough to be globally competitive because of inefficiencies of the Indian system that add 10 -12% to manufacturing costs. (2) Logistical issues like poor infrastructure. (3) Under inverted duty structure, the raw materials attract more import duty

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less FDI: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) FDI in electronics is less than 1% of the total FDI inflow because of onerous labour laws, delays in land-acquisition, etc. (2) India ranks 146 in the category of trading across borders due to the high costs of compliance. (3) Lack of Rare Earth Minerals.
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Real urgency for the government to move quickly to boost the domestic components industry ● Improve cost competitiveness by either lowering the cost of capital or reducing operational costs. ● Laws need to be liberal and predictable. ● Anomalies which discourage domestic manufacture on account of an inverted duty structure need to be rectified.
Source	BusinessLine, The Hindu, PIB, Indian express.



17

E - Waste Management

Syllabus Relation	GS 3: Technology, Environment and Security. Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
Question	Assess the different steps taken by the government to address the growing problem of e-waste in India.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recently the United Nations, WEF and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, gathered in Davos and launched the first global call for action to counter the fastest growing e-waste stream. ● As per the data flagged by UN agencies, every person on the planet at present is responsible for generating 6kg of e-waste annually. ● Also, as per the ASSOCHAM report, India is among the top five e-waste generating countries in the world besides China, the US, Japan and Germany.
Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Electronic waste, abbreviated as 'e-waste' is a term used to describe old, end-of-life electronic appliances such as computers, laptops, TV's, radios, refrigerators etc., which have been discarded by users. ● E-waste comprises of numerous valuable but harmful substances that can cause an adverse effect on human health.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Electronic industry is among world's largest and innovative industry for its kind. ● Every year tons of electronic items are shipped over oceans, however, after their usage time they become a complex waste matter which consists of many hazardous heavy metals, acids, toxic chemicals and non degradable plastics. ● There is an ever-escalating demand for electrical and electronic equipment due to the rise in consumerism, urbanization, economic growth, and a higher rate of obsolescence. ● This has resulted in India finding a place for itself amongst the highest producers and generators of e-waste in the world.

Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is estimated that the world produced as much as 50 million tonnes of electronic and electrical waste (e-waste) a year. ● Out of this, only 20% of global e-waste is recycled each year, which means that 40 million tonnes of e-waste is either placed in landfill, burned or illegally traded and treated in a sub-standard way. ● India generates around 2 million tonnes per annum (TPA) of E-waste of which 12% constituted of telecom equipment alone. ● Out of the 2 million TPA e-waste generated, only 4.38 Lakh TPA is recycled in India.
Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The increase in quantity of e-waste is because of increased consumption but also obsolescence. ● Users discard old computers, mobiles and other equipment much faster than before. ● According to a study in May 2017, the volume of waste is growing at an estimated 21% annually. ● This report predicts that by 2020, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) e-waste from old computers in India will increase by 500%. (2) From discarded mobile phones will be about 18 times higher. (3) From televisions will be 1.5 to 2 times higher. (4) From discarded refrigerators will be double; than their respective 2007 levels.
E-waste Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-waste is not hazardous per se. However, the hazardous constituents present in the e-waste render it hazardous when such wastes are dismantled and not properly processed. ● Electronics products like computers and cell phones contain a lot of different toxins. ● E-waste contains over 1,000 toxic materials, which contaminate soil and ground water. ● Exposure can cause headache, irritability, nausea, vomiting, and eye pain. ● Recyclers may suffer liver, kidney and neurological disorders. Due to lack of awareness, they are risking their health and the environment as well.
Issues/ Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poor Infrastructure: Due to poor infrastructure and ineffective implementation of legislation, a very small percentage of the total e-waste generated gets recycled. ● Improper Handling: ● Recycling Issue: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Only 1.5% of e-waste generated in India gets recycled. (2) The base metals which can be reused are lost and results soil contamination due to unorganised and crude dismantling. ● No incentives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The rules mandate an individual to drop the e-waste at an authorised collector, but do not provide any incentive against it. (2) This forces e-waste to end up with informal sector and loses track on further recycling
Importing Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The illegally imported e-waste adds to India's problems. ● A 2015 report by the United Nations Environment Programme says that China, India, Malaysia and Pakistan are the main destinations for large-scale shipments of hazardous wastes, including e-waste, in Asia.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● However, according to the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Trans-boundary) Rules, 2016, importing e-waste for disposal is banned in India.
<p>Government Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) These Rules were brought into force to enable recovery and/or reuse of useful material from e-waste, thereby reducing the hazardous wastes destined for disposal. (2) The objective was to ensure the environmentally sound management of all types of e-waste. (3) For the first time, the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) was introduced which made manufacturers liable for safe disposal of electronic goods. ● E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A manufacturer, dealer, refurbisher and Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) were also brought under the ambit of these Rules. (2) PRO is a professional organization authorized or financed collectively or individually by producers, which can take the responsibility for collection and channelization of e-waste generated from their products to ensure environmentally sound management. (3) Further, collection mechanism based approach was adopted for collection of e-waste by Producers under EPR. (4) Furthermore, the applicability of the Rules was expanded to cover components, consumables, parts and spares of EEE in addition to the equipments covered under the Rules. ● 2018 Amendment to the E-Waste Management Rules: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The E-Waste Management Rules, 2016 have recently been amended by the Centre to facilitate and effectively implement the environmentally sound management of e-waste in India. (2) These amendments have been made with the objective of channelizing the e-waste generated in the country towards authorized dismantlers and recyclers in order to further formalize the e-waste recycling sector. (3) By way of revised targets and monitoring under the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), effective and improved management of e-waste would be ensured. (4) As per the revised targets of e-waste collection, 10% of the quantity of waste generated shall be collected during 2017-2018. (5) Further, there shall be a 10% increase every year until the year 2023. (6) After 2023, the E-Waste collection target has been fixed at 70% of the quantity of waste generation. (7) Separate collection targets have been introduced for new producers who have recently begun their sales operations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-waste Awareness programme: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY, has initiated an E-waste Awareness programme under Digital India initiatives, along with industry associations from 2015. (2) It aims to create awareness among the public about the hazards of e-waste recycling by the unorganised sector, and to educate them about alternate methods of disposing of their e-waste.

Way Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proper Handling of e-waste: It is highly imperative that e-waste gets recycled in a safe, appropriate, and efficient manner. ● Awareness: Companies and individuals should take it upon themselves to educate people about the hazards of e-waste and illegal recycling. ● For effective implementation of the E-Waste Rules, the producers have to take responsibility for their products. ● A synchronized endeavour by the industries and the pollution control boards and local authorities is crucial to cope up with the problem of e-waste in India. ● Besides, Strict implementation of the rule, training for requisite skill sets and providing affordable technology to the informal sector could be a game-changer.
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, Down to Earth, ET.



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E-Commerce

Syllabus Relation	GS 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India, Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries, Indian diaspora. Important International institutions, agencies and fora their structure, mandate.
Question	What are the salient features of new 'Draft e-commerce policy? Critically analyze the data localisation clause.
Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Department of Industry and Internal Trade released the draft National eCommerce Policy that sends a clear message that India and its citizens have a sovereign right to their data. ● Final policy will be issued based on inputs. ● Also at international level, a group of 75 countries announced its decision to launch negotiations on the trade-related aspects of e-commerce at the WTO. ● However, India has decided to steer clear of the plurilateral talks. ● The members including the US, the EU and smaller economies such as Australia, to declare that they would pursue their own deal outside the WTO's usual negotiating stream.
Key Issues addressed in Draft National eCommerce Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Control Over Data : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Government to be given access to source code, algorithms of AI systems Impose custom duties on electronic transmissions to reduce revenue loss. (2) Bar sharing of sensitive data of Indian users with third party entities, even with consent. (3) A 'data authority' to look at community data. (4) E-consumer courts to be developed. ● Local Presence For Apps & Websites: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All ecommerce websites, apps available for downloading in India to have a registered business entity here. (2) Non-compliant ecommerce app/website to be denied access here.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incentives for Data Localisation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Location of the computing facilities like data centres, server farms within India. (2) Firms to get 3 years to comply with local data storage requirements. (3) Data storage facilities to get 'infrastructure status'. ● FDI In e-commerce: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) FDI only in marketplace model. (2) No FDI in inventory model. ● E-Commerce Trade: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Curbs on Chinese ecommerce exports. (2) Gifting route, often used by Chinese apps, websites, banned for all parcels except life-saving drugs. (3) Integrating Customs, RBI and India Post to improve tracking of imports through ecommerce. (4) Ecommerce startups may get 'infant industry' status raising limit for courier shipments from Rs 25,000 to boost ecommerce export.
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Electronic commerce refers to the production, distribution, marketing, sale or delivery of goods and services by electronic means. ● Electronic commerce has expanded rapidly over the past five years and is predicted to continue at this rate, or even accelerate. ● There are two important types of e-commerce model : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Marketplace based model of e-commerce means providing an information technology platform by an e-commerce entity on a digital & electronic network to act as a facilitator between the buyer and seller. Currently 100% FDI is allowed under this model. (2) Inventory based model of e-commerce means an e-commerce activity where inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly. - Currently India does not allow FDI under this model
Significance of e-commerce draft policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The move will help private sector companies comply with the norms laid down by the Srikrishna committee on data localization. ● The 100% FDI clause will allow e-commerce firms to offer their own brands as long as they are made in India. ● The marketplace will not be able to offer deep discounts through their in-house companies listed as seller. ● This is to prevent them from directly or indirectly influencing the prices of goods and services. ● A fraud intelligence mechanism is also suggested. ● The fraud intelligence mechanism would use artificial intelligence-based authentication systems, for early detection of frauds.
E-commerce and WTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The announcement of the plan to start the e-commerce plurilateral negotiations was made at the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet in Davos. ● Recent tightening of e-commerce market-place rules by the Indian government has led to protests from companies such as Amazon and Flipkart and many countries have called for a stable e-commerce policy environment in India.
Demands of Developed Countries:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They want to have access to free and unrestricted flow of data- the raw material that fuels their business.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their principal targets are large developing countries, such as China, India and Indonesia which generate large volumes of digital data. ● They seek to curtail the role of governments in regulating almost all key aspects of the digital economy. ● They want to leverage the negotiation to reduce their cost of doing business and enhance their incomes, including, by prohibiting countries from imposing taxes on them and on their products.
Why India oppose the global e-commerce rules at WTO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India fears that the new global e-commerce rules could provide unfair market access to foreign online retail firms, hurting the rapidly growing domestic start-ups. ● A key demand by the developed countries is to make permanent the current ban on customs duties on global electronic transactions- they were suspended in 1998. ● Responding to the latest proposals by the developed countries, India asked the sponsors to stick to the existing mandate set out in the 1998 electronic commerce work programme. ● According to India, negotiations on rules and disciplines in e-commerce would be highly premature at this stage and like a leap in the dark, especially given the highly asymmetrical nature of the existing e-commerce space. ● India also insist on need of policy space in areas such as ownership and use and flow of data in sunrise sectors like cloud computing and data storage. ● India need to have a clear domestic policy to back its stance, commerce department said.
E-commerce and MSMEs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSMEs will be the least able to compete with transnational corporations that enjoy the benefits of scale, subsidies, technological progress, etc. ● Rather, what MSMEs need are national policies and regulations that offer them opportunities to develop their technological capacities. ● They should also be granted the preferential access to markets while enhancing their competitiveness.
Stand of Developing countries:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most developing countries refused to allow a negotiating mandate on e-commerce, understanding that it would mean abandoning the previously agreed position of preventing any new negotiations while the Doha Development Agenda is not concluded, and avoiding any new obstacles for national policy-making. ● Recently, India and South Africa have asked WTO to explain why customs duty should not be levied on electronic transmissions. ● As more products, which are presently traded in physical form, get digitised and delivered through electronic transmissions, the moratorium on customs duties would result in higher revenue loss. ● The two have requested the organisation to examine all issues related to the imposition of customs duties on electronic transmissions as the US, Singapore and Korea demanded the temporary moratorium be made permanent.
Source	The Hindu, LiveMint, Business Standard, DNA.



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Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanraks Han Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS 3: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution. ● System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss the steps taken by government to protect and double farmers income. Also enumerate the components of the scheme PM-AASHA.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives of the Government and in keeping with its commitment and dedication for the Annadata, the Union Cabinet has approved a new Umbrella Scheme Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanraks Han Abhiyan (PM-AASHA). ● The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in Budget 2018.
Components of PM-AASHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Background: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get full benefit of the announced MSP. (2) If price of the agriculture produce market is less than MSP, then Government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP. (3) With this approach, Cabinet has approved the Umbrella Scheme of PM-AASHA with three sub-schemes. ● New Umbrella Scheme comprised of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Price Support Scheme (PSS). (2) Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS). (3) Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).
Details about the components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Price Support Scheme (PSS): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In PSS physical procurement of pulses, oilseeds and Copra will be done by Central Nodal Agencies with proactive role of State governments. (2) It is also decided that in addition to NAFED, Food Cooperation of India (FCI) will take up PSS operations in states /districts. (3) The procurement expenditure and losses due to procurement will be borne by Central Government as per norms. (4) NAFED: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stands for National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India. ➤ Under Ministry of agriculture. HQ in New Delhi. ➤ Established on the auspicious day of Gandhi Jayanti on 2nd October 1958. ➤ Apex organization of marketing cooperatives for agriculture production. ● Price Deficiency Payment Scheme this scheme (PDPS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ PDPS is proposed to cover all oilseeds for which MSP is notified. ➤ In this direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the selling price be paid to the farmers who are selling his produce in the market yard.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All payment will be done directly into registered bank account of the farmer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This scheme does not involve any physical procurement of crops as farmers are paid the difference between the MSP price and Sale price. ● Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Background: Cabinet has decided that participation of private sector in procurement operation needs to pilot so that private participation in procurement operations may be increased. ➤ States have the option to roll out Private Procurement Stockist Scheme (PPSS) on pilot basis in selected APMC(s) of district involving the participation of private stockiest. ➤ It will cover one or more crop of oilseeds for which MSP is notified. ➤ Since this is akin to PSS, it shall substitute PSS/PDPS in the pilot districts.
Expenditure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Cabinet has decided to give additional government guarantee of Rs.16,550 crore making it Rs. 45,550 crore in total. ● In addition to this, budget provision for procurement operations has also been increased and Rs. 15,053 crore is sanctioned for PM-AASHA implementation.
Pro-farmer initiatives of the Government:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Government is committed to realizing the vision of doubling farmers income by 2022. ● The emphasis on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Enhancing productivity. (2) Reducing cost of cultivation. (3) Strengthening post-harvesting management, including market structure. ● Market Reforms include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act, 2017. (2) Model Contract Farming and Services Act, 2018. ● New market architecture include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Setting up of Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs) to promote retail markets to farm gate. (2) Competitive and transparent wholesale trade at APMC through eNAM.
Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Better coverage of MSP: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) MSP procurement system has been very poor in terms of crops covered. (2) The new scheme would ensure better coverage of MSP and provision of crop-wise procurement. (3) Which is expected to benefit both farmers and states. ● Income Security to farmers: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The policy is an important step to achieve government's commitment to double farmers' income by 2022. (2) If properly implemented, the scheme is expected to help revive the rural economy by assuring better income to farmers and thus address farmers' distress. ● Reduce the need for physical procurement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) PDPS scheme under PM-AASHA will reduce the need for the government to physically procure food crops. (2) As the difference between the support and market prices can instead simply be paid in cash to the farmer. ● Reduce food subsidy bill: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In recent years over accumulation of large food grains in go-downs over the buffer requirement.

	<p>(1) This entails storage and wastage costs that add on to the food subsidy bill.</p> <p>(2) The new policy would help in bringing down India's food subsidy bill.</p>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Procurement Infrastructure: <p>(1) The NITI Aayog in its 2016 evaluation report highlighted that the procurement infrastructure in India is inadequate.</p> <p>(2) However, recent initiatives under PM-AASHA have not focused on improving the procurement infrastructure.</p> ● Undue benefit to traders: <p>(1) Critics has also raised concerns over price manipulation by traders.</p> <p>(2) The rural trader has great clout in the present political set-up and can manipulate prices.</p> ● Distribution System: <p>(1) NAFED has a stock of 4 million tonnes of pulses and oil seeds because of previous 2 years' procurement.</p> <p>(2) However, their distribution policy is still non-existent.</p> ● Procurement by Private Players: <p>(1) Previously, FCI have engaged private companies for procurement of wheat and paddy from farmers at MSP.</p> <p>(2) However, the process has not been smooth and the companies have taken years to get their expenses reimbursed.</p> ● Issues with price deficiency payment scheme: <p>(1) Reports on Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojna, has highlighted operational challenges which are also a concern under PM-AASHA.</p> <p>(2) Suffers from cumbersome procedures leading to harassment of farmers and delays in payments</p> ● Recent issue: <p>(1) The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee has calculated a total loss of Rs. 1150 crore to farmers in the first three weeks of the current season due to the government's failure to ensure that crops are sold at MSP.</p> <p>(2) Only MP has opted for the cash payment component. No other state has readied the IT infrastructure needed to implement it</p>
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government should ensure hassle-free and easy registration of farmers. ● The scheme should target small and marginal farmers so as to improve their economic condition. ● The government should effectively check price manipulation by traders. The Center first needs to break the trader lobbies at mandis. This could be done by widening the competition by inter-linking mandis. ● Further, it is of paramount importance to improve procurement infrastructural facilities ● Income support measures should be taken for farmers to alleviate farm distress.
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB,



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Aspirational Districts Program

Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GS2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors. ● Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes. ● Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes. ● GS3: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine the role played by ADP in bridging the development gap which is vital to SOCIAL and POLITICAL stability.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NITI Aayog has recently launched the baseline ranking for 115 aspirational districts. ● This is in line with the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) announced earlier.
What is ADP?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Launched by PM in 5th January 2018, the Transformation of Aspirational Districts program (2) It aims to expeditiously improve the socio-economic status of 117 districts from across 28 states. (3) The broad contours of the program are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), ➤ Collaboration (of Central, State level Officers & District Collectors), ➤ Competition among districts. ● Program will focus on the strength of each district, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts. ● Themes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The program is overall transformation of the district using mass movement approach. (2) To keep the approach focused, program focusses on 5 main themes with their respective weightage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Health & Nutrition: 30% ➤ Education: 30% ➤ Agriculture & Water Resources: 20% ➤ Financial Inclusion: 5% & Skill Development: 5% ➤ Basic Infrastructure: 10% ● The present ranking is based on 49 indicators across these 5 themes. ● These themes have direct bearing on the quality of life and economic productivity of citizens. ● Core strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) States as main drivers. (2) Work on strength of each district. (3) Make development a mass movement. (4) Identify low hanging fruits. (5) Measure progress and rank districts to spur the sense of competition. (6) Districts to aspire from becoming state's best to nation's best.

<p>Other General information about the scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How were the districts selected? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The parameters included are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Deprivation enumerated under Socio-Economic Caste Census. ➤ Key health and education performance indicators. ➤ State of basic infrastructure. ● How is progress monitored? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NITI Aayog in partnership with the government of Andhra Pradesh has created a dashboard. (2) This is for monitoring the real-time progress of the districts. (3) District collectors of all the aspirational districts can input the latest available data of their respective districts. (4) The dashboard will also be open to the public.
<p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges faced by the districts are in terms of Poverty of citizens, poor health and nutrition, education status and deficient infrastructure. ● The lack of regular, granular data at the district level has been a serious impediment to administrative efficiency. ● Most data-driven reforms do not pay adequate attention to the implementation conditions under which such data can be leveraged effectively. ● Real barrier to tailoring development interventions to district is centralized financing and decision-making structure that districts are embedded in. ● Districts have little discretion over funds received from the central and state governments. ● Expectation From district rankings is not feasible: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Collectors have three short years in which to make a mark. (2) An average district has more than 100 schemes running at time and usually suffers from weak implementation. (3) In this ecosystem, focusing on the politically visible priority, may well be the rational choice for a collector.
<p>Way forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Decentralized Environment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Competitive federalism requires a genuinely decentralized environment (2) Where elected local governments incentivized by their accountability to voters and empowered with resources, compete to deliver public goods linked to local preferences. (3) ADP seeks to undermine rather than promote decentralization. (4) Genuine competition without genuine decentralization is hard to sustain. ● Promotion of private sector: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Strategy to bypass funding and implementation constraints is to collaborate with private sector and civil society organizations. (2) This may yield short-term gains but unless the vision is to create a permanent parallel structure.
<p>Conclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The program is in its early days yet, but progress is good and signs for the future are hopeful. ● Committed and concerted action will be required from all those involved, from the Centre to the State to the district to the village.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu, NITI Aayog, PIB.</p>



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Angel Tax

Syllabus Relation	GS 3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment. Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
Question	What do you understand by Angel Tax? Discuss the issues faced by startups in India with reference to Angel Tax.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Centre has decided to set up a five-member working committee to look into the angel tax issue and come up with guidelines in one week. ● It also agreed to implement some key changes requested by start-ups regarding the issue.
Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Angel tax is imposed on the excess share capital raised by an unlisted firm, over and above the fair market value of its shares. ● The excess realisation is treated as income and taxed accordingly (30% of the excess funding). ● The tax was introduced in the 2012 Union Budget by then finance minister to arrest laundering of funds. ● It has come to be called angel tax since it largely impacts angel investments in startups. ● An angel investor is the one who funds a startup when it is taking baby steps to establish itself in the competitive market. ● Normally, about 300-400 startups get angel funding in a year.
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The angel tax provisions were introduced because of misuse by certain politicians and others to launder money. ● The tax was introduced in the 2012 Union Budget. ● Section 56 of the Income Tax Act provides that the amount received in excess of the fair market value will be charged to tax the company as income from other sources. ● Exemption: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In April last year, the government gave relief to startups by allowing them to avail tax concession if total investment, including funding from angel investors, does not exceed Rs 10 crore. (2) An angel investor picking up stakes in a startup should have a minimum net worth of Rs 2 crore or should have an average returned income of over Rs 25 lakh in the preceding three financial years. (3) Startups also enjoy income tax benefit for three out of seven consecutive assessment years. (4) To avail the concessions, startups would have to approach an eight-member inter-ministerial board of certification.
What is the Issue then?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that startups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption. ● The issue of angel tax had come into focus after some startups in Bengaluru and Mumbai got notices from the income tax department.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many founders have said they have been asked to pay up as much as 30% of their funding as tax. ● Angels have also received multiple notices asking them to furnish details on their source of income, their bank account statements and other financial data ● While aimed at curbing money-laundering, the angel tax has also resulted in a large number of genuine startups receiving notices from the IT Department.
Problem of valuation with Angel Tax	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Valuing startups based on their assets alone, given intangibles such as goodwill is not easy. ● Nor is it easy to arrive at a 'fair value' for them, based on discounted cash flows. ● So, startups are often valued subjectively and the valuation which seems sky-high to some, may be fair to others. ● Since startups operate in a highly uncertain environment, many companies are not always able to perform as per their financial projection.
Other Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discourages flow of Funds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Taxing this investment discourages and drives away angels, effectively stifling the much-needed flow of money to the fledgeling startups. (2) While the government wants to make sure that every penny is traced, there are genuine startups which are getting affected. ● Administrative Hurdles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Each time a company raises funds and requests an exemption, it is required to submit a slew of documents. (2) Also, the process laid down for exemption from Angel Tax is tedious and cumbersome for startups. ● Lack of clarity: Most of the investors seem confused due to the lack of clarity on the matters. ● Counterproductive: As per some experts, tax on investments is counterproductive.
Global Scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Globally more and more governments are recognising the usefulness of encouraging and inviting angel investors to boost their startup economies. ● To this end, many global startup hubs in fact offer amazing tax cuts and incentives to attract investors. ● China's global presence is built on the backs of many startup ventures. ● Baidu, Tencent, and Alibaba are a few well-known names that have emerged from the Chinese market. ● In Europe, countries like Germany and UK offer generous tax incentives to startups and angel investors.
New changes proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Indian government has decided to raise the maximum time limit below which a firm would be deemed eligible for angel tax exemption to 10 years from the earlier seven. ● Further, the paid-up share capital threshold below which startups would be eligible for an exemption has been set at Rs.25 crore. ● In cases where the investment exceeds Rs.25 crore, the firms would be eligible for exemption if the angel investors can prove a net worth of Rs.2 crore or more in the previous financial year.
Source	The Hindu, LiveMint, Business Line, ET.



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E-Pharmacy Status in India

Syllabus	GS2: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India is rightly acclaimed to be the pharmacy of the world, with its huge private sector capacity for producing branded and generic drugs. In light of this examine the importance of e-pharmacy regulation in our country.
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recently both Madras and Delhi High Court has banned the online sale of medicines. ● The Madras High Court has directed the Central government to notify the statutory rules related to online sale of drugs and medicines by January 31, 2019 and banned online sales till then.
Introduction	<p>Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amid a slew of conflicting judicial decisions from different High Courts, the legality of e-pharmacies continues to be questioned by various trade associations. It represents 8.4 lakh pharmacists who run the brick and mortar pharmacies in neighbourhood across India. ● Madras High Court held that the pharmacies in the country would be entitled to sell medicines online only after obtaining licences under the rules that were now in the draft stage and yet to be finalised. <p>About E-pharmacies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-pharmacy denotes the buying and selling of medicines and other pharmaceutical items with the support of web portal or any electronic mode. ● The Indian pharmacy market is huge and, as of 2017, is the third largest in terms of volume and 13th largest in terms of value, globally. ● The advent of internet pharmacy and access of drugs and diagnostics is gaining popularity due to cost effectiveness, high speed delivery to door step of patients.
Laws related to E-Pharmacies in India	<p>As per the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules of 1945:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is not permitted to ship, mail or provide door delivery of the prescribed medicines. ● Yet, drugs of scheduled and non-scheduled category are available online on different websites and distributed across the country. <p>Power distribution between centre and state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central Government is responsible for licensing of drug imports. ● State governments are responsible for the manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs. ● Central Government exercises regulatory control over drugs by Central Drugs Control Organization headed by the Drugs Controller General of India. ● State authorities' exercises regulatory control over drugs by state based Drugs Control Administration headed by the State Drugs Controllers.

	<p>Presently governing under which law:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Since all laws governing pharmacies in India were written before the digital era. ● E-pharmacies come under the purview of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Information Technology Act, 2000.
<p>Benefits of E-pharmacy</p>	<p>Cheaper and convenient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● e-pharmacies offer medicines for sale at a discount of at least 20% when compared to traditional pharmacists, with the added convenience of home delivery of medicines to one's doorstep. <p>Huge trade Potential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At present, e-Pharmacy is at its nascent stage in India. ● According to FICCI, online pharmacy model could account for 5-15% of the total pharma sales in India. <p>Accelerate competition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prudent way of looking at the entry of e-pharmacies is competition and the resultant effect it will have on lowering the price of medicine for Indian patients. <p>Improved drug information and patient Awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-pharmacies have the technology infrastructure to provide value added information to consumers, such as drug interactions, side effects, medicine reminders.
<p>Challenges and concerns</p>	<p>Trade associations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● They argue that their livelihoods are threatened by venture capital backed e-pharmacies and that jobs of thousands are on the line. <p>Self-regulation by trade associations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One major factor that contributes to high drug prices in India is the unreasonably high trade margins. ● self-regulation by trade associations contributes towards high margins as these trade associations control the entire drug distribution system in a manner that mutes competition. <p>Regulatory issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Medicines come under the purview of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. ● However, the current Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 doesn't explicitly deal with e-pharmacies. ● Thus, there is no clear-cut guidelines to regulate, control and monitor e-pharmacies in India. <p>Sub-standardisation of medicines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enough evidence on record to demonstrate how existing e-pharmacies contribute generously to drug abuse and sale of sub-standard medicine. ● There are concerns that e-pharmacies will encourage self-medication or irrational use of medicines which is already a common practice in India <p>Effect on retail sellers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The growth of e-pharmacies has given rise to concerns among the retail sellers that their business would be adversely affected as they would not be able to compete with the discounted pricing provided by online platforms. <p>Concerns Case of Cartelisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● History of India's trade associations of pharmacists is one of rampant, unabashed cartelisation that has resulted in an artificial inflation of medicine prices.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Practice of two competitors colluding to fix the sale price and area of operation is called cartelisation and is illegal under India's Competition Act. ● The premise of this law is that a free market is efficient only if all sellers are competing with each other to offer the lowest price to the customer.
e-Pharmacy draft rules:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definition of E-pharmacy: business of distribution or sale, stock, exhibit or offer for sale of drugs through a web portal or any other electronic mode. ● Mandatory Registration: The draft rules make it mandatory for e-pharmacy businesses to register with the Central Licensing Authority. ● Data Localization: It mandates e-pharmacy portals to be established in India through which they are conducting their business and the data generated has to be kept localised. ● Privacy: It states that the details of patient should be kept confidential and not to be disclosed to any third party except the central government or the state government concerned. ● Prescriptions: For carrying out sale of prescription drugs, a prescription by a Registered Medical Practitioner has to be uploaded by the customer. ● Compliance with IT Act: E-pharmacies have to comply with the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) and Rules.
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The e-pharmacy sector holds immense potential to address the persisting issue of affordability and accessibility of medicines in India. ● Steps should be taken to foster the e-pharmacy sector with sufficient safeguards and understringent regulatory control to protect the interest of the consumers. ● A stringent licensing mechanism should be adopted for e-pharmacies. ● A logo and a registration number for e-pharmacies can be generated which would enable the consumer to check the authenticity of the platform. ● Information regarding patient should be digitally stored to prevent medicinal abuse and ensure tracking in case there is any adverse event to a medicine. ● Government health schemes, e-health initiatives for example telemedicine can be linked to e-pharmacies to efficiently cater to a large section of population in rural and sub-urban areas
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● E-pharmacies may well be the catalyst that enables genuine prescription drugs being available to every person in every corner of India. ● It is possible that venture capitalist backed e-pharmacists will succeed in bringing back competition to the retail drug markets in India. ● There is no reason for India to continue indulging trade associations that have no taste for competition or fair business practices. ● Draft E-pharmacy Rules do provide a fair amount of clarity to e-pharmacies for conducting their business online. ● The revised rules should address the concerns highlighted above to encourage e-pharmacy operators and create a stable environment for investment,
Source	The Hindu, Indian Express, PIB,



UPSC

Current Affairs February 2019

By Jawwad Kazi

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Polity

Draft National River Ganga Bill 2018:

Why in news?	Government has proposed National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Conservation and Management) Bill, 2018
Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bill proposes to ban the construction of jetties, permanent hydraulic structures in the Ganga, unless permitted by the National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority. ● Bill proposes to create a management structure that will supervise the health of the Ganga. ● Bill lays down a host of restrictions to ensure the uninterrupted, ecological flow of the river. ● Legislation specifies that unauthorized activities that cause obstruction or discontinuity of water in the River Ganga due to engineered diversion are liable to a prison term of 3 years or fines upto ₹50 crore, or both.
Source	PIB

The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the official amendments to an Act that classifies any deposit scheme not registered with the government as an offence and bans it ● Amendments to are pursuant to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance.
Note	This has been covered in contemporary issues
Source	The Hindu, PRS.

Government introduces Bill on northeast:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government introduced a Constitution Amendment Bill in Rajya Sabha to make changes in sixth schedule areas.
More about the Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in the power: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Bill is to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of the northeastern region. (2) Amendment will impact one crore tribal people in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. ● Taking NE at par with Rest of India: Decision can prove to be a game changer since it would bring these 10 districts of North East at par with the rest of the country and allow the elected councils more finances to carry out developmental works in the agriculture, water management and road construction sectors.
Source	The Hindu

Bill to counter exploitation by NRI spouses:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a bid to counter growing incidents of exploitation of Indian women by NRI (Non-Resident Indian) spouses, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Monday introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bill will create accountability and protect those who are trapped in fraudulent marriages and are abandoned by their spouses.
About the bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compulsory registration of marriage within thirty days of marriage in India or abroad. ● It would provide better enforcement of rights of the deserted spouse under various family laws. ● Amendment to the Passport Act would empower the Passport Authority to impound or revoke the passport of NRI, if NRI has not registered his marriage within 30 days from the date of marriage.
What is the need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Due to numerous complaints received from Indian nationals mostly women deserted or harassed by their Non-Resident Indian Spouses. ● This would provide much needed relief to all Indian women married to NRIs worldwide.
Source	The Hindu.

Cinematograph amendment Bill 2019:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Union government has introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha. ● It imposes strict penalty to combat the menace of film piracy.
Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seeks to amend Cinematograph Act 1952: Bill seeks to tackle film piracy by including penal provisions for unauthorized duplication of films. ● Aims to check piracy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Checks release of pirated versions of films on the internet that causes huge losses to the film industry and the exchequer. (punishable with imprisonment:) (2) Proposes film piracy offences punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and fines that may extend to Rs 10 lakh or both.
Source	PRS India

Judgments

SC sends Delhi power tussle case to larger Bench:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A Supreme Court Bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushangave a split opinion on whether the Delhi government has control over the administration's services. ● It has decided to refer the question to a larger Bench.
What is the issue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Justice Bhushan's view: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Delhi government has no power over services. (2) Entry 41 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution (dealing with State Public Services) was outside the purview of the Delhi Legislative Assembly. ● Justice Sikri's view: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) He took a middle path (2) Files on the transfers and postings of officers in the rank of secretary, head of department and joint secretary could be directly submitted to the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

	<p>(3) According to DANICS (Delhi, Andaman & Nicobar Islands Civil Service) the files could be processed through the Council of Ministers led by the Chief Minister before being sent to the LG.</p> <p>(4) Setting up of Civil Service Boards to take care of service matters in case of grade one, two, three and four officers.</p> <p>(5) The Boards regarding grade four and three officers could be led by the Services Secretary and the other by the Chief Secretary.</p>
Distribution of powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delhi govt. enjoy powers over three areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Appointment of special public prosecutors and law officers. (2) Fixing land revenue rate. (3) Power to appoint or deal with electricity commission or board. ● Powers given to centre: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Delhi Anti-corruption Branch cannot probe central government. (2) Centre has the power to appoint enquiry commission.
Source	The Hindu

Why only bureaucrats on information panels, asks SC:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supreme court found that most of the post in both Center and State information commission are given to bureaucrats.
What RTI act says?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eminent persons on board: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Right to Information Act of 2005 itself requires people from varied domains to man the Commissions. (2) The court raised concerns over how government employees had consistently been found “more competent and more suitable” than eminent persons from other walks of life. ● Other issues like pendency: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Entire RTI mechanism has been choked by rising pendency and growing number of vacancies of Information Commissioners. (2) Supreme Court has, put the government on a deadline for filling vacancies in the Commissions. (3) The court directed that the process of appointment should commence at least one or two months before the retirement is due.
Central Information Commission (CIC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set up under the Right to Information Act in 2005. ● It is the quasi-judicial body. ● The Commission includes 1 CIC and not more than 10 IC. ● Appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee consisting of—Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha; a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.
Source	The Hindu.

MBBS exam: plea in HC questions bar on disabled

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought a response from the Centre and the Medical Council of India (MCI) on a petition challenging a notification which barred persons having more than 80% disability from taking admission to undergraduate medical education program.
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More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● what revised regulations prohibit? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Prohibit those with locomotor disabilities above 80% from getting admitted to MBBS. (2) It pronounces them ineligible. (3) Same is true with those with blood disorders. (4) Also debars students with chronic neurological conditions with a disability of over 80 per cent.
Source	The Hindu

Policy

New panel for welfare of Nomadic Communities:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance Minister has announced in the Budget to form a welfare panel for <u>Nomadic, Semi-nomadic and de-notified communities (DNT)</u>.
More about it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Committee which is tasked to identify DNT will be set up under NITI Aayog. ● Committee will follow Renke Commission and Idate Commission
Renke Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Commission For De-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was established in 2014 for period of three years for framing an appropriate scheme for pre and post matric scholarships and construction of hostels for DNT students. ● Renke commission was to identify the DNTs which are not listed in SC, ST and OBC list to avail the benefits for the scheme. ● Recommendations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Enumerate DNTs in the next census due in 2011. (2) For implementation of welfare Schemes for DNTs State-wise list of such tribes should be prepared. (3) Committees should be made at District and State level to assist the socio-economic condition of the DNTs. (4) Special steps to issue Caste Certificates and ration cards to every member of DNT. (5) Special campaign for issue of voter ID to the eligible members of DNT. (6) Modify the existing Housing Schemes in urban/rural areas and earmark specifically for DNTs. (7) Awareness of DNTs particularly among women to avail the benefit of various schemes for educational empowerment. (8) Seats may be reserved in Block/Taluka Panchayats and ZilaPandhayats/Zila Parishads, and the Urban Local Bodies for DNTs. Etc.
Idate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The commission was constituted in January 2015 for a three-year temporary term, following which it had to submit its report identifying these communities state-wise, assessing their development status, and recommending ways to uplift them. ● Recommendations:

Commission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The report has called DNTs poorest of the poor, most marginalized and most downtrodden communities. (2) The commission has recommended giving protection to DNTs under the Atrocities Act. (3) Recommended a Constitutional amendment so that Scheduled NT/ DNT/ SNT can be added as a third category after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Act. (4) Noted that entire communities were branded as criminals under the colonial rule through enforcement of the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. Despite repeal of the Act after Independence, subsequent legislations have forcibly alienated them from their traditional occupations and habitations.
Source	The Hindu, PIB

Finance Minister unveils ‘Vision 2030’ highlighting 10 dimensions

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance Minister in Interim Budget laid out Government’s vision for India 2030 highlighting 10 most important dimensions.
10 Dimensions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Build physical as well as social infrastructure and facilitate <u>ease of living</u>. (2) Vision to create <u>Digital India</u>. (3) Making India <u>pollution free nation</u>. (4) Expanding <u>Rural industrialization</u> using modern digital technologies to generate massive employment. (5) <u>Clean rivers and safe drinking water</u> for all Indians. (6) Exploring the <u>Blue economy</u>. (7) Making <u>India self-sufficient in the food</u> and exporting to the world to meet their food needs. (8) Producing the <u>food in the most organic way</u>. (9) <u>Healthy India</u>, work towards distress free healthcare and functional and comprehensive wellness system for all. (10) Transforming India into <u>minimum government and maximum governance</u> nation.
Source	The Hindu.

Information Technology [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government on Wednesday published 609 pages of suggestions and comments from relevant parties on new set of guidelines for intermediaries. ● Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules 2018 could have far reaching impact on the way social media websites and internet operates in India.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intermediaries can monitor the content: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) <u>Section 79</u> of the Information Technology Act, 2000, make intermediaries such as Facebook, Google, WhatsApp responsible for actively monitoring the content they host. (2) Intermediaries to allow the tracing of information on their platforms by government agencies. (3) Such tracing of information could create difficulties in the India operations of global end-to-end encrypted products like WhatsApp or Signal.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Changes in content: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All intermediary companies will have to deploy <u>technology based automated tools</u> with appropriate controls for identifying and removing or disabling public access to unlawful information or content. (2) Any content which threatens critical information infrastructure is not allowed under the new Rules. ● Registration in India: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) All players with more than 5 million users in India have to be incorporated under The Companies Act. (2) This will touch more companies than just the well-known ones. (3) Companies will need to have a permanent registered office in India with a physical address.
Source	The Indian Express.

National Commission for SafaiKarmacharis:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of tenure of the National Commission for SafaiKarmacharis (NCSK) beyond 31.3.2019 for three years.
About NCSK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A statutory body constituted under the NCSK ACT, 1993. ● Body looks to matters concerning the SafaiKarmachari's welfare and makes recommendations to the government. ● commission continued till February 2004. Thereafter, the tenure of the commission has been extended from time to time, as a non-statutory body. ● It is working for the welfare of both SafaiKarmacharis and Manual Scavenger. ● Commission is to perform functions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To monitor the implementation of the Act. (2) To inquire into complaints regarding contraventions to the Act. (3) Advice Central and State Governments for effective implementation of the Act.
Why extended tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The number of Manual Scavengers identified under the MS Act Survey is 14226. ● Under the National Survey undertaken by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is 31128. ● Since NCSK works for the welfare and upliftment of the SafaiKarmacharis and persons engaged in manual scavenging in the country. It has been extended.
Source	PIB

Explained: The lowdown on National Security Act

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recently a state govt. invoked the National Security Act (NSA) against three men accused of killing a cow. ● In December last year, a Manipur journalist, who had posted an alleged offensive Facebook post on the CM, was detained for 12 months under the NSA.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Security Act: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The NSA empowers the Centre or a State government to detain a person to prevent him from acting in any manner prejudicial to national security. (2) The government can also detain a person to prevent him from disrupting public order or for maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community.

	<p>(1) The maximum period for which one may be detained is 12 months. (2) But the term can be extended if the government finds fresh evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why it matters? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which collects and analyses crime data in the country, does not include cases under the NSA in its data as no FIRs are registered. Hence, no figures are available for the exact number of detentions under the NSA. (2) Experts say these cases point to the fact that governments sometimes use it as an extra-judicial power.
Source	Indian Express.

Cabinet approves new National Electronics Policy:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved the new National Electronics Policy 2019.
Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This has been covered in contemporary issues section.
Source	The Hindu

GeM Start-up Runway and SWAYATT Initiative:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launched on 19th February 2019, StartUp Runway is a unique concept initiated by GeM to promote entrepreneurship through innovation.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GeM Start-up Runway: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) This program is an opportunity for Startups to reach out to the Government Buyers by offering products and services that are unique in concept. (2) DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) certified Startups are invited to offer their products for procurement on GeM. (3) It seeks to support technology development, research and innovation by ensuring a conducive policy environment for industrial diversification. ● SWAYATT Initiative: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Aims to promote Start-ups, Women and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions on GeM. (2) This will bring together the key stakeholders within the Indian entrepreneurial ecosystem to GeM.
Source	PIB

Home Ministry puts Assam Rifles notification on hold

Why In news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Home Ministry has kept in abeyance its order that empowered the Assam Rifles. ● Order allows Assam Rifles deployed along the Myanmar border, to arrest anyone and search a place without a warrant in the border districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. ● The notification was withheld after Opposition parties moved an adjournment motion against the order in the Assam Assembly.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What notification says: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) An officer of the rank corresponding to that of the lowest rank of members of the Assam Rifles would have the powers under the CrPC.

	<p>(2) It is not clear why the notification included Assam, as the State does not share its border with Myanmar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Power of Assam Rifles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Assam Rifles has power to detain anyone where Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) is in place. (2) The Assam Rifles, a CRPF, is under the administrative control of the Home Ministry and the operational control of the Army. (3) Assam Rifles Act was amended in 2006, the powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) earlier available to it under the Assam Rifles Act, 1941, were not restored.
Source	The Hindu

HOPE Portal

Why In news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Organizations (NABH) has revamped Entry-Level Certification Process of hospitals to make it simpler, digital, faster and user-friendly.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why NABH certification? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NABH accreditation provides assurance of quality and care in hospitals at par with international benchmarks. (2) NABH has designed an exhaustive healthcare standard for hospitals and healthcare providers that have been accredited as per global standards. ● HOPE portal: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The revamped certification process is driven through a new portal called HOPE Healthcare Organizations' Platform for Entry-Level-Certification. (2) It is an online platform for smooth and secure registration which provides a self-explanatory questionnaire to be filled by the HCO. (3) It ensures quality at nascent stages by enrolling a wide range of hospitals across the country. (4) HOPE also enables them to comply with quality protocols, improve patient safety and the overall healthcare facility of the organization. ● About QCI: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NABH, a constituent body of QCI. (2) Established in 1997 Quality Council of India (QCI) is an autonomous organization under the DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. (3) It is the Quality Apex and National Accreditation Body for accreditation and quality promotion in the country.
Source	PIB

EVM is 'information' under Right to Information Act: CIC

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) is "information" under the Right to Information Act, the Central Information Commission has ruled.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What CIC ruled? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The EVM which is available with the respondent [ECI] in a material form and also is an information under the RTI Act. (2) Definition of information under RTI Act includes: Any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples,

	<p>models, data material held in any electronic form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Validity of terms models and samples: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The CIC upheld that the terms “models” and “samples” should apply to an EVM. (2) Models/samples of EVM are available with the ECI, but the same are only kept for training purpose by the ECI, and not saleable to the general public. ● Fresh argument <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) ECI Under-Secretary Soumyajit Ghosh argued that the information was exempted from disclosure under Section 8(1)(d) of the RTI Act. (2) As the software installed in the machines is an intellectual property of a third party, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of the third party concerned.
Source	The Hindu

Supplementary demands for grants

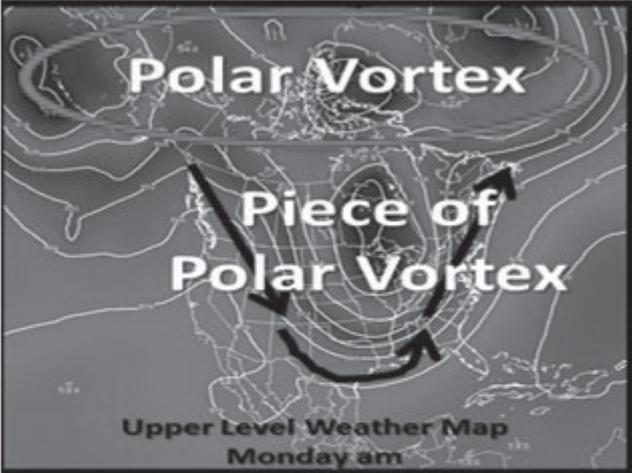
Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finance Minister of Maharashtra state govt. on Monday tabled supplementary demands worth Rs 4,284.65 crore in the Assembly.
What is supplementary demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definition: The additional grant required to meet the required expenditure of the government is called Supplementary Grants. ● When it has demanded? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) When grants, authorised by the Parliament, fall short of the required expenditure, an estimate is presented before the Parliament for Supplementary or Additional grants. (2) When actual expenditure incurred exceeds the approved grants of the Parliament, the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Railways presents a Demand for Excess Grant. ● Who bring it notice to parliament? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India(CAG). (2) The Public Accounts Committee examines these excesses and gives recommendations to the Parliament. (3) These grants are presented and passed by the Parliament before the end of the financial year.
Source	The Hindu



2

Environment

Polar Vortex

<p>Why is news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme cold wave has spread through US Midwest, caused by blast of arctic air which is known as 'polar vortex' event.
<p>What it is?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It is low pressure area, surrounded at both polar regions. (2) When polar vortex is strong it remains at the polar region. (3) When it is weak, it sends cold air south. (4) According to NOAA, many times during winter polar vortex expands as the "breaking off" of the part of vortex. (5) Strong vortex keeps jet stream in circular path, so that cold air at the top and warm air at bottom. <div data-bbox="379 885 1426 1676" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">What is the Polar Vortex?</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Polar Vortex</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Piece of Polar Vortex</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Upper Level Weather Map Monday am</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A persistent, large-scale upper level cyclone near one or both of earths poles. ➤ It ALWAYS exists at the poles, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter. ➤ Many times in winter, a piece of the vortex breaks off and is sent southward with the jet stream which is what is happening now. <p style="text-align: center;">The Polar Vortex is Not.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ is not something new. ➤ is not something that exists at the earths surface, it is in the upper atmosphere. ➤ is not something that will be visibly observed like tornadoes, funnel clouds, thunderstorms, lightning etc. ➤ is not something in itself dangerous to humans, but the cold, arctic air associated with them at the surface could be. </div>
<p>How it linked to Global Warming?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Global temperature has risen by 0.8 degree Celsius since 1880. ● The Arctic has warmed over twice the average. ● Temperature difference between north pole and relevant southern area has reduced. ● Jet streams travelling upward causes main vortex to disrupts.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

Protect places outside Ecologically Sensitive Zones(ESZ)

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to K C Malhotra founder of Save Western Ghat Movement (SWGM), Protection of places other than located in ESZ is very critical for Western Ghat protection.
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This area constitutes 90% of Western Ghat. Not addressed in the reports of both <u>Ksturirangan committee and M Gadgil committee</u>. ESZ covers only 10 to 20% of the Western Ghat.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological Festival of Western Ghat started in Coimbatore recently.

India's first integrated Greenfield gold mine

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent India's first integrated Greenfield gold mining project is expected to begin in the next two months.
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonnagiri of Kurnool district Andhra Pradesh.
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only gold mines in the country is in Karnataka at Kolar Gold Fields and Hutti were opened in the British era. No gold mining was carried out after Independence.
Source	Deccan Chronical

Fundraiser to secure 96 elephant corridors

Why in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent survey found seven elephant corridors in the country impaired, the Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, has come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a joint venture aiming at raising ₹20 million (₹187.16 crore) to secure the 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new, in the next ten years. The alliance tasked to raise the mammoth sum as money, which was the main constraint in securing the land.
Elephant corridor in news recently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talamai-Chamarajnagar elephant corridor at Mudahalli, Bengaluru. Wildlife Trust of India's (WTI) Elephant Corridor Securement Project-South India, recently has taken process of securing the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka inter-State corridor called the Talamai-Chamarajnagar elephant corridor. Wildlife Trust of India, in its 2017 publication 'Right of Passage: Elephant Corridors of India' has identified 101 elephant corridors across India. Out of 101 elephant corridors identified by the WTI in its 2012-15 study, five of them out of two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala and Karnataka have already been secured by the WTI with the help of conservation partners and the support of State governments.
Source	The Hindu

Climate change: 2018 set to be fourth hottest year since records began

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After months of devastating heatwaves and wildfires around the world, UN's specialist weather agency says 2018 is set to be the fourth hottest year. According to World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) for the first 10 months of the year reveal the planet was nearly 1C above the preindustrial baseline.
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<p>More in the news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerns: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) 20 warmest years ever measured have been in the past 22 years. (2) Over the past five years warming has averaged more than 1C higher than historical levels. ● Linking of catastrophic events to the rising global temperatures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Every fraction of a degree of warming makes a difference to human health and access to food and fresh water, to the extinction of animals and plants, to the survival of coral reefs and marine life. (2) The last four years were the four warmest years on record because, globally, humans have taken coal, oil and gas out of the ground, burnt them, and so emitted one and a half trillion tonnes of carbon dioxide to the Earth's atmosphere. (3) Examples like soaring temperatures and extreme weather provided a picture of result of the changing climate.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Indian Express</p>

Lion conservation plan

<p>Why in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Centre and the Gujarat government have announced a ₹97.85 crore Asiatic Lion Conservation Project. ● An initiative has been started after death of 20 lions in Gujarat affected to virus.
<p>More about the project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key outcome of the project: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Dedicated veterinary institute. (2) Lion ambulances. (3) Back-up stocks of vaccines. (4) Committee of experts for examining the suitability of Madhya Pradesh as a potential lion reserve. (5) comply with guidelines of the IUCN on selecting suitable habitat, translocation. ● Key aspects of the conservation project: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Habitat improvement measures. (2) Making more sources of water available. (3) Creating a wildlife crime cell, and a task force for the Greater Gir region. (4) GPS-based tracking system, which would look at surveillance tracking animals. (5) Automated sensor grid that would have magnetic sensors, movement sensors and infra-red heat sensors. ● Greater Gir Initiative: Greater Gir an initiative by Gujarat government that includes, other than the existing Gir National Park, sanctuaries in Girnar, Pania and Mitiyala.
<p>challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was identified to be the most suitable for reintroducing the species but there has been no progress on the proposal. ● SC in April 2013 had ordered the translocation of some lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh within six months, but this hasn't happened. ● It emphasized that the long-term survival of the lion as a species was best served if they could be present outside Gujarat.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

Jaipur birding fair dedicated to conservation of waders

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 22nd Indian Birding Fair, organized on the banks of Man Sagar Lake, was dedicated to the conservation of waders.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wader birds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Waders are tiny birds mostly confined to the edges of water and are observed feeding across moist surfaces. (2) The Indian subcontinent hosts 84 species of wading birds, 64 of which are migratory. (3) Wading birds such as little stint, green sandpiper, small pratincole, pied avocet, Jerdon courser, black winged stilt are some of the species spotted on the lake. ● Man Sagar lake: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Man Sagar Lake is an artificial lake named after Man Singh, the then ruler of Amber and a trusted general of Mughal Emperor Akbar. (2) Built it in 1610 AD by damming the Dravyavati river. (3) A palace Jal Mahal is situated in the middle of the lake. ● Indian Birding Fair: The fair was organized by the Tourism & Wildlife Society of India and supported by Jaipur Zoo.
Source	The Hindu

India China leading Global Greening Efforts, says study:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A study based on NASA satellite data has said India and China are leading the global greening effort. ● Observing that the world is a greener place than it was 20 years ago.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surprising Findings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) China and India account for one-third of the greening but contain only 9% of the planet's land area covered in vegetation. (2) That is a surprising finding, considering the general notion of land degradation in populous countries from over exploitation. ● Study published on Journal Nature Sustainability said that satellite data (2000 – 2017) revealed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) China alone accounts for 25% of the global net increase in leaf area with only 6.6% of global vegetated area. (2) The greening in China is from forests (42%) and croplands (32%). (3) But in India it is mostly from croplands (82%) with minor contribution from forests (4.4%). ● Improvements in crop production: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Food production in China and India has increased by over 35% since 2000. (2) Mostly due to an increase in harvested area through multiple cropping facilitated by fertilizer use and surface or groundwater irrigation. ● Many factors for greening effect: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) When the greening of the earth was first observed, it was believed due to a warmer, wetter climate and fertilization from the added carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. (2) But 20 years long data record from the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) instruments on NASA's Terra and Aqua satellites helps to find out that humans are also contributing.

Source	The Hindu.
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99.82% projects in forests got nod:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India's apex National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) cleared 682 of the 687 projects that came up for scrutiny. ● Charged with allowing forest land in Protected Areas to be diverted for industry. ● Only five projects were rejected since August 2014.
About NBWL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Statutory Organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. (2) Board is advisory in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife. (3) Apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in national parks and sanctuaries. ● Composition: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Chaired by Prime Minister. (2) Vice chairman is Minister of Environment. (3) Total 47 members, 15 non-government members, 19 ex-officio members, and 10 government officials. ● Functions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Promote the conservation and development of wildlife and forests. (2) Power to review all wildlife-related matters and approve projects in and around national parks (3) No alternation of boundaries in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries can be done without the approval of the NBWL.
Source	The Hindu

Wasted effort: half of India's waste-to-energy plants defunct

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment says nearly half of India's waste-to-energy (WTE) plants, meant to convert non-biodegradable waste, are defunct. ● Country's inability to segregate waste has resulted in even the existing plants working below capacity.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Background: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Since 1987, 15 WTE plants have been set up across the country. (2) Seven of these plants have since shut down. ● Plant's location: Delhi, Kanpur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Vijayawada and Karimnagar. ● Key reasons for closure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Plant's inability to handle mixed solid waste. (2) High cost of electricity generated by them that renders it unattractive to power companies. ● Government's initiative: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NITI Aayog, as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission, envisages 800 MW from WTE plants by 2018-19. (2) Which is 10 times the capacity of all the existing WTE plants put together.

	<p>(3) proposes setting up a Waste-to-Energy Corporation of India.</p> <p>(4) Currently there are 40-odd WTE plants at various stages of construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fundamental reason for the inefficiency: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Quality and composition of waste. (2) Low calorific value and high moisture content. (3) Most wastes sent to the WTE plants are unsegregated, they also have high inert content. (4) Not suitable for burning since additional fuel is required which makes these plants expensive to run.
Data regarding waste in India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current status: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) About 1.43 lakh tonnes per day of (TPD) municipal solid waste (MSW) is generated across the country. (2) OF this 1.11 lakh TPD (77.6%) is collected and 35,602 TPD (24.8%) processed. ● Plastic waste: According to the Central Pollution Control Board India generates close to 25,940 TPD of plastic waste of which 15,342 remains uncollected. ● Future Concerns: As per the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, MSW generation will reach 4.5 lakh TPD by 2031 and 11.9 lakh TPD by 2050.
Source	The Hindu

Antibiotic-resistant NDM-1 gene found in pristine Arctic:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The recent detection of the antibiotic resistant (AR) gene NDM-1 in the Arctic region is a further indication of the globalization of antimicrobial resistance. ● It was first isolated in New Delhi, India.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Background: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NDM-1 was first reported in 2007 in a patient admitted to a hospital in New Delhi. (2) First finding of NDM-1 in the environment, rather than a clinic setting, was in surface waters of Delhi, in 2010. ● Findings and predictions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) According to Clare McCann, principal author of the study, scientists were surprised to find a rather robust presence of NDM-1 in the arctic. (2) It was not a shock to find AR in the High Arctic. (3) Most antibiotics are produced by soil microorganisms and over time they have evolved to become resistant to the compounds which they excrete to survive. (4) AR is a natural phenomenon. ● Other findings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) NDM-1 gene is present in highest concentrations near freshwater sources where wildlife tends to congregate. (2) Discovery of levels of mobile genetic elements (MGEs), the mechanism by which bacteria trade AR, to mirror NDM-1. (3) MGEs are often associated with 'acquired' resistance and are found at higher levels in human and animal waste.
Source	The Hindu.

Caught down the wire: Punjab's blackbuck fight for existence

<p>Why in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In 2019, so far, as many as eight blackbucks have died in the Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary (AWS). ● Majority of them succumbed to their injuries, caused by barbed wires while trying to escape from stray dogs. ● Other unnatural reasons for blackbuck deaths include road accidents and falling into water storage tanks and concrete drains.
<p>More in the news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges faced: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) From attacks by stray dogs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most of the blackbuck here are dying due to injuries caused by stray dog attacks. ● Dogs target young deer and expecting females. (2) barbed wires: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Locals trying to save their crops from stray cattle have put up barbed wires and nets. ● Such fencing of fields restricts the free movement of blackbuck. ● Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary (AWS): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) AWS is an open sanctuary, spread across private land in 13 villages. (2) The blackbuck was notified as the State animal of Punjab in 1989. (3) Its presence in the AWS is due to the unique habitat of semi-arid plains consisting of agricultural fields, intermittent fallow-barren lands, scattered sand dunes, sand mounds and ridges.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu.</p>

Scientists discover massive mountains under Earth's crust:

<p>Why in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scientists have discovered massive mountains in the Earth's mantle. ● An advance that may change our understanding of how the planet was formed.
<p>More in news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Earth's Interior is different: ● We often learn that the Earth has three layers: a crust, mantle and core, which is subdivided into an inner and outer core. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ While that is not wrong, it does leave out several other layers that scientists have identified within the Earth. ● Earthquake data helps study: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Scientists used data from an enormous earthquake in Bolivia to find mountains and other topography on a layer located 660 km straight down, which separates the upper and lower mantle. (2) the researchers simply call it the 660-km boundary. (3) Data from earthquakes that are magnitude 7.0 or higher sends shockwaves in all directions that can travel through the core to the other side of the planet and back again. ● The transition zone: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The key data came from waves picked up after a magnitude 8.2 earthquake (the second-largest deep earthquake ever recorded) that shook Bolivia in 1994. (2) The researchers examined a layer 410 km down, at the top of the mid-mantle transition zone and they did not find similar roughness.

	(3) The presence of roughness on the 660-km boundary has significant implications for understanding how our planet formed and evolved.
Source	The Hindu

106 coastal sites picked for conservation:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biennial report released by the government says, the Centre has identified over 100 coastal and marine sites as conservation reserves under its National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) for 2017-2031.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlights of the Report: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Under NWAP government is working towards the conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems from the impacts of climate change. (2) In the last four and a half years, India has not only been able to sustain but also increase its mangrove cover at a time when these ecosystems are disappearing. (3) India has rich coastal and marine wealth. (4) It is also a source of valuable fish protein for the growing population and for global food basket. (5) India produced 3.8 mmt of seafood during 2017, valued at Rs 5.28 lakh million at landing center. (6) Fisheries sector supports around 9.3 lakh active and part-time fishers, one of the largest workforces of fishers in the world.
About 3rd NWAP 2017-2031	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The draft emphasizes on aspects like preservation of genetic diversity and sustainable utilization of species and ecosystems. ● Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict, coastal and marine ecosystem conservation and a focus on wildlife health are among the key areas. ● The first NWAP was adopted in 1983, while the second was adopted in 2002, which ended in 2017.
Source	The Hindu

Ghost nets, plastics pose threat to seabirds

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The unprecedented August 2018 flood has washed out a huge amount of plastics from the land and rivers into the ocean. ● Threatening marine life and underwater ecosystems. ● Now, scientists have come across evidence that migratory birds are also victims of the discarded plastic.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implications of plastics on seabirds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In the study documentation on the case of a Lesser Black-backed Gull or Heuglin's Gull with a plastic bottle ring caught in its beak. (2) The ring had pierced the bird's beak and formed a ring around its eyes, obstructing its vision during flight. (3) the ring could have become tangled with the bird's beak while it was feeding on fish from the sea or picking worms from the beach. ● Nylon fishing nets or ghost nets: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) nylon fishing nets thrown back into the ocean could also pose a serious hazard for marine life. (2) Discarded gill net wrapped around BIRD'S beak, limbs and wings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Affected their behavior: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Plastics found on the body of the bird seemed to have affected their behaviour, as they have to feed on the discarded food from other birds in the flock. (2) This seems to have forced them to depend on other members of the same species or even different species for food, and to escape from predators.
Source	The Hindu

Clean power:

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The effort to clean up India's thermal power plants running on coal has never really taken off, despite the Ministry of Environment notifying emission limits for major pollutants such as SPM, sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury in December 2015.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Notification Regarding Pollution Control <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Ministry of Environment notified emission limits for major pollutants. (2) Considering that the cumulative impact of these pollutants on the health and well-being of people is severe. (3) Centre have followed up the notification with a viable financial plan. (4) Originally, the compliance deadline was set for 2017 (5) But that was missed and the plan now is to achieve the norms by 2022. ● Cost of Non-Compliance: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) cost of non-compliance by the original deadline has been about 76,000 premature deaths. (2) latest proposal from the Power Ministry to provide the equivalent of over \$12 billion to remove sulphur from coal plant emissions. ● Planning Financing Pollution Control Measures: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A viable financial mechanism must be evolved to remove pollutants in existing and upcoming power plants. (2) Stop further long-term investments in a dirty fuel such as coal that contributes to carbon emissions. (3) Achieving speedy implementation of the new processes covering both public and private power producers
Source	The Hindu

Flying bulldog': world's largest bee spotted again

Why In news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The world's largest bee a giant insect roughly the size of a human thumb has been rediscovered. ● It has been rediscovered in a remote part of Indonesia in its first sighting in nearly 40 years.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wallace's giant bee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Discovered in the 19th century by British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace in the wild since 1981. (2) Bee is nicknamed the flying bulldog. (3) One can figure out how beautiful and big the species is in life is by hearing sound of its giant wings. ● About the bee:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) lives in the Indonesian island region of North Moluccas. (2) It makes nest in termite mounds by using its large fang-like mandibles to collect sticky resin to protect its home from the termites. (3) IUCN Red List of Threatened Species lists the bee as vulnerable.
Source	The Hindu

Declining biodiversity threatens food supply

Why In news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on Friday warned about the threat to the future of the world's food production from a lack of biodiversity in the environment.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges mentioned in the report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Biodiversity that underpins our food systems, at all levels, is declining around the world. (2) Once lost, plant, animal and micro-organisms species that are critical to our food systems, cannot be recovered. (3) Biodiversity enables agriculture systems to be more resilient to shocks such as disease and pest outbreaks, as well as coping with climate change. ● Drivers for biodiversity loss:It includes changes in land and water use and management, pollution and overharvesting.
Source	The Hindu

Warming imperils clouds that deter 'hothouse' conditions

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marine clouds that protect us from hothouse Earth conditions by reflecting sunlight back into space could break up and vanish if CO2 in the atmosphere triples, researchers warned.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marine clouds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) So-called stratocumulus clouds cover about 20% of subtropical oceans. (2) Mostly near western seaboard such as the coasts of California, Mexico and Peru. ● Concerns shown in the study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) When these clouds disappear, Earth warms dramatically, by about eight degrees Celsius. (2) In addition to the global warming that comes from enhanced greenhouse concentrations alone. (3) A temperature increase of that magnitude would melt polar ice and lift sea levels tens of meters. (4) The last time the planet was that hot, some 50 million years ago during the Eocene Epoch, crocodiles roamed the Arctic. (5) Even half that much warming would overwhelm humanity's capacity to adapt. (6) A barely one-degree increase since the mid-19th century — mostly in the last 50 years has been enough to worsen heatwaves, droughts, and flooding.
Source	The Hindu



3

International Relation

India's protests against Britain on Kashmir

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India has registered its protest with the British government about an upcoming meet on Kashmir at the British Parliament. ● The government also warned of “consequences” if Pakistan continued its actions on Kashmir, which it called a “direct interference in India’s internal affairs”.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UK’s stand: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The British High Commission said the visit by Mr. Qureshi was a “private” one. (2) It said that there are no plans for meetings with the U.K. government during this visit. (3) The U.K.’s long-standing position is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution to the situation in Kashmir, taking into account the Kashmiri people’s wishes. ● India’s stand: India told United Kingdom [government] strongly that their territory must not be used for anti-India activity conferences or rallies, and it said it hope that Britain will take it seriously, and take action against this kind of conference.
Source	The Hindu

Mallya’s extradition to India

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● British Home Secretary Sajid Javid has signed the order for the extradition of liquor baron Vijay Mallya to India. ● The businessman whose legal team had previously indicated their intention to appeal the extradition will now have two weeks to lodge an appeal.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britain’s extradition rules: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Under Britain’s extradition rules, Mr. Javid had two months from the date of the judgement to determine whether to order the extradition. (2) In making extradition decisions, the Minister has to consider issues including whether the death penalty would be involved or the person be extradited to a third country (neither of which apply in this case).
All about Extradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is Extradition? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Extradition is the surrender by one State to another of a person desired to be dealt with for crimes for which he has been accused or convicted and which are justifiable in the courts of the other States. (2) A Request for Extradition can be initiated against a fugitive criminal, who is formally accused of, charged with, or convicted of an extradition offence. ● Fugitive Criminal: A person who is accused or convicted of an extradition offence within the jurisdiction of a foreign State and includes a person who, while in India, conspires, attempts to commit or incites or participates as an accomplice in the commission of an extradition offence in a foreign State.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legislative Basis for Extradition in India: The Extradition Act 1962 provides India's legislative basis for extradition. ● Designated Central Authority in India for Extradition Matters: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the Central Authority for all incoming and outgoing requests for Extradition. CPV Division handles extradition matters in the Ministry of External Affairs. ● Bilateral Extradition Treaties: India has entered into bilateral Extradition Treaties with 42 countries to bring speed and efficiency to the process of extradition. ● Regional extradition treaties: India is a party to regional extradition treaties such as the London Scheme (Commonwealth Scheme for the Rendition of Fugitive Offenders 1966). ● UN Conventions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Indian Government ratified two UN Conventions - the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and its three protocols. (2) Article 16 of UNTOC can be used as a basis for extradition of fugitive criminals accused/convicted of offences that are classified as Organized Crimes.
Source	The Hindu, MEA

Russia to develop new missile systems by 2021

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said the country must develop new types of missile systems in the next two years after Washington and Moscow split up a key arms control treaty.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tit for tat: Following USA's withdrawal, Russia also leaving the treaty and hinted to start work on new types of weapons that would breach the crucial Cold War-era agreement. ● Russian development: During 2019-2020, Russia had developed a land-based version of the seaborne Kalibr system equipped with a long-range cruise missile. ● INF conditions: The INF agreement forbids ground-launched, short- and intermediate-range missiles, but not those launched from the air or sea — which Russia already has.
Source	The Hindu

Bills introduced to remove per-country limits on green card

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bill named "Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act" have been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to end the per-country limit on green cards. ● These two identical legislations are backed by top companies from Silicon Valley like Google.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beneficial to Indian professionals: If passed by Congress and signed into law, it could benefit thousands of Indian professionals waiting to gain permanent legal residency. ● Current cap on green cards:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The U.S. currently offers 1,40,000 green cards every year to employment-based immigrants. (2) The existing law, however, provides that not more than 7% of these green cards can go to nationals of any one country- even though some countries are more populous than others. (3) Because of this limit, a Chinese or an Indian postgraduate may have to wait half a decade or more for a Green Card, much longer than a student from a less-populated country.
Source	The Hindu

New immigration checkpoint for Kartarpur Sahib Corridor

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Home Ministry has designated the Dera Baba Nanak land check post in Gurdaspur district as an authorised immigration checkpoint.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rule: In pursuance of sub-rule (b) of rule 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950, the central government designates it as an authorised Immigration Check Post. ● In a notification, the Ministry said that anyone with valid travel documents could exit or enter through the check post.
Source	The Hindu

India-Maldives relations

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India and Maldives exchanged an agreement to facilitate visas for travel between the two countries in a number of categories. ● It will ease a bilateral standoff which had resulted in thousands of Indian job seekers being denied work permits last year.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liberal visa regime for both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) This Agreement provides a very liberal visa regime for Maldivian nationals to visit India for tourism, business, education & medical purposes. (2) The agreement will ease visas on arrival for Indian businessmen and to Indians applying for work in the Maldives as its work permits will be issued within 15 days to Indian employees, and the visa fees will be paid by employers in the Maldives. ● What was concluded in agreement? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Under the agreement, the government will free up the visa regime for Maldives citizens who travel to India for medical reasons and for education in particular. (2) This will include allowing Maldives citizens who receive a visa on arrival in India to change their visa status to medical visas if they require hospitalisation during their stay. (3) Medical visas will also be granted to attendants to accompany patients. (4) The government has also agreed to grant visas for parents and other dependants to live in India while their children attend school here.
Source	The Hindu

India-US trade relations

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● U.S. Ambassador Kenneth I. Juster will lead a delegation of officials to hold talks with Union Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu to resolve several sore trade points. ● It includes the concerns of American CEOs regarding doing business in India and bilateral trade imbalance.
<p>More in news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) review: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The status of the review of India's eligibility for the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) is also likely to come up in the light of recent developments where the U.S. has again threatened to withdraw the export exemptions for India. (2) Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) puts GSP under review. (3) Under GSP, India is allowed duty-free exports to the U.S. for about 2,000 product lines. (4) This move was protested by the Indian government and industry chambers. ● Other issues that had particularly incensed American businesses are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) India's new data localisation rules that force foreign companies to store Indians' data within the country. (2) Rules amending FDI rules in e-commerce that had hurt American giants like Amazon and Walmart. ● Higher import tariffs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Trade tensions between the two countries rose last year when U.S. President Donald Trump notified the imposition of higher import tariffs on steel and aluminium, which affected several countries, including India. (2) In retaliation, India announced counter-tariffs on 29 American goods, worth about \$235 million, but has delayed implementing them in the hope of resolving the matter.
<p>What is the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories. ● The GSP program has effective dates which are specified in relevant legislation, thereby requiring periodical reauthorization in order to remain in effect.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu,us.gov</p>

Venezuela seeks to double oil exports to India

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Venezuelan Oil Minister declared that Venezuela wants to double its oil sales to India and is open to barter payment arrangements with the world's third biggest crude consumer-India.
<p>More in news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alternative payment methods after US sanctions: Venezuela buys medicines and other products from India, is looking for alternative payment methods after the United States imposed stringent sanctions on Venezuela's state oil firm PDVSA. ● Double oil supplies: Venezuela aimed to double oil supplies to India from 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) now. ● Balance of trade:

	<p>(1) Barter deals could help India balance its trade with Venezuela.</p> <p>(2) In fiscal 2017/18, India's imports from Venezuela were worth \$5.87 billion while its exports were \$79.3 million.</p>
Source	The Hindu, Livemint

Defence pacts with Germany and Sweden

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India concluded defence cooperation and security protection agreements with Germany and Sweden during the ongoing visit of Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman there.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sharing classified information with France: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The agreement will enable both the countries to share classified information with each other. (2) India and Sweden have had a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the area of defence since 2009. ● Enhancing defence and defence industry cooperation with Germany: India and Germany signed an implementing arrangement on enhanced defence and defence industry cooperation to strengthen military to military engagement as well as defence industry and research and development linkages. ● Important defence equipment suppliers: Both Germany and Sweden are important suppliers of defence equipment to India and their companies are currently in the race for multi-billion tenders to supply submarines and fighter aircraft.
Source	The Hindu

India-Fiji relations

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interview with Fiji's High Commissioner to India.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balanced ties: High Commissioner said both India and China are important partners of Fiji and the island nation will continue to strengthen ties with the two Asian giants. ● Indian diaspora: Of the 9,00,000 people of the south Pacific island nation, some 40% are of Indian origin. ● Defence agreement: Both India and Fiji signed a defence agreement in 2017 with a goal to deepen cooperation in maritime security and provide training for Fiji troops. ● Other areas of cooperation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) There are a number of areas other than defence that both sides have identified to strengthen bilateral ties. (2) These include MoUs on sugar industry, agriculture and tourism. (3) Fiji is a major producer of sugar. The state-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) is the largest public enterprise in the country, employing some 3,000 people.
Source	The Hindu



International events

India to push for UN ban on JeM chief

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beijing has vetoed each of the past three attempts to list Azhar: in 2016, 2017 and most recently in 2018. ● China agreed to the UNSC press statement that named the JeM after considerable wrangling over the wording, particularly insisting on leaving out any direct reference to Pakistan in it and objecting to any “political statements.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian preparation: Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale is coordinating the diplomatic pressure India hopes to build on Pakistan in the upcoming weeks by meeting focused groups of Ambassadors from different regions with specific lists of expectations from each. ● EU’s role: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) In particular, the European Union is being asked to add Pakistan to its own blacklist and to conduct a serious review of the GSP+ (Generalised System of Preferences) status if it fails to crack down on the groups targeting India, particularly JeM and Lashkar-e-Taiba. (2) At present the EU has put only one country, DPRK or North Korea on its blacklist.
Source	The Hindu

ICJ verdict on Chagos archipelago

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its advisory opinion said that Britain has an obligation to end its administration of the Chagos archipelago and complete the process of decolonisation of Mauritius.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Judge’s explanation: Delivering the opinion, ICJ president said the judges had rejected the contention that the issue did not fall within its jurisdiction because it was a bilateral matter for the two countries, and concluded that the decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully completed as a result of Britain’s continued administration of the Chagos islands. ● Victory for Mauritius and its supporters: This is a significant legal victory for Mauritius and other nations, including India, which supported its case. ● 1965 pact: Under an agreement struck in 1965, in return for compensation to Mauritius and fishing rights, Britain has maintained control of the islands. ● U.S. military base of Diego Garcia: Chagos archipelago is a home to the U.S. military base of Diego Garcia, under lease from the United Kingdom since the 1960s. ● Wrongful act: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The continued administration of the territory by the U.K. amounted to a “wrongful act,” that was not consistent with the right to the people of “self determination.” ● The judges concluded that any detachment of part of a colony had to be based on the “freely expressed and genuine will” of the people. ● Wider ramifications of this case:

	<p>(1) The case is seen as having far wider ramifications beyond the two parties immediately concerned as it deals with the legacy of colonialism.</p> <p>(2) It also raises the question of whether agreements struck between colonial powers and their colonies in the final stages their rule could really be seen as legitimate, given the imbalance of power.</p>
Source	The Hindu

Second meeting between US-North Korea leaders

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and U.S. President Donald Trump met in Vietnam for a second summit that the United States hopes will persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for promises of peace and development.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Location of summit: Metropole hotel in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi. ● First summit in Singapore outcome: Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim pledged to work toward denuclearisation and permanent peace on the Korean peninsula. ● A courageous decision: Mr. Kim said they had overcome obstacles to hold their second summit and praised Mr. Trump for his “courageous decision” to begin a dialogue. ● Flexible stance: Mr. Trump has indicated a more flexible stance, saying he was in no rush to secure North Korea’s denuclearisation.
Sources	The Hindu

International Court of Justice

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In Kulbushan Jadhav case at the International Court of Justice India accused Pakistan of “knowingly, wilfully and brazenly” flouting the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. ● India also attacked the “farfical” trial of Mr. Jadhav, who was found guilty of spying and sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court in 2017.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review process: It requested the court to annul the verdict and direct Pakistan to set Mr. Jadhav free on the basis of the “review and reconsideration” process that would be available to him in that country.
The International Court of Justice (ICJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations (UN). ● Establishment: It was established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946. ● Seat of the Court: The seat of the Court is at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands). ● Exception: Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (United States of America).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role: The Court’s role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies. ● Composition: The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. ● Assistance: It is assisted by a Registry, its administrative organ. ● Official languages: English and French.
Source	The Hindu, ICJ



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Social Issues

Bill introduced on NRI marriages in Parliament

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The external External Affairs Ministe introduced a path breaking Bill on Registration of Marriage of non-Resident of India in Rajya Sabha. ● The objective of the Bill is to counter growing incidents of exploitation of Indian women by NRI (Non Resident Indian) spouses.
More about the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Bill is an outcome of a joint initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law and Justice. ● The objective of the Bill is to create more accountability and offer more protection against exploitation of Indian women by their NRI spouses. It envisages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● (i) Registration of Marriages by Non-Resident Indians; ● (ii) Amendment of the Passports Act 1967 and ● (iii) Amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973. ● The Amendments to CrPC, 1973 would empower the Courts for issuance of summons, warrants through the specially designated website of the Ministry of External Affairs. ● It also provides provisions for attachment of properties belonging to the NRI, if he does not appear before the Court and is declared as Proclaimed Offender by the Court.
Source	The Hindu, ET.

Leprosy removed as a ground for Divorce

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Rajya Sabha on the last day of the Budget session passed the Bill removing leprosy as a ground for divorce under five personal laws.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 sought to remove leprosy as a ground for divorce in following five personal laws: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Hindu Marriage Act, (2) Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, (3) Divorce Act (for Christians), (4) Special Marriage Ac. (5) The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act. ● The Law Commission had recommended repeal of laws and provisions which were discriminatory against leprosy affected people. ● Besides, India is a signatory to a UN Resolution which calls for elimination of discrimination against persons suffering from leprosy. ● In 2014, the Supreme Court had also asked the Centre and the state governments to take steps for rehabilitation and integration of leprosy affected people into the mainstream.

Leprosy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leprosy is a chronic infection caused by the bacillus Mycobacterium leprae. ● It affects the skin, the peripheral nerves and the upper part of the airway, or the testes. ● It is transmitted by prolonged contact, usually through aerosols containing the nasal secretions, or droplets from these fluids. ● However, 95% of people are naturally immune to the infection. ● It can also be transmitted from mother to child via the placenta. ● Leprosy is fully curable if diagnosed and treated early, before permanent neurological damage sets in.
Source	The Hindu, ET.

Panel on monthly national minimum wage

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The report of the 7-member expert panel recommended a uniform national minimum wage of Rs 9,750 per month. ● Also, the region-wise minimum wages ranging from Rs 8,892-Rs 11,622 per month for five regions have been recommended.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The expert committee was to determine the methodology for fixing the national minimum wage. ● The recommendations could form the basis for a national minimum wage in the country covering all workers- irrespective of their skills, sectors, occupations and rural-urban locations. ● Recommendations of the Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Additional house rent allowance, averaging up to Rs 55 per day, for urban workers over and above the national minimum wage. (2) The single value of the national minimum wage for India should be set at Rs 375 per day or Rs 9,750 per month. (3) Alternatively, setting the national minimum wage for five different regions with diverse socio-economic and labour market situations. (4) Nationally representative food basket for all regions should be used instead of estimating and using regional representative food baskets for each of the five regions. (5) Adopting an approach that would focus on a balanced diet rather than merely its calorie intake that should not only concentrate on the minimum requirement of calories but also on the minimum requirement of protein and fats.
Source	Indian Express.

Survey on Inhalant addicts

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to a survey conducted by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh have emerged front runners in alcohol abuse and health complications arising due to the addition.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● he survey, conducted to ascertain the magnitude of substance abuse in the country, was carried out between December 2017 and October 2018. ● It covered 4,73,569 individuals in the 10-75 age group. ● High prevalence of consumption of alcohol was also reported in Tripura and Chhattisgarh.

	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Growing addiction</p> <p>A survey conducted between December 2017 and October 2018 to ascertain the magnitude of substance abuse in India has thrown up some disturbing figures</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px;"> <p>People with alcohol-dependence: 57 million</p> <p>High prevalence States: U.P., Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Chattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh</p> <p>Sedative/Inhalants users: 4,60,000 children, 1.8 million adults</p> </div> <div style="width: 30%; background-color: #d0d0d0; padding: 5px;"> <p>Cannabis dependence: 7.2 million</p> <p>High prevalence States: U.P., Punjab and Odisha</p> <p>Heroin is the most abused opioid (1.14% of Indians use this)</p> <p>High prevalence States: U.P., Punjab, Chattisgarh, Delhi</p> </div> </div>
Source	The Hindu.

Minimum Assured Return Scheme (MARS)

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pension fund regulator PFRDA is working on a minimum assured return scheme (MARS) for subscribers of the flagship social security programme National Pension System(NPS).
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NPS is a contributory retirement savings scheme and seeks to inculcate the habit of saving for old age among the citizens. ● NPS, a government-sponsored pension scheme, was launched in January 2004 for government employees. ● It was opened to all sections in 2009. ● A subscriber can contribute regularly in a pension account during her working life, withdraw a part of the corpus in a lumpsum and use the remaining corpus to buy an annuity to secure a regular income after retirement. ● NPS, having an asset under management (AUM) of Rs 2.91 lakh crore, had subscriber base of 1.21 at the end of January 2019. ● The regulator is in the process of designing and developing MARS, according to a document of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
Source	The Hindu.

Action plan for free treatment of hepatitis patients

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union government launched a national programme aimed at eliminating viral hepatitis in Mumbai. ● The viral hepatitis is recognized as an important public health problem across the world
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More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Viral hepatitis is a global public health problem that kills nearly 2.72 lakh people annually. ● In India, it is estimated that there are 4 crore people suffering from Hepatitis B and 0.6-1.2 crore people suffering from Hepatitis C. ● It is an inflammatory condition of the liver caused by five known hepatitis viruses — A, B,C,D and E. ● Of these, B and C are known to cause 96% mortality. ● Hepatitis B and C are transmitted by unsafe injection practices, infected blood and blood products, sexual transmission and from mother to child.
About Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It provides a strategic framework, based on which the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme was framed and launched in July 2018 under National Health Mission by the Health Ministry. ● The aim of the programme is to combat hepatitis and achieve countrywide elimination of Hepatitis C by 2030. ● In India, Hepatitis B vaccine was introduced in the Universal Immunization Programme almost a decade ago. ● The comprehensive action plan will focus on curbing mother-to-child transmission by improving the coverage of hepatitis B injection given at birth. ● According to the action plan, one model hepatitis treatment centre will be established in each State in a government institution in the first year. ● This programme is also in line with our global commitment towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.3. India has affirmed this commitment at the 69th World Health Assembly.
Source	The Hindu.

More anti-cancer drugs under price control

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The union government capped trade margins of 42 cancer drugs at 30%, seeking to curb profiteering on these vital medicines. ● The move is expected to reduce prices of cancer drugs by 85% and will cover 72 formulations and 355 brands.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The inclusion of new drugs are in addition to 57 anti- cancer drugs already under price control. ● Manufacturers have been asked to recalculate prices and inform ● National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) within next seven days. ● The step has been taken to control the out-of-pocket expenses on medicines. ● The NPPA currently fixes price of drugs on the National List of Essential Medicines under schedule I of DPCO. ● So far, around 1,000 drugs have been price-capped through this mode. ● The move is likely to face resistance from the pharma industry, a pharma lobby expert.
About NPPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NPPA is an organization of the Government of India which was established to fix/ revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995. ● It enforces prices and availability of the medicines in the country. ● The organization is also entrusted with the task of recovering amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers.
Source	The Hindu.



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Economics

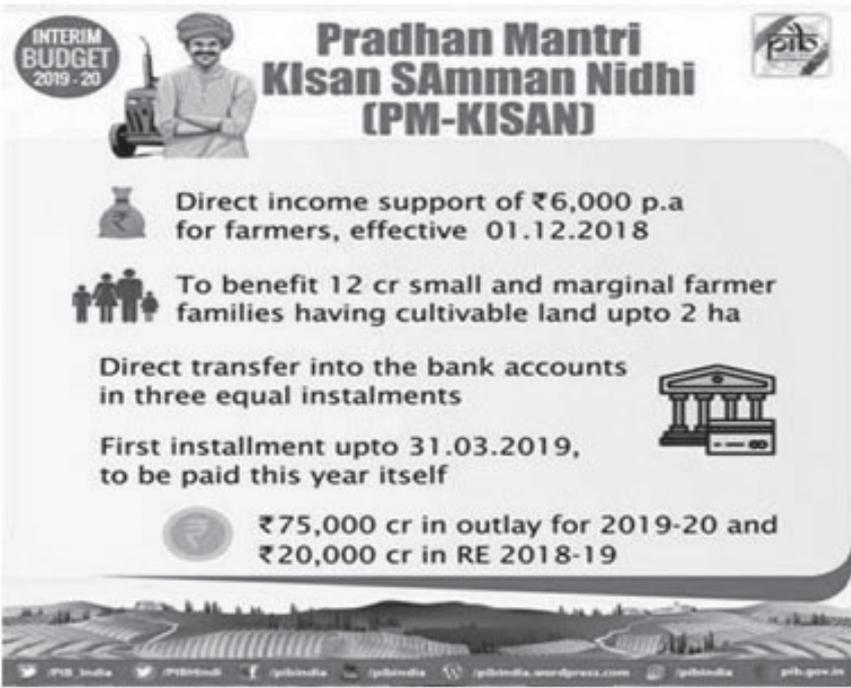
Interim dividend to government

Why in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India decided to transfer interim surplus of Rs 28,000 crore to the government. ● The move will bolster government's finances.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This is the second successive year the RBI will transfer an interim surplus. ● In August 2018, the RBI has decided to transfer Rs 50,000 crore of surplus to the government. ● While the RBI highlighted measures taken to boost credit flow to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the Finance Minister pitched for consolidation in the banking sector. ● How does a central bank generate profits? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) RBI print currency as well as issue deposits (or reserves) to commercial banks. Those are RBI's fixed liabilities. (2) RBI buy financial assets from the market and also do not pay interest on our liabilities. (3) However, the financial assets RBI hold, typically domestic and foreign govt bonds, do pay interest. (4) So RBI generate a large net interest income simply because it pay nothing on virtually all its liabilities. (5) So RBI earn a large surplus profit, more than all the public sector put together, because of the RBI's role as the manager of the country's currency. (6) This belongs entirely to the country's citizens. (7) After setting aside what is needed to be retained as equity capital to maintain the creditworthiness of the RBI, the RBI board pays out the remaining surplus to the RBI's owner — the government.
Source	Indian Express.

Government Policies and Taxation

Pradhan Mantri KisanSamman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide an assured income support to the small and marginal farmers, the Government while presenting the Interim Budget 2019-20 announced the Pradhan Mantri KisanSamman Nidhi (PM-KISAN). ● Pradhan Mantri KisanSamman Nidhi is a modification of the RythuBandhu scheme of the Telangana government, which provides assistance on a per-acre basis (Rs 8,000 per acre per year) without any holding size limit.
More about the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The programme would be made effective from 1st December 2018 and the first installment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid during this year itself.

	 <p>The poster for Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) features a farmer with a tractor and a money bag icon. It states: 'INTERIM BUDGET 2019-20', 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMMAN Nidhi (PM-KISAN)', 'Direct income support of ₹6,000 p.a for farmers, effective 01.12.2018', 'To benefit 12 cr small and marginal farmer families having cultivable land upto 2 ha', 'Direct transfer into the bank accounts in three equal instalments', 'First installment upto 31.03.2019, to be paid this year itself', and '₹75,000 cr in outlay for 2019-20 and ₹20,000 cr in RE 2018-19'. It also includes the PIB logo and social media handles.</p>
Source	PIB.

Angel tax norms to be relaxed

<p>Why is it in the news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Centre has decided to set up a five-member working committee to look into the angel tax issue and come up with guidelines in one week. ● It also agreed to implement some key changes requested by start-ups regarding the issue.
<p>More in the news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is Angel Tax? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Angel tax is a term used to refer to the income tax payable on capital raised by unlisted companies via the issue of shares where the share price is seen in excess of the fair market value of the shares sold. (2) The excess realization is treated as income and taxed accordingly (30% of the excess funding). (3) The tax was introduced in the 2012 Union Budget by then finance minister to arrest laundering of funds. (4) It has come to be called angel tax since it largely impacts angel investments in startups. ● Exemption: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) According to recent notification, start-ups whose aggregate amount of paid-up share capital and share premium after the proposed issue of share does not exceed Rs.10 crore are eligible for exemption from the tax. (2) For the exemption, startups were also required to get approval from an inter-ministerial board and a certificate of valuation by a merchant banker. (3) According to the notification, the exemption would apply only when the angel investor had a minimum net worth of Rs 2 crore, or an average returned income of over Rs.25 lakh in the preceding three financial years. ● What is the Issue?

	<p>(1) Despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that startups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption.</p> <p>(2) The issue of angel tax had come into focus after some startups in Bengaluru and Mumbai got notices from the income tax department.</p>
Source	The Hindu, ET.

New financial services regulator

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of a unified authority for regulating all financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in India. ● It is established through International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An IFSC is aimed at encouraging Indian companies that are conducting business in foreign financial centres such as London and Singapore, to bring that business to India by providing them with a global-standard regulatory and business environment. ● It would provide Indian corporates easier access to global financial markets. ● IFSC would also compliment and promote further development of financial markets in India.
Why a unified regulator?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are regulated by multiple regulators, i.e. RBI, SEBI and IRDAI. ● The dynamic nature of business in the IFSCs necessitates a high degree of inter-regulatory coordination. ● It also requires regular clarifications and frequent amendments in the existing regulations governing financial activities in IFSCs.. ● The development of financial services and products in IFSCs would require focussed and dedicated regulatory interventions. ● Hence, a need is felt for having a unified financial regulator for IFSCs in India to provide world class regulatory environment to financial market participants.
Source	PIB.

Amendments to Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order to deal with illegal deposit taking activities, the Union Cabinet approved amendments to the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018. ● These changes are based on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF).
More about the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Bill provides for severe punishment and pecuniary fines to act as deterrent for such illicit activities. ● It also has adequate provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally. ● A large number of such instances have been reported from the eastern part of the country. ● The Bill completely bans deposit takers from promoting, advertising or accepting deposits in any unregulated scheme. ● Three types of offences have been captured in the proposed law:

	<p>(1) 1. Running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes. (2) Fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes. (3) Wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Bill also provides for attachment of properties and assets of the deposit taker and subsequent realisation of assets for repayment to depositors. ● It will enable creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in India.
Source	Indian Express.

Open Acreage Licensing Policy

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India has offered 23 hydrocarbon blocks in the third exploration bidding round of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP). ● Petroleum and natural gas minister opened the auction at Petrotech, a three-day industry conference that began in Greater Noida.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 18 blocks offered for bidding are based on expressions of interest (EoIs) submitted by bidders. ● Under the OALP, once an explorer selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR) and submits the EoI. ● It is to be put up for competitive bidding and the entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.
Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) is a critical part of the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy. ● It provides uniform licences for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources. ● Till 2016, exploration was confined to blocks which have been put on tender by the Government. ● OALP was introduced vide a Cabinet decision of the Government in 2016, as part of the new Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy, so as to enable a faster survey and coverage of the available geographical area which has potential for oil and gas discovery.
National Data Repository (NDR):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The National Data Repository (NDR) has been created to provide explorers' data on the country's repositories, allowing them to choose fields according to their capabilities. ● Data received through the National Seismic Programme, an in-depth study of 26 sedimentary basins, are continuously being added to the NDR.
Source	Indian Express.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PMSYM)

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Finance Minister in the interim Budget 2019, has proposed to launch a mega pension yojana namely 'Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan' (PMSYM) for the unorganised sector workers.
More in about the Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This pension yojana will be for those unorganised sector workers who have monthly income upto Rs 15,000. ● The scheme will provide them an assured monthly pension of Rs 3,000 from the age of 60 years on a monthly contribution during their working age.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An unorganised sector worker joining pension yojana at the age of 29 years will have to contribute only Rs 100 per month till the age of 60 years. ● A worker joining the pension yojana at 18 years, will have to contribute as little as Rs 55 per month only. ● The Government will deposit equal matching share in the pension account of the worker every month. ● For the workers contributing Rs 100 per month, equal contribution would be paid by the government.
Source	Indian Express.

Infrastructure

Rooftop solar programme- Phase II

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government approved the Rs 11,814 crore phase-II of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Programme. ● The phase-II is meant to achieve cumulative capacity of 40,000 megawatt (MW) from rooftop solar (RTS) projects by 2022.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Phase II programme provides for central financial assistance (for residential rooftop solar installations) up to 40% for rooftop systems up to 3kW and 20% for those with a capacity of 3-10kW. ● The second phase will also focus on increasing the involvement of the distribution companies (DISCOM). ● DISCOMs and its local offices shall be the nodal points for implementation of the programme. ● For group housing societies or residential welfare associations (GHS/RAW), CFA will be limited to 20% for RTS plants for supply of power to common facilities. ● However, the capacity eligible for CFA for GHS or RAW will be limited to 10 kw per house with maximum capacity up to 500 kwp. ● Significance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Programmes will have substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emission. ➤ It is expected that addition of 38 GW solar rooftop plants under Phase-II by year 2022 will result in CO2 emission reduction of about 45.6 tonnes per year. ➤ Besides increasing self-employment the approval is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 9.39 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers for addition of 38GW capacity under Phase-II of the scheme by the year 2022.
Source	The Hindu.

Miscellaneous

Subsidy spend on the rise again

<p>Why is it in the news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per the Budget document analysis, rising LPG prices and higher subscribers have resulted in the government's subsidy expenditure over the last two years reversing a declining trend. 																																				
<p>More about the scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data show that the government's total expenditure on subsidies is expected to make up 9.83% of its total expenditure overall in 2019-20. It was 9.65% for last year, as per the revised estimate for 2018-19. This increase might not seem significant by itself, but it becomes noteworthy when viewed against the backdrop of a consistent annual fall from 18.2% in 2012-13 to 8.15% in 2017-18. <div data-bbox="448 734 1289 1500" style="text-align: center;"> <p>Heavy on the coffers TOTAL SUBSIDIES AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE (%)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total Subsidies (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2012-13</td> <td>18.23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'14-15</td> <td>~15.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'16-17</td> <td>~10.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'18-19 (RE)</td> <td>~8.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'19-20 (BE)</td> <td>9.83</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>GROWTH RATES OF FOOD AND PETROLEUM SUBSIDIES (%)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Food Subsidy (%)</th> <th>Petroleum Subsidy (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013-14</td> <td>8.24</td> <td>-11.87</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'14-15</td> <td>~30</td> <td>~10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'15-16</td> <td>~20</td> <td>~10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'16-17</td> <td>~10</td> <td>~10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'17-18</td> <td>~10</td> <td>~10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'18-19 (RE)</td> <td>50.92</td> <td>~10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>'19-20 (BE)</td> <td>~10</td> <td>7.54</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: Budget Documents</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Causes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The increase in the food subsidy allocation is a reflection of the increase in the Minimum Support prices hiked across the board. The reason behind the increase in the petroleum subsidy has to do in particular with the government's focus on LPG as a source of cleaner cooking fuel. The government has two major schemes in the LPG sector. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAHAL scheme: It involves direct cash transfers to LPG consumers for 12 numbers of 14.2 kg cylinders per year. Ujjwala Yojana: It seeks to give free LPG connections to poor households. 	Year	Total Subsidies (%)	2012-13	18.23	'14-15	~15.5	'16-17	~10.5	'18-19 (RE)	~8.15	'19-20 (BE)	9.83	Year	Food Subsidy (%)	Petroleum Subsidy (%)	2013-14	8.24	-11.87	'14-15	~30	~10	'15-16	~20	~10	'16-17	~10	~10	'17-18	~10	~10	'18-19 (RE)	50.92	~10	'19-20 (BE)	~10	7.54
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<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu.</p>																																				

Organised Retail in India

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● According to a latest joint report by Deloitte and the Retailers Association of India (RAI), the share of the organised retail market is expected to increase from 12% in 2017 to 22%-25% by 2021.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Findings of the report: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The retail market is expected to grow from \$795 billion in 2017 to \$1.2 trillion by 2021, as per the report. (2) The growth will be driven by increased internet penetration in the country and more international retailers operating in India. (3) It would also be partly driven by the growth of e-commerce market from \$24 billion in 2017 to \$84 billion in 2021. (4) The report pegs the growth in e-commerce market to factors like growing Internet penetration and increased usage of smartphones among others. ● Organised Retail: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Organized Retail refers to standardization of the otherwise fragmented retail industry. (2) For Example, Modern retail chains and stores are organized and managed by a central entity. (3) It is one of the fastest growing and promising sectors in India . (4) In recent years, it has become more organized with the entry of big players and foreign retailers.
Source	The Hindu.

Retail inflation

Why is it in the news ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As per the official data released, retail inflation continued to slide, easing to a 19-month low of 2.05% in January. ● The food inflation continuing to remain in the negative zone.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) inflation stood at (-)2.17% in January as against (-)2.65% in December. ● The 'food and beverages' segment registered a deflation of 1.29% in January as against 1.49% deflation a month ago. ● Inflation for the 'fuel and light' category moderated to 2.20 per cent in January from 4.54 per cent a month ago. ● At 2.05%, the overall retail inflation rate is much lower than the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) inflation projection of 2.8% for January-March quarter. ● The RBI, on February 7 cut policy rate by 25 basis points, had revised down its inflation projections. ● RBI cited low food inflation due to excess supply conditions domestically as well as internationally and larger than anticipated moderation in fuel inflation. ● Experts said headline CPI is expected to stay benign in the coming months and provides room for further rate cut by the RBI.
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Retail Inflation measures changes in the price level of a 'market basket' of consumer goods and services purchased by households. ● The headline inflation measure demonstrates overall inflation in the economy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conversely, the core inflation measure strips the prices of highly volatile food and fuel components to distinguish the inflation signal from transitory noise.
Source	Indian Express.

Wholesale inflation eases

Why is it in the news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As per the data released by the commerce and industry ministry Wholesale inflation eased to a 10-month low of 2.76% in January due largely to cooling fuel prices. ● It was 3.02% in January last year.
More in the news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inflation in the crude petroleum and natural gas segment slowed sharply in January to a one-year low of 3.87% from 16.8% in December. ● Similarly, inflation in the fuel and power segment slowed to a 27-month low of 1.85% in January. ● The slow trend is driven in large part by the fact that the mineral oils segment also saw inflation slowing to a 27-month low of 0.11%. <p><u>Wholesale Price Index (WPI):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WPI index reflects average price changes of goods that are bought and sold in the wholesale market. ● Wholesale price indexes report monthly to show the average price changes of goods sold in bulk, and they are a group of the indicators that follow growth in the economy. ● WPI includes all the manufactured products and CPI includes food and services part.
Source	The Hindu.



The Unique Academy

6

Science & Technology

Billboards in space

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recently, the hope of StartRocket, a Russian start-up aiming to put billboards in space. The firm plans to turn hundreds of tiny satellites into a massive display visible from the earth-something it said would make him the first man to draw in space since the ancient Greeks grouped stars into constellations.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up plans: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up said “New ages demand new gods,” adding that the world is no longer ruled by Greek deities but by brands and events. The team aims to put 200 tiny satellites, known as CubeSats, at an altitude of about 500 kilometres in the lower orbit by 2021. Need for regulation: Since it was announced in January, the initiative has angered astronomers and raised questions about the need to better regulate who owns the skies- and what is in them.
Source	The Hindu

‘Inkjet’ solar panels

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polish physicist and businesswoman Olga Malinkiewicz has developed a novel inkjet processing method for perovskites- a new generation of cheaper solar cells- that makes it possible to produce solar panels under lower temperatures, thus sharply reducing costs.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to reduce energy poverty: Perovskite solar cells have the potential to address the world energy poverty. Manufacturing: Solar panels coated with the mineral are light, flexible, efficient, inexpensive and come in varying hues and degrees of transparency. Application: They can easily be fixed to almost any surface — be it laptop, car, drone, spacecraft or building — to produce electricity, including in the shade or indoors. <p>Comparison between old and current manufacturing methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Initially the process was complicated and required ultra high temperatures, so only materials that could withstand extreme heat-like glass-could be coated with perovskite cells. Later invention of inkjet printing procedure that lowered production costs enough to make mass production economically feasible. Now high temperatures are no longer required to coat things with a photovoltaic layer.
Source	The Hindu

International Year of the Periodic Table

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNESCO has launched the 2019 as International Year of The Periodic Table to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the organisation of the periodic table.
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International Union of Pure Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IUPAC is responsible for maintaining the periodic table. ● IUPAC is an international federation of National Adhering Organizations that represents chemists in individual countries. ● It is a member of the International Council for Science (ICSU). ● Establishment: Established in 1919 as the successor of the International Congress of Applied Chemistry for the advancement of chemistry. ● Headquarters: Zurich, Switzerland. ● Members: The National Adhering Organizations can be national chemistry societies, national academies of sciences, or other bodies representing chemists. ● Inter-divisional Committee on Nomenclature and Symbols (IUPAC nomenclature): The IUPAC's Inter-divisional Committee on Nomenclature and Symbols (IUPAC nomenclature) is the recognized world authority in developing standards for the naming of the chemical elements and compounds.
Source	The Hindu, UNESCO

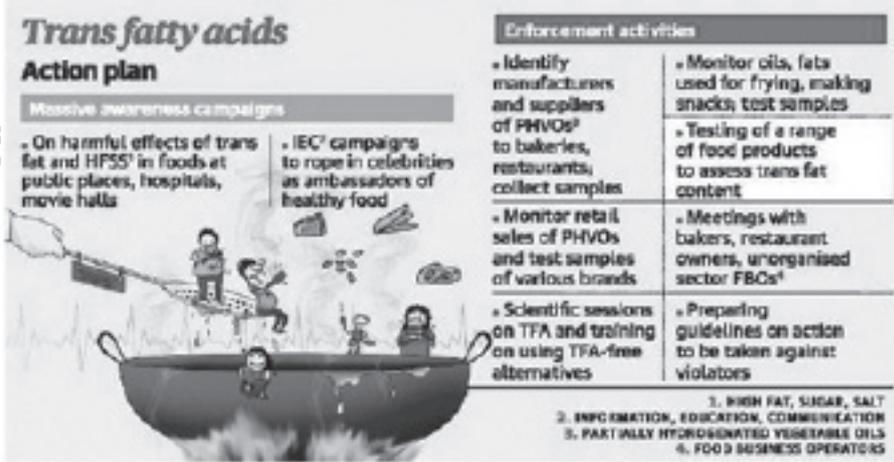
WHO on Cancer

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recently, figures were released by the WHO Southeast Asia on World Cancer Day indicates that 67% cancer patients in SE Asia die before 70.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary cause of deaths: Inadequate access to cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment. ● National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR) data: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) One woman dies of cervical cancer every eight minutes in India. (2) For every two women newly diagnosed with breast cancer, one woman dies of it in India. (3) As many as 2,500 persons die every day due to tobacco-related diseases; and tobacco (smoked and smokeless) use accounted for 3,17,928 deaths in men and women in 2018.
All about Cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is Cancer? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Cancer is a broad term. It describes the disease that results when cellular changes cause the uncontrolled growth and division of cells. (2) Certain forms of cancer result in visible growths called tumors, while others, such as leukemia, do not. (3) Most of the body's cells have specific functions and fixed lifespans. (4) A cell receives instructions to die so that the body can replace it with a newer cell that functions better. Cancerous cells lack the components that instruct them to stop dividing and to die. (5) Cancerous cells can form tumors, impair the immune system and cause other changes that prevent the body from functioning regularly. ● Is cancer genetic? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Genetic factors can contribute to the development of cancer. (2) A person's genetic code tells their cells when to divide and expire. Changes in the genes can lead to faulty instructions, and cancer can result. ● Examples of approaches to cancer treatment: Chemotherapy, Hormone therapy, Immunotherapy, Precision medicine, or personalized medicine, Radiation therapy, Stem cell transplant, Targeted therapy.
Source	The Hindu, Cancer.net

E-cigarette issue

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Indian Journal of Clinical Practice (IJCP) Group, a doctor-run publisher of medical journals partnered with American e-cigarette maker Juul Labs Inc. which is evaluating an entry into India. ● Many health experts criticised IJCP for partnering with it.
<p>More in news</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unethical act: Public health experts said, it is highly unethical for a scientific journal to align itself to any side of a scientific debate. ● Divided opinions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) E-cigarettes, which dispense nicotine by heating a liquid, are a controversial subject. (2) Even though their aerosols are thought to contain fewer carcinogens than cigarette smoke, experts are divided about their safety. (3) India's Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare favours a ban, and has advised all States to clamp down on the sales and manufacture of these products. (4) However, some experts say e-cigarettes can be a part of "harm reduction" policies, because they are a comparatively safe alternative to combustible cigarettes.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

Trans fat

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kerala government's health department has drawn up an action plan to generate public awareness on the harmful effects of trans fatty acids (TFA) in commercially available food items and to encourage the local food industry to meet the current statutory limits set for TFA. ● The draft is expected to be finalised and released shortly.
<p>More in news</p>	 <p>The infographic 'Trans fatty acids Action plan' is divided into two main sections: 'Action plan' and 'Enforcement activities'. The 'Action plan' includes 'Massive awareness campaigns' such as 'On harmful effects of trans fat and HFSS¹ in foods at public places, hospitals, movie halls' and 'IEC² campaigns to rope in celebrities as ambassadors of healthy food'. The 'Enforcement activities' section lists: 'Identify manufacturers and suppliers of PHVOs³ to bakeries, restaurants, collect samples', 'Monitor retail sales of PHVOs and test samples of various brands', 'Scientific sessions on TFA and training on using TFA-free alternatives', 'Monitor oils, fats used for frying, making snacks; test samples', 'Testing of a range of food products to assess trans fat content', 'Meetings with bakers, restaurant owners, unorganised sector FBOs⁴', and 'Preparing guidelines on action to be taken against violators'. A legend at the bottom defines: 1. HIGH FAT, SUGAR, SALT; 2. INFORMATION, EDUCATION, COMMUNICATION; 3. PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED VEGETABLE OILS; 4. FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The year-long action plan has specific components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Building awareness on trans fat amongst food business operators (FBOs) and giving them scientific sessions and training on how they can keep their food TFA-free. (2) Generating public awareness on the harmful effects of trans fat, especially among schoolchildren, is being given special focus so that the demand for healthier versions of their favourite foods come from the children themselves.

	<p>(3) Clear timelines are being set as to when each of the components of the plan should be completed and when enforcement should begin.</p> <p>(4) Salt being a major contributor to hypertension and stroke, the action plan also plans to address the high salt content in processed foods, pickles, papads and condiments by encouraging manufacturers to move to low sodium options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need for alternatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs) are one of the main sources of TFA in industrially produced food. (2) There is need to switch to TFA-free margarine or shortening to produce baked goods. (3) But alternative technologies and know-how need to provide to for re-adjusting recipes to maintain the taste and texture of products of food industry.
Source	The Hindu

e-AUSHADHI

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The e-AUSHADHI portal was launched for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters.
e-AUSHADHI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This new e-portal is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative. ● It is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability. ● It will provide real time information of the licensed manufactures and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances. ● Benefits and main objectives of 'e-Aushadhi': <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) To implement a transparent system for procurement, storage and distribution of quality drugs, supplies, equipments etc. required for the hospitals at reasonable competitive price. (2) To ensure adequate savings in the drug budget by scientific forecasting system based on the preparation of essential drug list and its actual consumption. (3) Monitoring the budget and drug consumption pattern by introducing pass book system. (4) To improve infrastructure of the existing drug ware house in district. (5) Streamline the Drug warehouse management, quality management, equipment inventory management, equipment complain chain management, equipment auction life cycle, human resource and finance management in an optimized and efficient manner. (6) Enhance the use of technology as a cost-effective solution to support the OSMC administration's step towards new direction. (7) Support the operational and strategic information needs of the OSMC. (8) Provide an infrastructure for the sharing of information and computer applications throughout the OSMC hierarchy.
Source	The Hindu

IPS cells

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A team of Japanese researchers will carry out an unprecedented trial using human-induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) to treat spinal cord injuries. ● The team at Tokyo's Keio University has received government approval for the trial — which have the potential to develop into any cell in the body — to treat patients with serious spinal cord injuries.
More about trial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The team will transplant two million iPS cells into the spines of the patients, who will be monitored for a year. ● World's first clinical trial: The strict limitations on the number of participants are necessary because the process is an unprecedented and world's first clinical trial. ● Parkinson's trial: The research team hopes to test the efficacy and safety of the treatment for chronic injuries as well in the future if they can confirm the safety of the technique through the clinical trial. ● Basic terminologies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Parkinson's disease: It is a chronic, degenerative neurological disorder that affects the body's motor system, often causing shaking and other difficulties in movement. (2) iPS cells: These are created by stimulating mature, already specialised, cells back into a juvenile state — basically cloning without the need for an embryo.
Source	The Hindu

New Universe map

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A new map of the night sky published charts hundreds of thousands of previously unknown galaxies discovered using a telescope that can detect light sources optical instruments cannot see. ● The international team behind the unprecedented space survey said their discovery literally shed new light on some of the Universe's deepest secrets, including the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project participants: More than 200 astronomers from 18 countries were involved in the study. ● LOFAR telescope: The LOFAR telescope is made up of a network of radio antenna across seven countries, forming the equivalent of a 1,300-km diameter satellite dish. ● Technology used: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) It used radio astronomy with Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope to look at a segment of sky over the northern hemisphere. (2) It picks up traces or "jets" of ancient radiation produced when galaxies merge. (3) These jets, previously undetected, can extend over millions of light years ● LOFAR observations: The map created by the LOFAR observations contains data equivalent to the capacity of ten million DVDs yet charts just two percent of the sky. ● Radio astronomy: It allows scientists to detect radiation produced when massive celestial objects interact.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How it will help?:The discovery of the new light sources may also help scientists better understand the behaviour of one of space's most enigmatic phenomena.
Source	The Hindu

Conversion of used edible oil into Bio-ATF

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dehradun-based Indian Institute of Petroleum has successfully finished a pilot test to convert used cooking oil into bio-aviation turbine fuel (Bio-ATF). ● It can be blended with conventional ATF and used as aircraft fuel.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About pilot project: The Institute collected used cooking oil from caterers and hotels in Dehradun for the pilot, which has now set the platform for commercial use of the technology. ● Identical to other plant-based oils: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The chemical composition of the used cooking oil is identical to other plant-based oils that have been converted to Bio-ATF. (2) Pilot test has proven that it is very similar to Bio-ATF derived from jatropha oil. ● Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The test assumes importance as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched the Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel. (2) As many as 64 companies in 101 locations across the country have been identified for the purpose by FSSAI. (3) The food safety body says that by 2020, it should be possible to recover about 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for conversion into bio-fuel. ● How pilot test will going to help?Reducing the re-use of cooking oil in the food industry will have positive public health outcomes and its conversion into Bio-ATF will help the aviation sector reduce its carbon footprint.
Source	The Hindu

Illicit use of DNA by China

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As per Chinese rights group, communist govt. is preparing a DNA database that could be used to chase down Uighurs who resist Beijing's plans.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uighurs: A predominantly Muslim ethnic group. ● Re-education camp: It has detained up to 1 million people in what China calls "re-education" camps, drawing condemnation from human rights groups and a threat of sanctions from the Trump administration. Use of genetic material: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) USA: Police forces in the U.S. and elsewhere use genetic material from family members to find suspects and solve crimes. (2) China: Chinese officials, who are building a broad nationwide database of DNA samples, have cited the crime-fighting benefits of China's own genetic studies. ● Challenge to the scientific community: China's campaign poses a direct challenge to the scientific community and the way it makes cutting-edge knowledge publicly available.
Source	The Hindu

7

Internal Security

Operation Smile

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 'Operation Smile-V' initiative launched by Hyderabad Police has helped in rescuing 325 children, who were either working as labourers or begging on the streets, since January 1 this year.
Operation Smile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective: To trace the missing children and rescue child labourers, Operation Smile-V was launched on January 1 across Telangana. Operation Smile also called as Operation Muskaan is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to rescue/rehabilitate missing children.
Source	The Hindu

Centre bans Kashmir outfit

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Union Home Ministry has banned the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for promoting terrorism and radicalising and recruiting youth for terrorist activities in India.
More in news	<div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px;"> <p>Spreading terror</p> <p>The govt. has banned the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen for radicalising and recruiting youth for terrorist activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly well-educated urban youth belonging to the outfit had carried out grenade attacks on checkposts and snatched weapons from security forces in the past Last year, eight members of the group were killed TuM played a major role in the commission of terrorist acts and a number of its cadres have been arrested </div>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> TuM claims to be fighting for the "liberation of Kashmir." Set up in the 1990s. The TuM carried out a number of terrorist attacks besides subversive acts, namely grenade attacks, weapons snatching incidents, supporting other terrorist outfits such as Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), etc. in terms of financial and logistic support in the recent past. TuM is headed by Jamil-ur-Rehman of Lajora in Pulwama.
Source	The Hindu

Government's proposal on Whatsapp

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent Indian government's proposal make it mandatory for online platforms to trace the origin of unlawful messages is 'overbroad'.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It will thus require WhatsApp to re-architect the product into one without privacy.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Privacy issue: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The government and WhatsApp have been at loggerheads over the issue of tracing the origin of fake messages. (2) The Facebook-owned instant messaging platform has said on multiple occasions that it would not comply with the government's demand as it would undermine the privacy of WhatsApp users. (3) The government, on the other hand, said that it did not want WhatsApp to decrypt and read messages, but insisted that it should be able to trace the origin of messages that lead to serious crimes. ● User data: WhatsApp has 1.5 billion monthly active users, bans about 2 million accounts every month.
Source	The Hindu

Heron TP (aka IAI Eitan)

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Indian government has approved the procurement of ten missile-armed Heron TP (aka IAI Eitan) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to be operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF) from Israel in a bid to enhance its unmanned warfare capabilities.
Heron TP (aka IAI Eitan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Produced by: Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). ● Specifications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unmanned reconnaissance aircraft ● Range- 7,400 kilometers (4,600 miles). ● Capacity- 2,700kg payload ● Max takeoff weight- 5,400kg ● Medium-altitude, long endurance UAV. ● Maximum flight time- 36 hours in favourable weather conditions.
Source	The Hindu

National Security Act (NSA)

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The authorities in Agar Malwa district of Madhya Pradesh booked two men under the draconian National Security Act (NSA) for allegedly transporting cattle illegally and disrupting public peace.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is NSA? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The National Security Act is a stringent law that allows preventive detention for months, if authorities are satisfied that a person is a threat to national security or law and order. (2) The person does not need to be charged during this period of detention. The goal is to prevent the individual from committing a crime. ● Historical background: The National Security Act was promulgated on September 23, 1980, during the Indira Gandhi government and its purpose is "to provide for preventive detention in certain cases and for matters connected therewith". ● Applicability: It applies to the entirety of India, except Jammu and Kashmir. ● As per NSA, the grounds for preventive detention of a person include:

	<p>(1) Acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.</p> <p>(2) Regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.</p> <p>(3) Preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detention period: <p>(1) Under the National Security Act, an individual can be detained without a charge for up to 12 months; the state government needs to be intimated that a person has been detained under the NSA.</p> <p>(2) A person detained under the National Security Act can be held for 10 days without being told the charges against them.</p> ● Appeal provision: The detained person can appeal before a high court advisory board but they are not allowed a lawyer during the trial. ● Misuse: The NSA has repeatedly come under criticism for the way it is used by the police.
Source	The Hindu

Government waived anti-corruption clauses in Rafale deal

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The €7.87 billion Rafale deal between India and France involved major and unprecedented concessions from the Indian government. ● It includes dropping of critical provisions for anti-corruption penalties and making payments through an escrow account. 		
More in news	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p>Box 1</p> <p>The DAC ratified and approved the following:-</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>a] Revised Article 5 of the IGA.</p> <p>b] Revised Clause 21 (Arbitration) of the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>c] Non-Inclusion of the Standard DPP Clauses related to 'Penalty for Undue Influence', 'Agents/ Agency Commission' and 'Access to Accounts' In the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>d] Minor Variations from DPP 2013 guidelines for Clauses 8.1, 27 and 29 of Aircraft and Weapons Package Supply Protocols and xxx of Weapons Package Supply Protocol.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>e] Inclusion of additional Articles 9 to 17 of Offset Contracts to those specified in model Offset Contract of DPP 2013.</p> <p>f] Revised Article 9 of the Offset Contracts aligned with the xx clause of the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>g] Revised Article 12 of the Offset Contracts aligned with the Contract.</p> <p>h] Revised Offset Schedules of DA and MBDA.</p> </td> </tr> </table> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political implication for current government: This has significant political implications for the Narendra Modi government which has claimed that eliminating corruption is a major plank of its agenda for governance and promised action against alleged corruption in defence deals struck during the United Progressive Alliance Government. 	<p>a] Revised Article 5 of the IGA.</p> <p>b] Revised Clause 21 (Arbitration) of the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>c] Non-Inclusion of the Standard DPP Clauses related to 'Penalty for Undue Influence', 'Agents/ Agency Commission' and 'Access to Accounts' In the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>d] Minor Variations from DPP 2013 guidelines for Clauses 8.1, 27 and 29 of Aircraft and Weapons Package Supply Protocols and xxx of Weapons Package Supply Protocol.</p>	<p>e] Inclusion of additional Articles 9 to 17 of Offset Contracts to those specified in model Offset Contract of DPP 2013.</p> <p>f] Revised Article 9 of the Offset Contracts aligned with the xx clause of the Supply Protocols.</p> <p>g] Revised Article 12 of the Offset Contracts aligned with the Contract.</p> <p>h] Revised Offset Schedules of DA and MBDA.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standard Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) clauses dropped: DPP clauses on “Penalty for use of Undue Influence, Agents/Agency Commission, and Access to Company accounts” of Dassault Aviation and MBDA France were dropped by the Indian government in the supply protocols. ● Terms of the IGA: Under the terms of the IGA signed between India and France in Delhi on September 23, 2016, Dassault is the supplier of the Rafale aircraft package while MBDA France is the supplier of the weapons package to the Indian Air Force.
Source	The Hindu

Budget shortfall worries Defence Services

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The shortfall in Defence allocation in the interim Budget 2019-20, especially in its capital allocation, has left the Services worried as it threatens to derail the capability enhancement and modernisation underway. 																			
More in news	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Widening deficit A look at the allocation for the services in the interim Budget</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">SERVICE</th> <th colspan="3">CAPITAL</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Projected (In ₹lakh crore)</th> <th>Allotted</th> <th>Committed liabilities</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Army</td> <td>36,000</td> <td>29,700</td> <td>21,600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Navy</td> <td>35,714</td> <td>22,227</td> <td>25,461</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Air Force</td> <td>74,895</td> <td>39,347</td> <td>47,413</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>As far as we are concerned, the state today is 68% of our equipment is in the vintage category, with just about 24% in the current, and 8% in the state of the art category LT. GEN. SARATH CHAND, Vice Chief of Army Staff to the parliamentary standing committee last year</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Significant shortfall: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A look at the numbers reveals the shortfall is so significant that, for the Navy and Air Force, the capital allocation does even meet the committed liabilities, that is, payments for deals already contracted. (2) The Army, meanwhile, is looking at a shortfall in its non-salary revenue expenditure. (3) The Defence allocation in the interim budget was Rs. 3.18 lakh crore, and Defence pensions stood at 1.12 lakh crore. (4) Of this, allocation for revenue expenditure (net) is Rs. 2.01 lakh crore and capital expenditure (net) is Rs. 1.08 lakh crore. (5) The share of the three Services in the overall defence budget stands as follows: Army–54%, Navy–14% and Air Force–22%. (6) The Army, with its large size, has a huge revenue burden compared to the other two Services, and a significant part of it goes for salaries. (7) The Army has also embarked on its biggest reorganisation drive since independence and that would also entail some financial requirement. (8) The three Services are pushing through several procurements on a priority basis, many of which were to reach a decisive phase in the coming year, but there are no funds left for their conclusion. 	SERVICE	CAPITAL			Projected (In ₹lakh crore)	Allotted	Committed liabilities	Army	36,000	29,700	21,600	Navy	35,714	22,227	25,461	Air Force	74,895	39,347	47,413
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Source	The Hindu																			

India inks contract for 72,000 assault rifles

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After several failed attempts to equip the infantry with a basic rifle, the Army signed a contract with Sig Sauer of the U.S. for 72,400 SIG716 assault rifles for front-line soldiers deployed in operational areas.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Fast track procurement:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A contract for 72,400 assault rifles through fast track procurement was signed with Sig Sauer. (2) The entire lot will be delivered in 12 months. ● <u>Division of lot:</u> Of the 72,400 rifles, 66,400 are meant for the Army, 2,000 for the Navy and 4,000 for the Air Force. ● <u>Specifications:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Effective range of 500 m. (2) Weight of less than 3 kg. ● <u>Replacement for INSAS rifles:</u> The new rifles will replace the Indian National Small Arms System (INSAS) rifles. <u>EoI for naval utility helicopters:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Defence Ministry also issued the Expression of Interest (EoI) for a deal to buy 111 naval utility helicopters. (2) This is the first project to be executed through the strategic partnership policy. (3) Under this, the chosen Indian private company will team up with the Original Equipment Manufacturer to build the product in India. (4) The copters will replace the ageing Chetak fleet.
Source	The Hindu

Panic button on mobiles

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The government launched the panic button feature on mobile phones for safety of women and other emergency services across 16 States and Mumbai. ● The initiative was opened jointly by Home Minister and Women and Child Development Minister nearly three years after the government first made the safety feature a mandatory requirement in phones through a gazette notification.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In order to access an emergency service, such as police, medical and other services, a user can dial 112 from any phone. ● <u>Various access methods:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) A smartphone user can also press the power button thrice in quick succession and a user of a basic or feature phone can long press 5 or 9 on the key pad. (2) One can also download the 112 mobile application. ● <u>Process post pressing 112:</u> Once a user presses the panic button, five calls will be made to emergency number 112 as well as call log details and the geo location of the victim will be sent by SMSs and emails to police officials at the State, district and local level. ● <u>Where it available now?</u>

	<p>(1) It can be availed in Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, UP, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Andaman, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu, Jammu & Kashmir as well as Mumbai.</p> <p>(2) The safety feature had earlier been launched in Nagaland and Himachal Pradesh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The panic button facility, also known as the Emergency Response Support System, is being supported under the Nirbhaya Fund set up for safety of women.
Source	The Hindu

Brah Mos

Why is it in news?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More lethal version of the supersonic cruise missile BrahMos is under development and the prototype would be ready for testing in about three years.
More in news	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planned improvement: The idea is to have a smaller missile with the same capabilities. So the missile will fly at 3.5 times the speed of sound instead of 2.8 Mach. The range will remain at 300 km. ● New components: For this several mechanical components in the missile are being replaced with electrical components which will also reduce the size. ● NG variant on LCA: The reduced weight enables the NG variant to be carried by the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). An LCA can carry two missiles while a Su-30MKI can carry five of them.
BrahMos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● BrahMos is a joint venture between India and Russia and named after Brahmaputra and Moscowa rivers. ● It is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against surface and sea-based targets. ● The development trials of an anti-shipping variant began in 2003 and combat trials began in 2005. ● The land and sea variants of BrahMos are already operational with the Army and Navy and the air-launched version is under development.
Source	

AK-103 assault rifles deal with Russia

<p>Why is it in news?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India and Russia are close to concluding an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for a multi-billion deal to locally bulk manufacture AK-103 assault rifles.
<p>More in news</p>	<div data-bbox="491 293 1305 783" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">King of assault</p>  <p>The AK-103 assault rifle is the third generation of the Kalashnikovs, an upgrade of the AK47 and AKM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forearm, magazine, butt stock, and pistol grip are made of high strength plastic and feature great durability to stress. Protective coatings ensure excellent corrosion resistance of metal parts The AK-103 can carry a 40 mm grenade launcher or a bayonet <p>Users: Countries which use variants of AK-103 include Russia, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Libya, Namibia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Venezuela</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">Source: Kalashnikov Concern</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracts in line: The Army has recently signed a contract for 72,400 assault rifles from Sig Sauer of the U.S. and another tender for 93,895 Close Quarter Battle (CQB) carbines is in advanced stage of conclusion. These rifles are for frontline troops deployed in forward areas. Replacement for INSAS: Army is looking to replace the indigenous INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifles in use with a modern rifle. Production with technology transfer: The AK-103 will be bulk produced by the OFB with technology transfer.
<p>Source</p>	<p>The Hindu</p>

NOTES

