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XXI. QUESTIONS
HEALTH

1. Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)

PMNCH Delegation recently called on the Prime Minister and presented the logo for the 2018 Partners’ Forum.

PMNCH Delegation:

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (The Partnership, PMNCH) is an alliance of more than 1000 organizations in 77 countries from the sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health communities, as well as health influencing sectors.

The Partnership is governed by a Board, and administered by a Secretariat hosted at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Partnership provides a platform for organizations to align objectives, strategies and resources, and agree on interventions to improve maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.

The Partnership’s role complements the work and accountability processes of its individual members, enabling them to deliver more collectively than they would alone.

This Partner-centric approach mobilizes, engages and empowers different implementing partners. It allows them to coordinate their actions and activities, and encourages and promotes mutual accountability.

2. World Immunization Week

World Immunization Week is celebrated from 24th-30th of April by the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to increase awareness about vaccination.

Aim: It aims to highlight the collective action needed to ensure that every person is protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Theme: “Protected together, #VaccinesWork”.

Global efforts:

Despite improvements in individual countries and a strong global rate of new vaccine introduction, all of the GVAP targets for disease elimination—including measles, rubella, and maternal and neonatal tetanus—are behind schedule.

3. FSSAI introduces Project Dhoop

In order to address rising incidence of Vitamin ‘D’ Deficiencies (VDD), particularly amongst the young people, FSSAI has launched a unique initiative, ‘Project Dhoop’ in association with NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools. Project Dhoop urges schools to shift their morning assembly to noon time, mainly between 11am and 1pm to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments. It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

4. Viral Hepatitis

With viral hepatitis becoming as serious health problem as the “big three” communicable diseases — HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — in the country, the Union Health Ministry
is ready to roll out a Rs 500 crore-three-year comprehensive integrated national action plan to check morbidity and mortality due to the disease that inflicts the liver. The action plan has been developed with the key objective to provide an actionable framework of evidence based, priority interventions to support the national response for prevention, control and management of viral hepatitis in the country.

**Viral hepatitis** Inflammation of liver is usually referred as hepatitis. Viral hepatitis is a widespread infectious disease normally caused by the hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E. The condition can progress to liver fibrosis (scarring), cirrhosis or liver cancer. It can be caused by any of the known five hepatotropic viruses, namely — hepatitis A, B, C, D and E which are highly divergent in their structure, epidemiology, mode of transmission, incubation period, signs/symptoms, diagnosis, prevention and treatment options.

5. **Narcotic Control Bureau**

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has raised concerns about the abuse and trafficking of Tramadol, a pain killer and suggested that **the availability of Tramadol be substantially reduced** in order to track its movement in the market. It is proposed to bring Tramadol, a painkiller, under the ambit of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

**Suggestions:**
- Manufacture Tramadol and codeine-based cough syrups in small batches to enable authorities to track the manufacturer.
- Verify the existence of sale premises before a license is granted by the states and conduct surprise raids in this regard.
- All the state licensing authorities should re-consider proposal of reduction in batch size for manufacturing such drugs to control the diversion towards its abuse and misuse.

The Narcotics Control Bureau is the apex coordinating agency. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 which came into effect from the 14th November, 1985
made an express provision for constituting a Central Authority for the purpose of exercising the powers and functions of the Central Government under the Act.

6. **National Biopharma Mission**

The Union Government has entered into agreement with World Bank for flexible financing arrangement to accelerate research towards early development for biopharmaceuticals under National Biopharma Mission.

*The agreement was signed between the project implementing agency – BIRAC* a PSU of DBT, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Govt. of India and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (on behalf of World Bank).

**Significance:**
- The programme will specifically focus on the development of new vaccines, biotherapeutics, diagnostics and medical devices to better address the rising burden of diseases in the country.
- It will also bring isolated centres of excellence together, enhance regional capabilities and strengthen the current bio-clusters network in terms of capacities as well as quantity and quality of output.
- This would strengthen translational capability of academic researchers; empower bio-entrepreneurs and SMEs by decreasing the cost and risk during early stages of product development and also elevate the innovation quotient of the industry.

The **National Biopharma Mission** is being implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) – a Public Sector Undertaking of Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

**Aim** - to make India a hub for design and development of novel, affordable and effective biopharmaceutical products such as vaccines, biologics and medical devices for combating public health concerns.

**EDUCATION**
1. Atal Tinkering Labs
The ATL Community Day was held across India, over the course of April 13 – 16. The initiative is an effort to spread awareness as well as engage the local communities in the neighbourhood of an Atal Tinkering Lab, to come and experience the exciting new world of science and future technologies. AIM has selected more than 2400 schools in 2017 for establishing Atal Tinkering Labs.

**Atal Tinkering Labs**

**Vision:** ‘Cultivate one Million children in India as Neoteric Innovators’

**Objective:** The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.

**Financial Support:** AIM will provide grant-in-aid that includes a one-time establishment cost of Rs. 10 lakh and operational expenses of Rs. 10 lakh for a maximum period of 5 years to each ATL.

**Eligibility:** Schools (minimum Grade VI – X) managed by Government, local body or private trusts/society can set up ATL.

2. MoU between ICI and IGNTU
A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) an autonomous body under the Ministry of Tourism, and Indira Gandhi National Tribal University (IGNTU), Amarkantak.

The MOU was signed for imparting collaborative degree programmes including research in the field of culinary arts.

**Indian Culinary Institute (ICI): is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Tourism.**

**Main objective** of setting up of the ICI was to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve, document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine, meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine, as also of promoting Cuisine as a Niche Tourism product.
Indira Gandhi National Tribal University is located in Amarkantak, Anuppur district, Madhya Pradesh.
It was established through an Act of Parliament, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Act, 2007.

3. **NIRF India Rankings 2018**

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) India Rankings 2018 have been announced. NIRF Indian Rankings 2018 was the third edition of the rankings that were introduced in the year 2016.
The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.
The parameters for ranking broadly cover “Teaching, Learning and Resources,” “Research and Professional Practices,” “Graduation Outcomes,” “Outreach and Inclusivity,” and “Perception”.
The 2018 rankings include nine different categories—overall, universities, engineering, colleges, management, pharmacy, medical, architecture, and law. Out of which sections like medical, architecture and law have been introduced this year.

**Performance of various institutions:**
- The Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru and Delhi’s Miranda House are India’s best university and college this year.
- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, Nalsar University of Law in Hyderabad and Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur ranked number 1 in their respective categories.
- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras was declared the best engineering college.
- Delhi University’s Miranda House topped the college category this year as well.
- Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad occupied the top position among management institutions this year also.

**Significance of NIRF:** Ranking promotes competition among the Universities and drive them to strive for excellence. The rankings assume significance as performance of institutions has been linked with “Institutions of Eminence” scheme.

**Institutions of Eminence scheme:** The institutes of eminence scheme under the Union human resource development (HRD) ministry aims to project Indian institutes to global recognition.

The 20 selected institutes will enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy. The government will run 10 of these and they will receive special funding.

The selection shall be made through challenge method mode by the Empowered Expert Committee constituted for the purpose.

Only higher education institutions currently placed in the top 500 of global rankings or top 50 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are eligible to apply for the eminence tag.

The private Institutions of Eminence can also come up as greenfield ventures provided the sponsoring organisation submits a convincing perspective plan for 15 years.

4. **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0**

Human Resource Development Ministry has launched Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a flagship programme of the Ministry of Human Resources Development, with the intention to enrich Rural India.

It aims to leverage the knowledge base and resources of the Premier Institutions of the country to bring in transformational change in rural developmental process.

It also aims to create a vibrant relationship between the society and the higher educational institutes, with the latter providing the knowledge and technology support to improve the
livelihoods in rural areas and to upgrade the capabilities of both the public and private organisations in the society.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0:

- Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0, the institutions have been selected on a Challenge Mode and the scheme has been extended to 750 reputed Higher Educational Institutes (both public and private) of the country.
- Also, scope for providing Subject Expert Groups and Regional Coordinating Institutes to handhold and guide the participating institutions has been strengthened.
- IIT Delhi has been designated to function as the National Coordinating Institute for this programme and the Ministry intends to extend the coverage to all the reputed Higher Educational Institutes, in a phased manner. Each selected institute would adopt a cluster of villages / panchayats and gradually expand the outreach over a period of time.

5. POCSO e-Box

To equip the children with the information regarding the possible modes of protection/complaints, the National Council Of Educational Research And Training (NCERT) has published the information regarding Childline (1098) 24×7 Helpline for children and POCSO e-box on the back side of the front cover of all course books from Class 6 to Class 12.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO), e-Box, is an online complaint management system for easy and direct reporting of sexual offences against children and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act, 2012. E-Box is very simple to operate and will help to maintain the confidentiality of the complaint.

POCSO Act, 2012
Being concerned about offences against children, the Government enacted POCSO Act, 2012 to protect them from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography, while safeguarding the interest of the child at every stage of the judicial process. This is achieved by incorporating child friendly mechanisms for reporting, recording of evidence, investigation and speedy trial of offences through designated Special Courts. Any human being up to the age of 18 years is recognized as a child under the POCSO Act.

6. Integration of e-SANAD portal and National Academic Depository

In a bid to make education system in India more transparent, the integration of e-SANAD portal and NAD – National Academic Depository has been launched by the Union HRD Ministry.

e-Sanad is a project aimed at online submission/verification of documents with an ultimate object to extend contact less, cashless, faceless and paperless document attestation service for apostille and normal attestation to applicants in India (to be extended to Indians residing abroad as well in a phased manner).
The project is being implemented by NIC in coordination with CBSE, States/UTs and the Ministry of External Affairs in a phased manner.

National Academic Depository (NAD) is a 24X7 online store house of all academic awards viz. certificates, diplomas, degrees, mark-sheets etc. duly digitised and lodged by academic institutions / boards / eligibility assessment bodies.
The UGC has signed a tripartite agreement with NSDL Database Management Limited (NDML) and CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL) for operationalising NAD.
NAD not only ensures easy access to and retrieval of an academic award but also validates and guarantees its authenticity and safe storage.
National Academic Depository comprises of two interoperable digital depositories viz. CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL) and NSDL Database Management Limited (NDML).

7. **Study in India programme**

With an aim to provide students across the world an opportunity to study in Indian educational institutions, the Union HRD Ministry has launched “Study in India” programme. The “Study in India” is an innovative initiative to attract students from countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa to come and experience the very best of academic learning from the top institutions in India.

**Key features:** Under the programme, meritorious students would also be provided with fee waiver and scholarship. The Institute concerned will bear the expenditure on the fee waiver based on cross-subsidisation or through its existing funding. One of the objectives for the programme is to improve global ranking for Indian educational institutes.

**Implementation:** This will be achieved through systematic brand-building, identifying quality institutions for receiving the students, creating suitable infrastructure and facilitation structures.

**Significance of the move:** The programme will not only encourage more foreign students to choose India as a destination for higher education but will also double India’s market share of global education exports from less than 1% to 2%. The move is also aimed to improve global ranking of Indian educational institutes.

8. **HRD Ministry constituted a Committee to examine the conduct of Class 10 and Class 12 examinations**

**Objective:** to prevent leakages.

**Composition:** seven members

**Submission of report:** on or before May 31, 2018
The terms of reference of the Committee include:

(i) Revisiting all aspects related to the security checks for ensuring that the question papers reach the students without tampering,

(ii) Examining and assessing all areas of potential weakness in the present system of transporting question papers from the printing presses to the students, and Suggesting ways in which the system can be made more secure with the use of technology and minimisation of human intervention in the process.

LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

1. Atal New India Challenge

The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under the NITI Aayog has launched the Atal New India Challenge.


Working: Under the Atal New India Challenge, AIM will invite prospective innovators/MSMEs/start-ups to design market-ready products, using cutting edge technologies or prototypes across 17 identified focus areas such as Climate Smart Agriculture, Smart Mobility, Predictive Maintenance of Rolling Stock, Waste Management etc.

Grants: Applicants showing capability, intent and potential to productize technologies will be awarded grants up to Rs1 crore. This grant will be further supplemented by mentoring, handholding, incubating and other support as needed at various stages of commercialization, while generating wider deployment for the product.
The **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** is Government of India’s flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country. AIM is mandated to create an umbrella structure to oversee innovation ecosystem of the country and revolutionizing the innovation eco-system – touching upon the entire innovation life cycle through various programs. **Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs)** create innovators, Atal Incubation Centre and support to Established Incubation Centre will take the innovations to the market and a network of Incubators shall help create enterprises around these innovations.

2. **Draft Code on Health and Safety released**


**Application:** establishments employing 10 or more workers.

**Consolidation:** 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions (Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, etc.)

**Key provisions of the draft Code include:**

- **Duties of employers and employees:** Every employer is required to ensure that the workplace is free from hazards that cause injury or diseases. The employer will give an employment letter to every worker, as prescribed by the appropriate government (central government for certain employments such as railways and mines, and state governments for all other employments). Every employee is required to take care of his own health and safety, and of those affected by his conduct at the workplace.

- **Rights of employees:** Every employee will have the right to obtain information from the employer related to safety and health at work. The employee may inform the facilitator if the safety and health arrangements are inadequate. A facilitator will be empowered to examine the workplace and inquire into accidents or dangerous occurrences that take place.
- **Advisory bodies:** Occupational Safety and Health Advisory Boards will be set up at the national and state level. The National Health Advisory Board will advise on standards, rules, and regulations to be framed under the draft Code. The central government will notify these standards. The state boards will advise the state governments on matters referred to them.

- **Working Hours:** The Code provides that no worker will be allowed to work in an establishment for more than 48 hours a week. A worker will not be allowed to work overtime for more than 100 hours in a quarter.

- **Welfare facilities:** The employer will provide welfare facilities to the workers, at the standards prescribed by the central government. These facilities will include separate bathing places and locker rooms for male and female employees.

3. **Draft Code on Social Security released**

Key features of the draft Code include:

- **Application of Code:** The draft Code will apply to: (i) workers employed by any entity in India (an enterprise or a household), (ii) owner of an entity in India, (iii) international workers, and (iv) Indian citizens outside India, who opt to be covered under social security schemes.

The draft Code will **not apply to certain entities and workers.** These include establishments of the central and state governments, and Indian employees working in a foreign country with whom India has a social security agreement.
Social security organisations: The draft Code sets up three bodies:

(i) National Social Security Council, headed by the Prime Minister, to review and monitor the implementation of social security in India,

(ii) Central Board of Social Security, headed by the Minister of Labour, to administer scheme funds and ensure coordination between state boards,

(iii) State Board of Social Security (in each state), headed by the Chief Minister of the respective state. The State Boards will be responsible for implementing social security schemes in their states.

Registration of workers: The State Boards, in coordination with the Central Board, will provide a portable social security account for the registration of workers. This account, called the Vishwakarma Karmik Suraksha Khata (VIKAS), will be linked to the Aadhaar number of the worker.

Funds and schemes: The draft Code establishes two funds in each state, to be managed by the respective State Board: (i) a fund for social security, and (ii) a fund for gratuity. The employer and workers will make contributions to the funds, as a proportion of their wages. In case of the gratuity fund, the employer will contribute 2% of the wage payable to each employee.

The central or state governments may formulate schemes for social security after consulting the National Council.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Delhi becomes first city to roll-out Euro VI fuel

New Delhi has become the first city in India to deploy Bharat Stage 6 Fuel for both petrol and diesel (two years ahead of the previously scheduled date of April 1, 2020) to help battle Delhi’s long-standing terminal pollution problem.
BS norms
The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.
India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.

**Difference between BS-IV and the new BS-VI:** presence of Sulphur.

The newly introduced fuel is estimated to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80 per cent, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm. As per the analysts, the emission of NOx (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by nearly 70 per cent and 25 per cent from cars with petrol engines.

2. **Van Dhan Vikas Kendra**
   Ministry of Tribal Affairs is planning to launch first ever “Van Dhan Vikas Kendra” at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh for value addition of Forest Produce.
   - Value addition assumes critical importance in ensuring remunerative prices to the tribals in this approach.
   - This first model Van Dhan Vikas Kendra is being implemented for training of 300 beneficiaries with a total outlay of Rs 43.38 lakhs for training, providing equipments & tools for primary level processing and infrastructure & building for housing the Kendra.
   - It provides skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.
   - The selection of the tribal beneficiaries and formation of the SHGs under this has been undertaken by TRIFED.

3. **Manas National Park**
Assam Spring Festival is being held at the Manas National Park.

Aim: to promote the local food and culture of the fringe villagers. It is an attempt to create a model of alternative livelihood through food, handloom and culture.

Manas National Park is a national park, UNESCO Natural World Heritage site, a Project Tiger reserve, an elephant reserve and a biosphere reserve in Assam, India.

4. NAAMES Mission

In a first, NASA is conducting a study of the world’s largest phytoplankton bloom in the North Atlantic, named the North Atlantic Aerosols and Marine Ecosystems Study (NAAMES) mission, to see how the tiny sea critters influence the climate in every season. It is the first research mission to conduct an integrated study of all four distinct phases of the world’s largest phytoplankton bloom.

The North Atlantic Aerosols and Marine Ecosystems Study (NAAMES) is an interdisciplinary investigation resolving key processes controlling marine ecosystems and aerosols that are essential to our understanding of Earth system function and future change. NAAMES is funded by the NASA Earth Venture Suborbital Program and is the first EV-S mission focused on studying the coupled ocean ecosystem and atmosphere. NAAMES consists of four, combined ship and aircraft field campaigns that are each aligned to a specific event in the annual plankton lifecycle.

5. National Clean Air Programme
The Environment Ministry has come out with a draft national action plan proposing multiple strategies to reduce air pollution.

**Measures proposed:**
- Under the NCAP, the ministry plans to take a host of measures to bring down air pollution.
- These include augmenting the air quality monitoring network, identification of alternative technology for real-time monitoring, setting up of 10 city super network, indoor air pollution monitoring and management and air pollution health impact studies.
- Other measures include air quality forecasting system, issuance of notification on dust management, a three-tier mechanism for review, assessment and inspection for implementation and a national emission inventory.

**Objectives of NCAP:**
- To augment and evolve an effective and a proficient ambient air quality monitoring network across the country to ensure comprehensive and reliable database.
- To have efficient data dissemination and a public outreach mechanism for timely measures for prevention and mitigation of air pollution.
- To have a feasible management plan for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.

**6. Rushikulya**
In a rare occurrence, olive ridley turtles have turned up for mass nesting for the second time at Rushikulya rookery on Odisha coast.
The Rushikulya coast, in Ganjam district of Odisha, is considered to be a major nesting site in the world and lakhs of olive ridleys come here every year to lay eggs.

**Olive Ridley turtles:**
- Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, Olive turtles are a medium-sized species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- They are best known for their behavior of **synchronized nesting in mass numbers**.
- The olive ridley is classified as **Vulnerable** according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and is listed in **Appendix I of CITES**.
- The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridleys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle.

7. **Ramsar tag likely for Sunderbans**

The West Bengal government has given its approval to the State Forest Department to apply for recognition of Sunderban Reserve Forest under the Ramsar Convention.
**Significance:** Matter of pride for the Sunderbans and also bring a lot of international scientific attention and intervention to the area.

Once conferred a Ramsar site status, it will be the largest protected wetland in the country. It will also help promote the Sunderbans as an eco-tourism hotspot.

The Indian Sunderbans, with 2,114 sq. km. of mangrove forests, comprise almost 43% of the mangrove cover in the country according to a 2017 Forest Survey of India report.

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**Ramsar convention:** The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Adopted in 1971 in Ramsar, an Iranian city, the Convention came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states have acceded to become “Contracting Parties”. There are currently 26 sites in India recognised as Ramsar wetland sites of international importance, including the East Kolkata Wetlands also in West Bengal.

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8. **Earth Day 2018**

Earth Day was celebrated on April 22 across the globe.

**Theme of Earth Day 2018:** End Plastic Pollution.

It was first celebrated on April 22, 1970

9. **New system to measure air quality**

India is tying up with the United States and Finland to develop a pollution-forecast system that will help anticipate particulate matter (PM) levels at least two days in advance and at greater resolution than what is possible now. The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will be coordinating this exercise and the plan is to have a system in place by winter.
Currently, the **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR)**, run out of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, serves as the apex forecaster of pollution trends in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad. It generates a likely air quality profile, a day in advance, for these cities.

10. **World’s smallest fern**

Researchers have discovered the world’s smallest land fern in the Ahwa forests of the Western Ghats in Gujarat’s Dang district.

The size of the new Malvi’s adder’s-tongue fern *Ophioglossum malviae* is just one centimetre.

The fingernail-sized fern belongs to a group known as the adder’s-tongue ferns, named after their resemblance to a snake’s tongue.

The ferns are seasonal and grow with the first monsoon rains. They last only for a few months and new plants are born through their spores next year.

11. **Fejervarya goemchi**

- In the **Western Ghats** parts of Goa, scientists have identified a new species of frog called *Fejervarya goemchi*.
- The new species is named after the historical name of the state of Goa.
- Although most of these frogs are terrestrial, they need water bodies to continue for survival.

A four-day Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and UNCCD Secretariat, to build the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation, was recently held in New Delhi.

**UNCCD**

- Established in 1994, the United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference’s Agenda 21.
- To help publicize the Convention, 2006 was declared “International Year of Deserts and Desertification”.
- The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- Its 197 Parties aim, through partnerships, to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention.

**13. Great Barrier Reef**

Australia has pledged Aus $500 million ($379 million) in new funding to restore and protect the Great Barrier Reef. The reef is a critical national asset, contributing Aus$6.4 billion a year to the Australian economy.

**Threats:**
- It is reeling from significant bouts of coral bleaching due to warming sea temperatures linked to climate change.
- It is also under threat from the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish, which has proliferated due to pollution and agricultural run-off. The predator starfish feeds on corals by spreading its stomach over them and using digestive enzymes to liquefy tissue.
- With its heavy use of coal-fired power and relatively small population, Australia is considered one of the world’s worst per-capita greenhouse gas polluters.

The Great Barrier Reef: world’s largest coral reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching for over 2,300 km over an area of approximately 344,400 square km.
The reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.
It is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps.
It was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

14. Trapdoor matriarch

It is the world’s oldest known spider which died recently at the ripe old age of 43 after being monitored for years during a long-term population study in Australia.
The trapdoor matriarch comfortably outlived the previous record holder, a 28-year-old tarantula found in Mexico.

15. Coastal Regulation Zone
The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has framed a new draft Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018.

The salient features of the draft CRZ Notification, 2018 and changes with respect to CRZ Notification, 2011, are as under:

- **CRZ limits on land** along the tidal influenced water bodies has been proposed to be reduced from 100 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less, to 50 meters or the width of the creek, whichever is less.

- **A No Development Zone (NDZ) of 20 meters** has been proposed to be stipulated for all Islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land.

- **For CRZ-III areas**, two separate categories have been proposed viz.: CRZ-III A – Densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall have an NDZ of 50 meters from the HTL as against 200 meters from the HTL stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011. CRZ-III B – Rural areas with population density of below 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200 meters from the HTL.

- **Ease of procedures**: Only such projects/activities, which are located in the CRZ-I & IV areas, shall be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the MoEF&CC. For all other project activities located in CRZ-II/III areas, CRZ clearance shall be considered at the level of the CZMA.

- **FSI**: As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, for CRZ-II areas, Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) had been frozen at 1991 Development Control Regulation (DCR) levels. In the Draft CRZ, 2018 Notification, it has been proposed to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects.

- **Mining**: Regulated limestone mining is proposed to be permitted, subject to strict Environmental safeguards, in areas adequately above the height of HTL, based on recommendations of reputed National Institutes in the Mining field.

- **Disposal of plastics and mangroves**: The norms also prevent the disposal of plastic into the coastal waters and mandate the compensatory plantation of three times the
mangrove area destroyed for development works. Mangroves in private land will not require a buffer zone.

- **Eco-tourism activities** such as mangrove walks, tree huts, nature trails, and so on will be allowed in these areas through the development of coastal zone management plans (CZMPs) and public consultation.

Coastal Regulation Zone or CRZ is a coastal land up to **500m** from the High Tide Line and a range of **100m** along banks of creeks, estuaries, backwaters and rivers subject to tidal fluctuations is CRZ.

According to Coastal Regulation Zone notifications, it is divided into 4 zones:

**CRZ I** – It refers to the ecologically sensitive areas, essential in maintaining ecosystem of the coast. These lie between the HTL and LTL. Only exploration of natural gas and extraction of salt is permitted.

**CRZ II** – These areas form up to the shoreline of the coast. Authorized structures are not allowed to be constructed in this zone.

**CRZ III** – This includes rural and urban localities. Only certain activities relating to agriculture and public utilities allowed here.

**CRZ IV** – This includes the aquatic area up to the territorial limit (12 nautical miles). Fishing and allied activities permitted in this zone. Solid waste can be let off in this zone.

### 16. Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018 notified

The Rules amend the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016. Key features of the amended Rules include:

- **Alternate use**: The Rules define alternate use of a material as one which is for a purpose other than for which it was conceived. This other purpose will be beneficial as it will promote resource efficiency.

- **Energy recovery**: Energy recovery has been defined as **recovery of energy from waste**. This includes conversion of waste material into usable heat, electricity, or fuel through
different processes, including combustion, gasification, anaerobic digestion, and land fill gas recovery.

- **Non-recyclable multi-layered plastic:** The 2016 Rules state that the manufacture and use of non-recyclable multi-layered plastic should be phased out in two years. In the 2018 Rules, non-recyclable multi-layered plastic has been replaced with multi-layered plastic which is non-recyclable or non-energy recoverable or with no alternate use.

- **Registration for manufacture and recycle of plastic bags:** The 2018 Rules modify the process of registration. Under the revised Rules, for registration or renewal of registration, every producer or brand-owner is required to make an application to:
  (i) the concerned State Pollution Control Board or Pollution Control Committee of the Union Territory, if operating in one or two states or union territories;
  (ii) the Central Pollution Control Board, if operating in more than two states or union territories.

- **Pricing of carry bags:** Under the 2016 Rules, shopkeepers and street vendors willing to provide plastic carry bags for dispensing any commodity were required to register with the local body. Such registration also required payment of plastic waste management fee. Under the 2018 Rules, this rule has been removed.

**17. Draft Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2018 released**

It seeks to amend the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011. Salient features of the draft 2018 notification include:

- **CRZ limits:** CRZ limits on land along tidal influenced water bodies have been reduced from 100 meters to 50 meters or the width of the water body, whichever is less.

- **Bifurcation of CRZ-III areas:** CRZ-III areas (areas that are relatively undisturbed such as rural and where the ratio of built up plot to total plot is less than 50%) have been divided into two categories:
i. **CRZ-III A** - rural areas with a population density of 2,161 people per square kilometre or more as per the 2011 Census. Such areas shall have a No Development Zone (NDZ) of 50 meter from the High Tide Line (line on land up to which the highest water line reaches during the spring tide) (HTL);

ii. **CRZ-III B** - rural areas with a population density lesser than 2,161 people per square kilometre. Such areas shall continue to have a NDZ of 200 meter from the HTL.

Land area up to 50 meters from the HTL, or width of the water body, whichever is less, along the tidal influenced water bodies, shall also be earmarked as NDZ in CRZ-III areas.

- **Projects that require approval**: Only those projects located in CRZ-I (environmentally most critical) and CRZ-IV (water and seabed areas) will require clearance from the Ministry of Environment. Other projects will be considered by Coastal Zone Management Authorities in respective states and union territories.

**FSI in CRZ-II**: The CRZ Notification, 2011 had frozen the Floor Space Index (built up area/ total area) (FSI) for CRZ-II areas at 1991 Development Control Regulation levels. The draft notification proposes to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects as prevailing on the date of the new notification.

**DEFENCE & SPACE**

1. **RemoveDebris System**

   RemoveDebris system, a UK-led experiment to tackle space junk is set to head into orbit. The system is going to the International Space Station where astronauts are expected to set the experiment running in late May.

   **Working**: A microsatellite called here RemoveSAT, will release, capture and deorbit two space debris targets, called DebrisSats, in sequence using various rendezvous, capture and deorbiting technologies thus demonstrating in orbit, key ADR (Active Debris Removal)
technologies for future missions in what promises to be the first ADR technology mission internationally.

**Background:** Space junk is an ever-growing problem with more than 7,500 tonnes of redundant hardware now thought to be circling the Earth. Ranging from old rocket bodies and defunct spacecraft through to screws and even flecks of paint – this material poses a collision hazard to operational missions.

2. **Point Nemo**

Scientists were initially planning to push the Tiangong-1 satellite to Point Nemo. However, they could not do so as they lost control of it.

China’s defunct Tiangong-1 space lab mostly broke up on re-entering the Earth’s atmosphere above the South Pacific.

Point Nemo, or “ocean point of inaccessibility,” is a region in the South Pacific that is the loneliest place on the planet. It is used as a graveyard for controlled re-entries and a place where space junk can be dropped safely.

The Tiangong 1 module is China’s first spacecraft designed for orbital docking tests and space research. Its name translates to “Heavenly Palace” in English.

The Tiangong 1 space lab intended to serve as a space station module prototype for China, which is the third country (after Russia and the United States) to develop the capability to launch astronauts into space and return them safely to Earth.

3. **Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE)**
A supersonic parachute that will help NASA missions to land on Mars, was successfully launched into the sky during a key test designed to mimic the conditions of entering the red planet.

The Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE) was launched aboard a sounding rocket from NASA’s Wallops Flight Facility in the US. An ambitious NASA Mars rover mission set to launch in 2020 will rely on a special parachute to slow the spacecraft down as it enters the Martian atmosphere at over 12,000 mph (5.4 kilometers per second).

The Mars 2020 mission will seek signs of ancient Martian life by investigating evidence in place and by caching drilled samples of Martian rocks for potential future return to Earth.

4. Icarus-farthest star

NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope has discovered the farthest individual star ever seen — an enormous blue stellar body nicknamed Icarus located over halfway across the universe. The star, harboured in a very distant spiral galaxy, is so far away that its light has taken nine billion years to reach Earth. It appears to us as it did when the universe was about 30% of its current age. The star, located in a distant spiral galaxy, is at least 100 times further away than any other star previously observed, with the exception of things like the huge supernova explosions that mark the death of certain stars.

The scientists took advantage of a phenomenon called “gravitational lensing” to spot the star. It involves the bending of light by massive galaxy clusters in the line of sight, which magnifies more distant celestial objects. This makes dim, faraway objects that otherwise would be undetectable, like an individual star, visible.
The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. NASA launched Hubble in 1990. It was built by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency. Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts.

5. IIT Delhi launches first 5G radio lab

In an effort to establish India as a key global player in the standardisation, research and development and manufacturing of 5G equipment, a Massive MIMO radio laboratory has been set up at IIT Delhi. This will be the first such lab in India.

Multiple-input multiple-output, or MIMO, is a radio communications technology or RF technology that is being mentioned and used in many new technologies these days. Wi-Fi, LTE; Long Term Evolution, and many other radio, wireless and RF technologies are using the new MIMO wireless technology to provide increased link capacity and spectral efficiency combined with improved link reliability using what were previously seen as interference paths.

Working:
- MIMO technology uses a natural radio-wave phenomenon called multipath.
- With multipath, transmitted information bounces off walls, ceilings, and other objects, reaching the receiving antenna multiple times at different angles and slightly different times. In the past, multipath caused interference and slowed down wireless signals.
- With multipath, MIMO technology uses multiple, smart transmitters and receivers with an added spatial dimension, increasing performance and range.
6. IRNSS-1I

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched the IRNSS-1I satellite through its PSLV-C41. It was the 20th flight of PSLV-XL version. This satellite will transmit signals for the accurate determination of position, navigation and time.

Like all other IRNSS satellites, IRNSS-1I will also carry two payloads – navigation payload and ranging payload – the former to transmit signals for determining position, velocity and time and the latter for determining the frequency range of the satellite.

**Background:**

Navigation satellite IRNSS-1I has been launched to replace India’s first navigation satellite IRNSS-1A, whose three Rubidium atomic clocks had stopped working two years ago.

IRNSS stands for Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System. It is a set of satellites which together can provide India a regional positioning system similar to the GPS. According to the ISRO website, the system is designed to give position accuracy better than 20 metres to users in its primary coverage area. It can also service regions extending up to 1500 km around India’s boundary. NavIC is the operational name for the IRNSS.

There are **currently seven IRNSS satellites (1A to 1G) in orbit.** A, B, F, G are placed in a geosynchronous orbit, which means they seem to be at a fixed location above the Earth and they orbit along with the Earth. The remaining three, C, D, E, are located in geostationary orbit-they seem to be at a fixed location above the Earth along the equator and orbit along with the Earth. The last IRNSS, 1H, which was launched on August 31, 2017 was unsuccessful as the satellite did not come out of its heat shield.

India’s (ISRO’s) NavIC joined the elite league of four countries / space agencies which have similar navigation capabilities. These include GPS (United States), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (European Union), BeiDou (China). Japan is also planning a similar project with three of its own satellites. Japan’s system will be called the QZSS.

7. Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)
- TESS, NASA’s planet-hunting satellite was recently launched on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

- The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a NASA mission that will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars in Earth’s sky.

- **Mission:** The mission will monitor at least 200,000 stars for signs of exoplanets, ranging from Earth-sized rocky worlds to huge gas giant planets. TESS, however, will focus on stars that are 30 to 100 times brighter than those Kepler examined. This will help astronomers better understand the structure of solar systems outside of our Earth, and provide insights into how our own solar system formed.

- **Orbit:** TESS will occupy a never-before-used orbit high above Earth. The elliptical orbit, called P/2, is exactly half of the moon’s orbital period; this means that TESS will orbit Earth every 13.7 days. Its closest point to Earth (67,000 miles or 108,000 kilometers) is about triple the distance of geosynchronous orbit, where most communications satellites operate.

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8. **Lunar ‘Gateway’ space station**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) is planning to award its first contract for the lunar “Gateway” program in 2019.

**The Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway:**

- The Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway is NASA’s planned “staging” area intended for studies of the moon and the deep-space environment. Eventually, it will function as a way station for astronauts travelling to and from Mars.

- The Gateway would also further NASA’s goal of another human landing on the moon and will help determine whether water near the surface could be used to manufacture propellant for deep-space missions.
9. **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)**

In Kerala, the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is planning to provide real-time information on the market price of fishes and allied news through the **GPS-enabled GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN)**.

Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences. INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community through sustained ocean observations and constant improvements through systematic and focused research.

GAGAN was developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) at a cost of Rs. 774 crore, over 15 years. GAGAN will provide augmentation service for the GPS over the country, the Bay of Bengal, South East Asia and Middle East and up to Africa. Some of its benefits are improved efficiency, direct routes, increased fuel savings, approach with vertical guidance at runways, significant cost savings because of the withdrawal of ground aids and reduced workload of flight crew and air traffic controllers. Gagan works by augmenting and relaying data from GPS satellites with the help of two augmentation satellites and 15 earth-based reference stations. The system utilises the satellite-based wide area augmentation system (SBAS) technology which has been developed by Raytheon.

10. **ESA’s space observatory Gaia**
ESA’s Gaia mission has produced the richest star catalogue to date, including high-precision measurements of nearly 1.7 billion stars and revealing previously unseen details of our home Galaxy.

Preliminary analysis of this phenomenal data reveals fine details about the make-up of the Milky Way’s stellar population and about how stars move, essential information for investigating the formation and evolution of our Galaxy.

GAIA

- Gaia is an ambitious mission to chart a three-dimensional map of our Galaxy, the Milky Way, in the process revealing the composition, formation and evolution of the Galaxy.
- The mission relies on a huge human collaboration to make sense of a large volume of highly complex data. It demonstrates the need for long-term projects to guarantee progress in space science and technology and to implement even more daring scientific missions of the coming decades. Launched on December 19, 2013, the Gaia satellite both rotates and orbits around the Earth, while surveying the sky with its two telescopes.
- Gaia will provide unprecedented positional and radial velocity measurements with the accuracies needed to produce a stereoscopic and kinematic census of about one billion stars in our Galaxy and throughout the Local Group. This amounts to about 1 per cent of the Galactic stellar population.

11. Resource Prospector Mission

NASA has cancelled Resource Prospector Mission - a mission to assay the resources that may be available to humans on the moon.
Scientists know that water ice exists on the moon, but the Resource Prospector would have provided scientists with a more complete understanding of these deposits.

The Resource Prospector mission would have sent a rover to the moon’s polar regions to learn about water and other deposits on and just beneath the lunar surface. The Resource Prospector mission consisted of a lander and a solar-powered rover equipped with a drill. The rover would have scouted the lunar surface, digging up soil for analysis.

12. Hubble captured first image of surviving companion to supernova

NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope has captured the first image of a surviving companion to a supernova, a compelling evidence that some supernovas originate in double-star systems.

**Background:**
Seventeen years ago, astronomers had witnessed a supernova go off 40 million light-years away in the galaxy called NGC 7424, located in the southern constellation Grus, the Crane, the NASA statement said. The image of the companion star was seen in the fading afterglow of that supernova, called SN 2001ig. SN 2001ig is categorised as a Type IIb stripped-envelope supernova. This type of supernova is unusual because most, but not all, of the hydrogen is gone prior to the explosion.

13. Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight)

NASA is set to launch Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight) on May 5, the first-ever mission to study the heart of Mars.

**InSight Mission:**
- InSight is part of NASA’s Discovery Program, managed by the agency’s Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.
- It will be the first mission to peer deep beneath the Martian surface, studying the planet’s interior by measuring its heat output and listening for marsquakes, which are seismic events similar to earthquakes on Earth.
- It will use the seismic waves generated by marsquakes to develop a map of the planet’s deep interior.

**Significance:** The findings of Mars’ formation will help better understand how other rocky planets, including Earth, were and are created. But InSight is more than a Mars mission – it is a terrestrial planet explorer that would address one of the most fundamental issues of planetary and solar system science – understanding the processes that shaped the rocky planets of the inner solar system (including Earth) more than four billion years ago.

**MarCo:**
- The rocket that will loft InSight beyond Earth will also launch a separate NASA technology experiment: two mini-spacecraft called Mars Cube One, or MarCO. These briefcase-sized CubeSats will fly on their own path to Mars behind InSight.
- Their goal is to test new miniaturized deep space communication equipment. This will be a first test of miniaturized CubeSat technology at another planet, which researchers hope can offer new capabilities to future missions.
- If successful, the MarCOs could represent a new kind of communication capability to Earth. InSight’s success is independent of its CubeSat tag-alongs.
14. Sentinel – 3B satellite

The European Union has successfully managed to launch its new, highly-advanced Sentinel Earth observation satellite into space. The earth observing satellite is called Sentinel-3B and it flew to space atop a Russian Rocket launcher.

**Aim:** to monitor the Earth’s ocean. Along with that it will map the vegetation growth on the earth surface and will measure the thinning ice sheets.

The Sentinel-3B was the seventh rocket that was launched by the European Union for its ambitious Copernicus mission.

**Copernicus programme:**
- Copernicus is the most ambitious Earth observation programme to date. It will provide accurate, timely and easily accessible information to improve the management of the environment, understand and mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure civil security.
- Copernicus is the new name for the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security programme, previously known as GMES.
- This initiative is headed by the European Commission (EC) in partnership with the European Space Agency (ESA).
- ESA coordinates the delivery of data from upwards of 30 satellites. The EC, acting on behalf of the European Union, is responsible for the overall initiative, setting requirements and managing the services.
- **Services provided by Copernicus:** land management, the marine environment, atmosphere, emergency response, security and climate change.

15. Internet security threat programme
'Internet Security Threat Report’ has been released by Symantec. Countries are ranked based on their vulnerability. These rankings are based on eight parameters – malware, spam, phishing, bots, network attacks, web attacks, ransomware and cryptominers.

**Indian scenario:**
- India is the third-most vulnerable country in terms of cyber threat risks including malware, spam, ransomware and one of the most recent and difficult-to-detect ones – cryptominers.
- India continues to be second-most impacted by spam and bots and third-most impacted by network attacks and fourth-most impacted by ransomware.
- In terms of cryptomining activities, India has ranked second in Asia-Pacific and Japan region (APJ), and ninth globally.

**Global scenario:**
The US was the most vulnerable to attacks at 26.61% followed by China at 10.95%.

**16. Cybersecurity Tech Accord**

Dozens of major technology companies including Microsoft, Facebook, Cisco, and SAP have signed onto a pledge, known as Cybersecurity Tech Accord, to protect their users around the globe against cybersecurity threats and to abstain from helping any government launch a cyberattack.

This is hailed as a “watershed agreement” among companies representing every layer of internet communication.
The tech sector accord will help companies take a principled path towards more effective steps to work together and defend customers around the world. The accord declares that the signatories will protect all of their customers from threats and will not “help governments launch cyberattacks against innocent citizens and enterprises from anywhere.”

The accord rests on four pillars:
- Protect all of our users and customers everywhere
- Oppose cyberattacks on innocent citizens and enterprises from anywhere.
- Help empower users, customers and developers to strengthen cybersecurity protection.
- Partner with each other and with likeminded groups to enhance cybersecurity

17. Bhabha Kavach

It is an armour panel developed by BARC which gives personal protection against bullets of different threat levels.

Bhabha Kavach made up of BARC Nano-Sheets are lighter in weight with reduced trauma level with respect to the existing jackets.

The jacket is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics that is hot-pressed with carbon nano-tubes and composite polymer.

18. Earth BioGenome Project

Scientists have proposed Earth BioGenome project, a massive project to sequence, catalog and analyze the genomes of all eukaryotic species on the planet.
Eukaryotes include all organisms except bacteria and archaea. It includes plants, animals, fungi and other organisms whose cells have a nucleus that houses their chromosomal DNA. There are an estimated 10-15 million eukaryotic species on Earth.

About the project:
- The central goal of the Earth BioGenome Project (EBP) is to understand the evolution and organization of life on our planet by sequencing and functionally annotating the genomes of 1.5 million known species of eukaryotes.
- The project also seeks to reveal some of the estimated 10 to 15 million unknown species of eukaryotes, most of which are single cell organisms, insects and small animals in the oceans.
- The Project also plans to capitalize on the “citizen scientist” movement to collect specimens.
- The initiative is led by a coordinating council with members from the United States, the European Union, China, Brazil, Canada, Australia and some African countries.
- This will take 10 years, cost $4.7 billion and require more than 200 petabytes of digital storage capacity.

19. National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP)

The Government of India has initiated the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP) with a view to address cyclone risks in the country.

**Objective:** to undertake suitable structural and non-structural measures to mitigate the effects of cyclones in the coastal states and UT’s of India.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) will implement the Project in coordination with participating State Governments and the National Institute for Disaster Management (NIDM).
The Project has identified 13 cyclone prone States and Union Territories (UTs), with varying levels of vulnerability. These States/UT have further been classified into two categories, based on the frequency of occurrence of cyclone, size of population and the existing institutional mechanism for disaster management. These categories are:

- **Category I**: Higher vulnerability States i.e. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

- **Category II**: Lower vulnerability States i.e. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Pondicherry, Lakshadweep, Daman and Diu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

**Mission Statement**: The National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project seeks to minimize vulnerability in the cyclone hazard prone states and Union Territories of India and make people and infrastructure disaster resilient, in harmony with conservation of coastal ecosystems.

The **Project aims** to fulfill its Mission by undertaking following structural and non-structural measures,

1. **Early warning and communication system** by improving the Last Mile connectivity.
2. **Construction and sustainable maintenance of Multi-purpose Cyclone Shelters (MPCSSs)**, Improved access and evacuation to these and already exiting MPCSSs and habituations through construction of roads and bridges, construction of coastal embankments in selected places for protection against storms, flooding and storm surge in high risk areas and underground cabling.
3. **Enhanced capacity and capability of local communities to respond to disasters**, and **Strengthening Disaster Risk Mitigation (DRM) capacity at Central, State and Local levels** in order to enable mainstreaming of risk mitigation measures into the overall development agenda.

**20. Protected Area Permit**
The Union Home Ministry has decided to relax the six-decade-old Protected Area Permit regime from **Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur** for five years with effect from April 1. Foreign tourists, except those from Pakistan, China and Afghanistan, would now be allowed to visit some of the most pristine locations of the country which, so far, were out of bounds for them without a special permit.

**Protected Areas:** Under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958, all areas falling between the Inner line and the International Border of some states have been declared as protected areas.

The protected areas currently include whole of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim, besides parts of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir. Some parts of Sikkim fall under the protected area regime while others under the restricted area.

As per the guidelines, a foreign national is not normally allowed to visit a protected or restricted area unless the government is satisfied that there are extra-ordinary reasons to justify his or her visit.

Necessary powers have been delegated to various authorities to issue such special permits without the prior approval of the Union home ministry to facilitate foreign tourists subject to the **certain exceptions:**

- In cases of foreign diplomats, including the members of the United Nations and international organisations holding diplomatic or official passports, the special permits to visit such protected or restricted areas are issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- In cases of the citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals of Pakistani origin, no permit, however, can be issued without the prior approval of the Union home ministry.

**21. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**
In a boost to indigenisation and in realisation of India’s growing technological prowess, the DAC has approved procurement of Defence Research and Development Organisation’s (DRDO’s) designed and developed NAG Missile System (NAMIS) at the cost of Rs 524 crore.

To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC. It is headed by the Defence Minister.

**Objective:** The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

**Functions:** The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

The NAG missile is a third generation anti-tank guided missile, which has top attack capabilities that can effectively engage and destroy all known enemy tanks during day and night. The system includes a third generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile, the NAG, along with the Missile Carrier Vehicle (NAMICA).

**22. Draft Defence Production Policy 2018 released by the Ministry of Defence**

The Policy will replace the existing Defence Production Policy 2011.

Key features of the policy include:

- **Vision:** The Policy seeks to make India one of the top five countries in aerospace and defence industries. This would be achieved through active participation from public and private sector, and fulfilling the objective of self-reliance and demand of other countries.
- **Objectives:** The Policy seeks to reduce India’s current dependence on imports, and achieve self-reliance in development and manufacture of 13 categories of weapon systems, including fighter aircraft, warships, missile systems by 2025. It also seeks to achieve investment of around Rs 70,000 crore and create employment for 20 to 30 lakh people by 2025.

- **Ease of Doing Business:** Bringing in necessary enabling provisions such as removing restrictions of turnover and minimum number of years of prior experience. Rs 1,000 crore will be allocated between 2018-20 to allow start-ups to participate in competitions that will address challenges in major defence and research and development requirements.

- **Foreign Direct Investment:** To further liberalise the FDI regime in defence. **FDI up to 74% under automatic route will be allowed in niche technology areas.**

- **Infrastructure development:** Two defence industry corridors will be set up in collaboration with states to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities for setting up defence production facilities. The central government will provide 50% assistance up to a ceiling of Rs 3,000 crore for development of each defence corridor through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). Further, a scheme will be created to provide 75% assistance to industry to set up common testing facilities, up to a ceiling of Rs 100 crore per facility.

**Aerospace:** An aeronautical university will be set up as an autonomous institution to promote manufacturing in India on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis between the government and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.

**WOMEN**

1. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has made total payment of Rs. 271.66 crores to beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY). The payment has been made to 11,47,386 beneficiaries across the country.
Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.

The scheme is a **conditional cash transfer scheme** for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first two live births.

**Exceptions:** The maternity benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Government or Public Sector Undertaking or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force.

**Funding:** The scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40 while for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10. It is 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

2. **Swadhar Greh Scheme**
Recently released government data shows that there are 559 Swadhar Greh presently functional in the country with 17231 beneficiaries. Swadhar Greh is a DBT compliant scheme.

As per guidelines of the Swadhar Greh Scheme, to seek financial assistance the agency should meet following requirements:

- The agency should be either recognized by State/UT under existing law or should be well known with the experience or working in the field for at least 3 years and its work should be reported satisfactory by the State Govt./UT Administration concerned.
- It should ordinarily have been engaged in the field of women’s welfare/social welfare for a minimum period of two years.
- Its financial position should be sound.
- It should have facilities, resources, experience and personnel to undertake the management of such project.
- It should run Swadhar Greh on a no-profit basis.
- It should have facilities like computers, internet connection etc at Swadhar Greh.

The Swadhar scheme was launched by the **Union Ministry of Women and Child Development** in 2002 for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The scheme provides shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls who are in need. The beneficiaries include widows deserted by their families and relatives, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters, women victims of terrorist/extremist violence etc.

**Implementation of the scheme:**
The State Governments/UT Administration invite applications from eligible organizations and the proposals which fulfil the norms are placed before a Project Sanctioning Committee (PSC) chaired by Secretary(WCD) of the State/UT concerned.

3. **Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme**

Government of India is implementing Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme to empower rural women through community participation. The scheme is envisaged to work at various levels, and at the National level (domain based knowledge support) and State level (State
Resource Centre for Women) technical support to the respective governments on issues related to women is provided.

**Mahila Shakti Kendra:**
- It is envisioned as a one-stop convergence support service for empowering rural women with opportunities for skill development, employment, digital literacy, health and nutrition.
- Aim to improve declining child sex ratio, ensure survival and protection of the girl child, ensuring her education and empowering her to fulfil her potential. It will provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for getting their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building.
- At the national level, the Mahila Shakti Kendra will provide domain-based knowledge support while at the state level, it will cater to the State Resource Centre for Women that will provide technical support to the respective government on issues related to women, the district and block level centres, and will provide support to the PMMSK and also give a foothold to Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao in 640 districts.

4. **POSHAN Abhiyan**
The annual targets set under POSHAN Abhiyaan beginning 2017-18 are as under:
- Prevent and reduce stunting in children (0-6 years): By 6% @ 2% p.a.
- Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years): By 6% @ 2% p.a.
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among young Children(6-59 months): By 9% @ 3% p.a.
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years: By 9% @ 3% p.a.
- Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW): By 6% @ 2% p.a.

POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched on International Women’s day (March 8) in 2018 to boost nutrition among children and women.
The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.

The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

5. WHO directives call for support for breastfeeding

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have issued a new 10-step guidance to increase support for breastfeeding in health facilities that provide maternity and newborn services, which provide the immediate health system platform to help mothers initiate breastfeeding within the first hour and breastfeed exclusively for six months.

Highlights:
- The guidelines describe how hospitals should have a written breastfeeding policy in place, required staff competencies, and antenatal and post-birth care, including breastfeeding support for mothers.
- It also recommends limited use of breast milk substitutes, rooming-in, responsive feeding, educating parents on the use of bottles and pacifiers, and support when mothers and babies are discharged from hospital.

Significance of breastfeeding:

Breastfeeding is an important efficient and cost-effective intervention promoting child survival and health. Breastfeeding within an hour of birth could prevent 20% of the newborn deaths. Infants who are not breastfed are 15 times more likely to die from pneumonia and 11 times more likely to die from diarrhoea than children who are exclusively breastfed, which are two leading causes of death in children under-five years of age.
In addition, children who were not breastfed are at increased risk for diabetes, obesity, allergies, asthma, childhood leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome etc. Apart from mortality and morbidity benefits, breastfeeding also has tremendous impact on improved IQ.

**MAA programme:**
- To intensify the efforts further for promotion of breastfeeding, the Health Ministry has initiated a nationwide programme called “MAA-Mother’s Absolute Affection” to bring undiluted focus on promotion of breastfeeding and provision of services towards supporting breastfeeding, along with ongoing efforts of routine health systems.
- The key components of the MAA programme are awareness generation, promotion of breastfeeding & interpersonal counselling at community level, skilled support for breastfeeding at delivery points and monitoring and Award/recognition of health facility.
- Under this programme, ASHA has been incentivized for reaching out to pregnant and lactating mothers and provide information on benefits and techniques of successful breastfeeding during interpersonal communication. ANMs at all sub-centres and health personnel at all delivery points are being trained for providing skilled support to mothers referred with issues related to breastfeeding.
- Under NHM, funding support has been recommended for all States and UTs for successful implementation of the MAA programme.

**AGRICULTURE**

1. **Uttarakhand’s second mega food park at Udham Singh Nagar**
The park- M/s Himalayan Mega Food Park Private Ltd has been set up at a cost of Rs 99.96 crore and will benefit around 25,000 farmers in this as well as neighbouring districts. The first Mega Food Park in the state located at Haridwar has already become operational.

**Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing** Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.

- The Scheme of Mega Food Park aims at providing a mechanism to link agricultural production to the market by bringing together farmers, processors and retailers so as to ensure maximizing value addition, minimizing wastages, increasing farmers’ income and creating employment opportunities particularly in rural sector.
- These food parks give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables.
- A maximum grant of Rs50 crore is given for setting up a MFP, in minimum 50 acres of contiguous land with only 50% contribution to the total project cost.

**Functioning:** The Scheme has a cluster based approach based on a hub and spokes model. It includes creation of infrastructure for primary processing and storage near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) and Collection Centres (CCs) and common facilities and enabling infrastructure at Central Processing Centre (CPC). The PPCs are meant for functioning as a link between the producers and processors for supply of raw material to the Central Processing Centres. CPC has need based core processing facilities and basic enabling infrastructure to be used by the food processing units setup at the CPC. The minimum area required for a CPC is 50 acres.

2. **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**
The Centre has allowed states to set up their own insurance companies for implementing Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

Presently, five public sector insurers and 13 private insurance companies are empanelled for implementation of the scheme.

The move comes after several requests from states as well as observations made by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its 2017 report that old crop insurance schemes which have now been merged with PMFBY, were poorly implemented during 2011-2016.

**PMFBY**

- The PMFBY, launched in April 2016, compensates farmers for any losses in crop yield. In the event of a crop loss, the farmer will be paid based on the difference between the threshold yield and actual yield.
- The threshold yield is calculated based on average yield for the last seven years and the extent of compensation is set according to the degree of risk for the notified crop.
- The scheme is compulsory for farmers who have availed of institutional loans.
- The scheme insures farmers against a wide range of external risks — droughts, dry spells, floods, inundation, pests and diseases, landslides, natural fire and lightning, hailstorms, cyclones, typhoons, tempests, hurricanes and tornadoes. The scheme also covers post-harvest losses up to a period of 14 days.
- The Scheme covers all Food & Oilseeds crops and Annual Commercial/Horticultural Crops for which past yield data is available and for which requisite number of Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) are conducted being under General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).

3. **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**
According to revised guidelines of the centre’s flagship scheme to promote organic farming, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), farmers will be eligible for an assistance of Rs 48,700 per hectare for a three-year period for adopting these traditional methods of cultivation.

According to the revised guidelines, farmers practising traditional methods of organic farming like yogik farming, gou mata kheti, Vedic farming, Vaishnav kheti, Ahinsa farming, Adhvoot Shivanand farming, and rishi krishi will be eligible for financial assistance, in addition to those adopting standard organic farming practices like zero-budget natural farming and permaculture.

**Yogik farming** refers to a system where it is believed that farmers can channelize cosmic energy to their fields by performing yoga.

**Rishi krishi** is based on pre-Vedic, Vedic and medieval texts like Vishvavallava, Kashyapiyakrishisukti, and Surapala’s Vrikshayurveda.

**Gou mata kheti** is a system of farming which uses cow dung and urine from indigenous breeds of lactating cows.

**Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** is an elaborated component of Soil Health Management (SHM) of major project National Mission of Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).

4. **National Bamboo Mission**

The Mission would ensure holistic development of the bamboo sector by addressing complete value chain and establishing effective linkage of producers (farmers) with industry.

**The restructured NBM strives to:**

- To increase the area under bamboo plantation in non-forest Government and private lands to supplement farm income and contribute towards resilience to climate change.
- To improve post-harvest management through establishment of innovative primary processing units, treatment and seasoning plants, primary treatment and seasoning plants, preservation technologies and market infrastructure.
- To promote product development at micro, small and medium levels and feed bigger industry.
- To rejuvenate the under developed bamboo industry in India.
- To promote skill development, capacity building, awareness generation for development of bamboo sector.

**Coverage:**
The Mission will focus on development of bamboo in limited States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, particularly in the North Eastern region and States including Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

**Background:**
- National Bamboo Mission (NBM) started as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 2006-07, was mainly emphasizing on propagation and cultivation of bamboo, with limited efforts on processing, product development and value addition.
- There, was weak linkage between the producers (farmers) and the industry. The restructured proposal gives simultaneous emphasis to propagation of quality plantations of bamboo, product development and value addition including primary processing and treatment; micro, small & medium enterprises as well as high value
products; markets and skill development, thus addressing the complete value chain for growth of the bamboo sector.

**Cabinet approves restructured National Bamboo Mission**

National Bamboo Mission **under the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture**

**Period:** 2018-19 and 2019-20.

**Amount allocated:** Rs 1,290 crore. Of this, Rs 950 crore will be the share of the central government.

**Objective:** The scheme seeks to increase the area under bamboo cultivation in non-forest government and private land, and improve post-harvest management.

Note: National Bamboo Mission was initially launched in 2006-07 and continued till 2015-16.

5. IMD releases long range forecast for southwest monsoon rainfall 2018

The monsoon seasonal rainfall is estimated to be **97% of the long period average (LPA)**, with an error of +/- 5%.

Rainfall is considered to be normal if it ranges between 96-104% of the LPA.

LPA is the average rainfall for the period from 1951 to 2000 in a region. In 2017, the Southwest Monsoon Rainfall was estimated to be 96% of the LPA and the actual rainfall was 95%.

FINANCE & ECONOMY

6. RBI bars banks from dealing with virtual currencies

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks to stop providing service to any entity dealing with virtual currencies, with immediate effect.
It has also asked regulated entities that are already providing such services to exit the relationship within three months.

**Background:**

Widely seen as a disruption for the traditional banking and financial institutions, cryptocurrencies have gained significant traction over the last half a decade, at the same time creating a regulatory nightmare for banking regulators across the globe. At present, there are around 969 cryptocurrencies in existence across the globe, with a total market capitalisation close to 116 Billion USD.

**Virtual/ cryptocurrencies**

- Founded as a peer-to-peer electronic payment system, cryptocurrencies enable transfer of money between parties, without going through a banking system.
- These digital payment systems are based on cryptographic proof of the chain of transactions, deriving their name, Cryptocurrency.
- These employ cryptographic algorithms and functions to ensure anonymity (privacy) of the users (who are identified by an alphanumeric public key), security of the transactions and integrity of the payment systems.

**Associated concerns:**

- Despite numerous advantages and user friendly processes, cryptocurrencies have their own set of associated risks in the form of volatility in valuation, lack of liquidity, security and many more.
- Cryptocurrencies are being denounced in many countries because of their use in grey and black markets. There are two sets of interconnected risks; one being to the growth and expansion of these platforms in the uncertain policy environment, and the other being the risks these platforms pose to the users and the security of the state.
- They also have the potential use for Illicit Trade and Criminal Activities and can be used for Terror Financing.
- They also have the Potential for Tax Evasion.
7. Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS)

- The Reserve Bank has deferred the implementation of the Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) by one year as many banks are not prepared to migrate to the new accounting system. The earlier deadline for banks to switch to the Ind AS was from April 1, 2018.

- Ind AS or Indian Accounting Standards govern the accounting and recording of financial transactions as well as the presentation of statements such as profit and loss account and balance sheet of a company.

- Ind AS has been evolved as a compromise formula that tries to harmonise Indian accounting rules with the IFRS.

- The implementation of IndAS for public sector banks requires an amendment to the Banking Regulation Act. The schedule in BR Act relating to financial statement disclosures needs to be changed to the IndAS format. Section 29 of the BR Act deals with the accounts and balance sheets of public sector banks. Private sector banks are covered by the Companies Act, which is based on the new accounting standards.

8. Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework

Eleven public sector banks have been brought under the central bank’s Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework with an aim to check NPAs. This comes months after the central government had allocated capital of Rs 52,311 crore to 11 “weak banks” to maintain their minimum capital requirement.
PCAs:
- PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment.
- It can even cap a bank’s lending limit to one entity or sector. Other corrective actions that can be imposed on banks include special audit, restructuring operations and activation of recovery plan.
- Banks’ promoters can be asked to bring in new management, too.
- The RBI can also supersede the bank’s board, under PCA.

The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached. There are three risk thresholds which are based on certain levels of asset quality, profitability, capital and the like.

The third such threshold, which is maximum tolerance limit, sets net NPA at over 12% and negative return on assets for four consecutive years.

Types of sanctions: There are two types of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary.
Restrictions on dividend, branch expansion, directors compensation, are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposit. In the cases of two banks where PCA was invoked after the revised guidelines were issued — IDBI Bank and UCO Bank — only mandatory restrictions were imposed. Both the banks breached risk threshold 2.

9. Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS)

The Reserve Bank has tightened reporting norms for the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS). Now banks will be required to upload daily transaction-wise information undertaken.
by them under LRS. Under LRS, all resident individuals can freely remit $250,000 overseas every financial year for a permissible set of current or capital account transactions.

**Permitted:** Remittances are permitted for overseas education, travel, medical treatment and purchase of shares and property, apart from maintenance of relatives living abroad, gifting and donations. Individuals can also open, maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with overseas banks for carrying out transactions.

**Not permitted:** However, the rules do not allow remittances for trading on the foreign exchange markets, margin or margin calls to overseas exchanges and counterparties and the purchase of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds issued by Indian companies abroad. Sending money to certain countries and entities is also barred. Under LRS, people can’t send money to countries identified as ‘non cooperative’ by the Financial Action Task Force. Remittances are also prohibited to entities identified as posing terrorist risks.

**Significance:** The LRS represents India’s baby steps towards dismantling controls on foreign exchange movements in and out of the country. It has allowed large numbers of Indians to study abroad and diversify their portfolios from purely desi stocks and property.

10. **Inflation Targeting**

Making a case for doing away with inflation targeting by the RBI, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) member Surjit Bhalla recently said it has made zero impact on prices. Under the new policy framework, the RBI aims to contain inflation at 4% with a band of (+/-) 2%.

Average inflation in 2017-18 was 3.5%. India’s real interest rate is higher by 2.5%, which is 3rd highest in the world.
Inflation targeting is a monetary policy in which a central bank has an explicit target inflation rate for the medium term and announces this inflation target to the public. It will have price stability as the main goal of monetary policy. Many central banks adopted inflation targeting as a pragmatic response to the failure of other monetary policy regimes, such as those that targeted the money supply or the value of the currency in relation to another, presumably stable, currency.

Why it is good?
- It will lead to increased transparency and accountability.
- Policy will be linked to medium/long term goals, but with some short term flexibility.
- With inflation targeting in place, people will tend to have low inflation expectations. If there was no inflation target, people could have higher inflation expectations, encouraging workers to demand higher wages and firms to put up prices.
- It also helps in avoiding boom and bust cycles.
- If inflation creeps up, then it can cause various economic costs such as uncertainty leading to lower investment, loss of international competitiveness and reduced value of savings. This can also be avoided with targeting.

Associated concerns: Inflation targeting puts too much weight on inflation relative to other goals. Central Banks Start to Ignore More Pressing Problems. Inflation target reduces “flexibility”. It has the potential to constrain policy in some circumstances in which it would not be desirable to do so.

Not a panacea:
- Inflation targeting has been successfully practiced in a growing number of countries over the past 20 years, and many more countries are moving toward this framework.
- Over time, inflation targeting has proven to be a flexible framework that has been resilient in changing circumstances, including during the recent global financial crisis.
Individual countries, however, must assess their economies to determine whether inflation targeting is appropriate for them or if it can be tailored to suit their needs. For example, in many open economies, the exchange rate plays a pivotal role in stabilizing output and inflation.

In such countries, policymakers must debate the appropriate role of the exchange rate and whether it should be subordinated to the inflation objective.

11. Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP)

Finland-headquartered Nokia has invoked the mutual agreement procedure (MAP) under the India-Finland Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, to resolve the Rs 2,000-crore tax dispute with the Indian tax department.

Now, the competent authorities of the two countries — India and Finland — will sit at the negotiating table and decide how the dispute should be resolved.

Indian income tax department had slapped a Rs 2,000-crore tax demand on Nokia India over alleged default on tax deduction at source (TDS) on software-related payments made to Nokia Finland for six years.

The IT department had concluded that payments made by Nokia India to Nokia Finland for software downloads — which got embedded in the Nokia handsets manufactured in India — were taxable in India as royalty.

**MAP** is an alternative available to taxpayers to resolve disputes giving rise to double taxation, whether juridical or economic in nature.

An agreement for avoidance of double taxation between countries would give authorisation for assistance of Competent Authorities (CAs) in the respective jurisdiction under MAP.

The main benefit of pursuing MAP is the elimination of double taxation (either juridical or economic). The MAP resolution, once accepted, eliminates protracted litigation.
12. Economic Freedom Index

The Heritage Foundation has released its Index of Economic Freedom report 2017. The Heritage Foundation is an American conservative public policy think-tank based in Washington.

Economic freedom is measured based on 12 quantitative and qualitative factors, grouped into four broad categories, or pillars, of economic freedom:

- Rule of Law (property rights, government integrity, judicial effectiveness).
- Government Size (government spending, tax burden, fiscal health).
- Regulatory Efficiency (business freedom, labor freedom, monetary freedom).
- Open Markets (trade freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom).

Each of the ten economic freedoms within these categories is graded on a scale of 0 to 100. A country’s overall score is derived by averaging these ten economic freedoms, with equal weight being given to each.

Highlights of the report:

- India’s economic freedom score is 54.5, making its economy the 130th freest in the 2018 Index. In 2017, India with a score of 52.6 points was ranked at 143 among 180 countries.
- India is ranked 30th among 43 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages.
- China is ranked 111 and Pakistan is now at 131 position.

India’s performance:

India is developing into an open-market economy. However, traces of its past autocratic policies still remain. Economic liberalisation measures, including industrial deregulation, privatisation of state-owned enterprises and reduced controls on foreign trade and investment, that began in the early 1990s, accelerated growth.
More recently, the government reformed one of its more opaque operational practices to make the auctioning of rights to exploit state-owned resources more transparent.

**Economic freedom is the fundamental right of every human to control his or her own labor and property.** In an economically free society, individuals are free to work, produce, consume, and invest in any way they please. In economically free societies, governments allow labor, capital, and goods to move freely, and refrain from coercion or constraint of liberty beyond the extent necessary to protect and maintain liberty itself.

13. **Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme**

The government of India has announced that the first tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond scheme for the current year 2018-19 will shortly be opened for subscription.

**Eligibility:** The bonds will be restricted for sale to resident Indian entities, including individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.

**Denomination and tenor:** The bonds will be denominated in multiples of gram(s) of gold with a basic unit of 1 gram. The tenor will be for a period of 8 years with exit option from the 5th year to be exercised on the interest payment dates.

**Minimum and Maximum limit:** The minimum permissible investment limit will be 1 gram of gold, while the maximum limit will be 4 kg for individual, 4 kg for HUF and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March) notified by the government from time to time.

**Joint Holder:** In case of joint holding, the investment limit of 4 kg will be applied to the first applicant only.

**Collateral:** Bonds can be used as collateral for loans. The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio is to be set equal to ordinary gold loan mandated by the Reserve Bank from time to time.
The sovereign gold bond was introduced by the Government in 2015. While the Government introduced these bonds to help reduce India’s over dependence on gold imports, the move was also aimed at changing the habits of Indians from saving in physical form of gold to a paper form with Sovereign backing.


First Ever International SME Convention-2018 is being held in New Delhi. 150 participants from 31 countries and 400 entrepreneurs from India participated in the convention. The convention has specific focus on inclusion of MSMEs in the Make in India program & empowering women entrepreneurs.

Organizers: The SME International Convention – 2018 is being organised by the Ministry of MSME and National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) along with KVIC and Coir Board.

Theme: “Business beyond Borders”.

The International SME Convention 2018 is a platform for intensive business discussion, progressive interaction and trade association between progressive entrepreneurs from all over the world and offers a special focus on business and trade opportunities in India for International Entrepreneurs.

The platform facilitates exchange of relevant business partnerships and trade opportunities for India’s Best Small and Medium Enterprises.

15. Commonwealth Innovation Index

A new Commonwealth Innovation Index has been launched as part of a new Commonwealth Innovation Hub on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) being held in London.

The index has been created in partnership with the United Nations World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and its annual Global Innovation Index (GII).
It is aimed at providing a tool that allows member states, organisations and citizens to benchmark themselves against 53 countries of the Commonwealth, with the new innovation hub offering a dedicated online space for Commonwealth countries to showcase what they have to offer and share with other members.

**Performance of countries:**
- India is ranked 10th.
- Bangladesh has been ranked 24th.
- The index is topped by the UK, Singapore and Canada.

**About GII:** The Global Innovation Index (GII), co-published by World-Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD with CII as a Knowledge Partner since inception, has been ranking world economies including India since 2007 according to their innovation capabilities and outcomes using 82 indicators among a host of other important parameters.

**16. Commonwealth Innovation Fund**
A new Commonwealth Innovation fund has been launched on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) being held in London.

**The Commonwealth Innovation Fund:**
- The Global Innovation Fund (GIF) will work as the delivery partner to host a new Commonwealth Innovation Fund (CIF), which will use GIFs existing due diligence processes for sourcing, evaluating and investing to generate a high-quality portfolio of enterprises that are aligned with the Commonwealth Secretariats priorities.
- The GIF will manage the fund and its investments, which will be targeted at innovative projects across Commonwealth countries that “save and improve lives”.
- The new partnership aims to provide financing for incubating and accelerating impact-oriented ideas and innovations within the Commonwealth countries.
- It is a $200 million venture capital firm that invests in social innovations that aim to improve lives and opportunities in the developing world through the use of grants and risk capital.

Global Innovation fund:
- The Global Innovation Fund is a non-profit innovation fund headquartered in London with an office in Washington D.C. that invests in the development, rigorous testing, and scaling of innovations targeted at improving the lives of the world’s poorest people.
- GIF is a unique hybrid investment fund that supports the piloting, rigorous testing, and scaling of innovations targeted at improving the lives of the poorest people in developing countries.

17. Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project

India has signed a loan agreement with World Bank for US$ 125 million for “Innovate in India for Inclusiveness Project”.

The project seeks to nurture indigenous innovation, foster local product development and accelerate commercialization process by bridging critical skill and infrastructure gaps to promote affordable and innovative healthcare products generation for inclusive development and increasing competitiveness in India.

The project would support consortia of public, private, and the academic institutions to overcome the key market failures currently holding back the development of an innovative biopharmaceutical and medical devices industry in India.
The project consists of the following parts:
- Strengthening of pilot-to-market innovation ecosystem.
- Acceleration of the pilot-to-market process for specific products.
- Project Management and monitoring & Evaluation.

18. Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

India will have to make money laundering an explicitly standalone offence to upgrade its compliance ahead of the on-site mutual evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which is due in November-December 2020.

FATF had undertaken mutual evaluation of India in 2010 when the body expressed satisfaction with the measures taken by the country. However, in its report, the FATF highlighted a number of lacunae in the then extant legislation, for which it suggested changes.

**Issue:** As per FATF recommendations, money laundering should be made a standalone offence. However, despite several amendments, the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) remains a predicate-offence-oriented law. This means a case under the Act depends on the fate of cases pursued by primary agencies such as the CBI, the Income Tax Department or the police.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7. It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.

The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

19. Expert Committee on commodity spot and derivative markets submits report
Commodity spot markets are those markets where the sale and delivery of commodities takes place immediately or within 11 days (e.g. a mandi for vegetables).

In the commodity derivatives market, the exchange of commodities takes place at a later date, on certain conditions agreed upon previously. Alternatively, instead of delivery of goods, the difference between the prevailing price and the originally agreed-upon price may be paid or received.

Recommendations of the Expert Committee include:

- **Integration of commodity spot and derivatives market:** The Committee noted that the while the commodity spot and derivatives market are distinct from each other, they are interlinked.
  A sound derivatives market helps in determining the future price for a commodity, and a well-functioning spot market and robust warehousing infrastructure ensure adequate supply of the commodity in the future (for the derivatives market). It observed that the integration of these two markets is important for both agricultural and non-agricultural markets in India.

- **Way to integrate these markets:** creating an electronic spot market platform, where the price of a commodity from across the country is available. Such a market will have to be well-regulated, and the Committee recommended that this responsibility may be entrusted to a single regulator, such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

- **Adoption of model APLM Act:** The Committee recommended that states should adopt the model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitating) Act, 2017 (APLM Act), released by the centre.
The model Act seeks to create a **barrier free single market for trade in the country**, and caps market fee levied by an agriculture market committee on the sale of produce.

- **Ministry for base metals**: The Committee observed that there is a need for a dedicated department to oversee the working of non-agricultural commodity markets. These commodities include base metals (e.g. aluminium and tin), precious metals, and energy related commodities (such as coal). It recommended that a controlling ministry for base metals may be created.

20. **RBI prohibits entities regulated by it from dealing in virtual currencies**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) prohibited entities regulated by it from dealing in virtual currencies, or facilitating any person from dealing in virtual currencies.

Virtual currencies, such as bitcoins, are stored and transacted in digital forms.

RBI mandated that all regulated entities, which were providing such services, **discontinue the relationship within three months**.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. **Bharatmala programme**

In order to keep up the pace to implement ambitious Bharatmala Programme, the NHAI is planning to award 3,000-odd km of projects in the next couple of months of the new fiscal. The increase in awarding of the project in FY18 is due to Bharatmala Programme.

Bharatmala Project is **the second largest highways construction project in the country since NHDP**, under which almost 50,000 km or highway roads were targeted across the country. Bharatmala will look to improve connectivity particularly on economic corridors, border areas and far flung areas with an aim of quicker movement of cargo and
boosting exports.

Bharatmala includes economic corridors of around 9,000 km, inter-corridor and feeder routes of around 6,000 km, 5,000 km roads under the National Corridors Efficiency Program, border and international connectivity roads of around 2,000 km, coastal and port connectivity roads of around 2,000 km, expressways of around 800 km and 10,000 km of NHDP roads. The total length in phase 1 comes to around 34,800 km.

2. Char Dham Project

Ministry of road, transport and highway (MORTH) in their affidavit submitted recently before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in matter of Char Dham widening road in Uttarakhand stated that in all the total 53 projects/stretches of Char Dham, none is above 100 km which is why no environmental clearance was obtained.

Stretches upto 100 km are exempted from environmental clearance under Environmental Clearance Notification.

Issue:

A petition was filed which said that the entire project of 900 km was misleadingly fragmented into segments which are actually continuous stretches of five national highway to avoid environmental clearance. It stated that the criteria of Cumulative Impact Assessment and carrying capacity study must be followed for Himalayan terrain while considering any infrastructural projects.

Chardham project:

The project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of; Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri at an estimated cost of Rs.12,000 crores. The roads will be widened from 12m to 24m and the project will involve construction of tunnels, bypasses, bridges, subway and viaducts.
3. **UDAN-RCS**

Pathankot gets operationalized as the 21st airport under UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) – RCS (Regional Connectivity Scheme).

**Need for schemes like Udan:**
- There are as many as 398 “unserved” airports which have no commercial flights and 18 “under-served” airports host less than seven flights per week.
- Besides, a major reason for the poor regional air connectivity in India is that airlines do not find it lucrative to operate from small cities. The government has tried to address this concern by an adroit combination of subsidies and fare caps.

UDAN is a market-based policy intervention that builds on similar programmes in the US, Canada and Australia. It is also consistent with universal service approaches established for other network-based services such as railways and telecom. The **objective** of the Scheme is to make flying affordable for the masses, to promote tourism, increase employment and promote balanced regional growth. It also intends to put life into unserved and under-served airports.

It offers **viability gap funding** to operators to fly smaller aircraft to such airports with a commitment to price tickets for at least half of the seats at ₹2,500 for an hour-long flight.

4. **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)**

The government’s National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) is in talks with private equity firm Everstone Group for a tie-up to manage its Green Growth Equity Fund (GGEF).

**GGEF:**
- The Green Growth Equity Fund will be the **second investment platform to be set up by NIIF**.
- GGEF, which will invest in renewable energy assets, is a joint venture between NIIF and the UK government.
- **GGEF would be managed by a third-party investment manager, selected by NIIF**

  *Limited and the UK government* through an efficient and robust screening and selection process.

**NIIF:**
- NIIF was set up in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled projects in the infrastructure sector.
- NIIF will invest in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India.
- The corpus of the fund is proposed to be around Rs40,000 crore, with the government investing 49% and the rest to be raised from third-party investors such as sovereign wealth funds, insurance and pension funds, endowments etc.
- NIIF’s strategy includes anchoring equity, quasi-equity and debt funds in partnership with investors targeting investments across the relevant sectors in India.

5. **SEBI amends norms for REITS**

Sebi has amended REITs and InvITs regulations to facilitate the growth of such trusts. As per the amendments, REITs and InvITs will now have to provide a mechanism for resolution of disputes with their shareholders and partners in the holding firm.

REITs are similar to mutual funds. While mutual funds provide for an opportunity to invest in equity stocks, REITs allow one to invest in income-generating real estate assets.

REITs raise funds from a large number of investors and directly invest that sum in income-generating real estate properties (which could be offices, residential apartments, shopping centres, hotels and warehouses).
The trusts are listed in stock exchanges so that investors can buy units in the trust. REITs are structured as trusts. Thus, the assets of an REIT are held by an independent trustee on behalf of unit holders.

6. FAME scheme

The government has decided to extend the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid) and Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme by six months until 30 September 2018, or till the time the second phase of the scheme is approved by it.

FAME India scheme: With an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles, the government had launched the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-India) scheme in 2015.

Aim: The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments, including two-wheelers, three wheeler auto, passenger four-wheeler vehicle, light commercial vehicles and buses. The scheme covers hybrid and electric technologies like a strong hybrid, plug-in hybrid and battery electric vehicles.

FAME India – Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India – is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. The scheme envisages Rs 795 crore support in the first two fiscals. It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.

7. PMGSY

A parliamentary panel has found discrepancies including diversion of funds, issuing tenders prior to technical sanctions, incomplete projects, preference to certain villages etc. in the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) — a flagship programme of the Central government to provide rural last mile connectivity.
The panel also found that some states had deviated from the prescribed procedures. Consequently eligible habitations were either left out or wrongly shown as connected.

PMGSY was launched on 25th December 2000 as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme to provide all weather road connectivity in rural areas of the country. The programme’s target is to connect the 178,184 habitations identified as unconnected when the programme was launched. The present government has set an accelerated goal of achieving this target by 2019, ahead of the initial timeline of 2022. For most intensive Integrated Action Plan (IAP) blocks as identified by Ministry of Home Affairs the unconnected habitations with population of 100 and above (as per 2001 Census) are eligible to be covered under PMGSY.

8. Uniform Road Tax

A group of ministers (GoM) on transport constituted by the roads ministry has recommended a uniform road tax structure for vehicles across states.

The group was constituted to find a solution to the various problems plaguing the road sector in the country. It was also asked to suggest ways to improve road safety and facilitate ease of transport.

Recommendations made:
One national bus and taxi permit: The GoM has recommended one national bus and taxi permit on the lines of permits for goods transporters. Public transport in the country is growing annually at a rate of just about 2%, as against a 20% annual growth in private transport. Therefore, a national permit will give the much-needed fillip to public transport and help reduce road congestion.
Boost to electric vehicles: The GoM proposed to liberalize the permit system for electric vehicles to promote alternative fuels. It suggested raising the tax on diesel vehicles by 2% while lowering the tax on electric vehicles.

Benefits of uniform road tax:
- It will end the practice of people registering their vehicles in low-tax states and using them in other states. The move will also bring relief to consumers moving across states.
- If the states agree to One Nation, One Permit, One Tax then the revenues of the states will increase. This will also reduce the chances of one operator taking a few permits and running a large number of buses.
- It will also go a long way in improving the interstate transfer of used cars making the lengthy and rather a cumbersome process that exists today into a much more streamlined and less complicated one.

9. Leisang in Manipur

Leisang in Manipur has become the last village to be added to the national power grid under the Rural Electrification Scheme.

Definition: The government considers a village electrified if it has basic electrical infrastructure and 10% of its households and public places including schools, local administrative offices and health centres have power.

The government had allocated Rs75,893 crore for the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana with the aim of providing electricity access to all villages.
10. PM Ujwala Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has been launched in Delhi. The Cabinet, in February 2018, had approved the increase in the target for the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana to eight crore from the earlier five crore. This has to be achieved by 2020.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.

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

Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories.

The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.


Under the schemes, certain incentives will be provided to eligible industrial units in respective states. Industrial units undertaking substantial expansion in the manufacturing and services sectors are eligible under the schemes.

Incentives provided under the schemes are:

- **Central capital investment incentive for access to credit**: Incentive of 30% of the investment (maximum five crore rupees) in plant and machinery per industrial unit.
Central comprehensive insurance incentive: Reimbursement of 100% insurance premium on insurance of the building, and plant and machinery for a period of five years.

Central interest incentive: Interest incentive of 3% on the working capital credit advanced by the scheduled banks or central or state financial institutions for first five years. This incentive is available only for the scheme in Jammu and Kashmir.

Period:
- Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand - from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2022.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS & SUMMITS

1. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
   - Second lead-up Conference to 3rd Annual Meeting of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on ‘Enhancing Port and Coastal Infrastructure’ is being held Visakhapatnam.
   - The Regional Conference is being organized by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India in collaboration with AIIB, CII and Research and Infrastructure System (RIS) for Developing Countries.
   - The panel discusses various issues relating to trade promotion through sea route, building-up robust port & coastal infrastructure and revising & relaxing maritime regulatory issues to promote blue economy in India.

AIIB
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond.

- It is headquartered in Beijing.
- It commenced operations in January 2016 and has now grown to 84 approved members from around the world.
- By investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors today, it aims to connect people, services and markets that over time will impact the lives of billions and build a better future.

**Organs of AIIB**

**Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors consists of one Governor and one Alternate Governor appointed by each member country. Governors and Alternate Governors serve at the pleasure of the appointing member.

**Board of Directors:** Non-resident Board of Directors is responsible for the direction of the Bank’s general operations, exercising all powers delegated to it by the Board of Governors. This includes approving the Bank’s strategy, annual plan and budget; establishing policies; taking decisions concerning Bank operations; and supervising management and operation of the Bank and establishing an oversight mechanism.

**International Advisory Panel:** The Bank has established an International Advisory Panel (IAP) to support the President and Senior Management on the Bank’s strategies and policies as well as on general operational issues. The Panel meets in tandem with the Bank’s Annual Meeting, or as requested by the President. The President selects and appoints members of the IAP to two-year terms. Panelists receive a small honorarium and do not receive a salary. The Bank pays the costs associated with Panel meetings.
India has emerged as the biggest beneficiary of the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, soaking up a quarter of all its investment commitments to date, despite continuing diplomatic tension between New Delhi and Beijing.

In the first two years of its existence, the AIIB — conceived by China as an alternative to the World Bank — approved $4.3bn worth of funding for infrastructure projects around Asia, over $1bn worth of which is due to go to schemes in India.

2. UN Disarmament Commission
India has voiced opposition to the “weaponization” of outer space, saying it should not become an area of conflict while calling for collective efforts to strengthen safety and security of the space-based assets.

India voiced its concerns in the recently held UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) session.
UNDC:
- The United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) is a deliberative body and a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly which is mandated to consider and make recommendations on various disarmament related issues and to follow up the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special sessions devoted to disarmament held so far.
- The Disarmament Commission was re-established at the first Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament in 1978 to succeed an earlier Disarmament Commission, which ceased to convene after 1965.
- Since 1978, the Disarmament Commission has dealt with numerous disarmament related questions, both nuclear and conventional, and has submitted guidelines and principles on various subject items, including guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures, guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and guidelines and recommendations for objective information on military matters.

Significance of UNDC: At a time of growing mistrust and rising international tensions as well as numerous challenges to both the disarmament agenda and the disarmament machinery, the role of the UNDC as a platform for dialogue and cooperation assumes a greater significance.

3. International Energy Forum
India is hosting the 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi.

IEF Ministerial meeting:
- The IEF Ministerial meetings are informal dialogues, at both the political and technical levels, aimed to improve policy and investment decisions, and through increased knowledge and experience sharing.
- The biennial IEF Ministerial Meetings are the world’s largest gathering of Energy Ministers who engage in a dialogue on global energy issues.

IEF: The International Energy Forum (IEF) is an inter-governmental arrangement set up in 1991. It is based in Riyadh.

Functions: It serves as a neutral facilitator of informal, open, informed and continuing global energy dialogue among its members comprising of energy producing and energy consuming states, including transit countries.

Members: There are 72 member countries of IEF, including India, covering all six continents, which are signatories to the Charter of the IEF. Its membership accounts for 90% of global supply and demand for oil and gas.

Executive board:
- The Executive Board (EB) set up in 2002 comprising of 31 designated representatives of Ministers of the member states comprise the governing board of IEF.
- It meets twice a year.
- International Energy Agency (IEA) and Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are non-voting members of the Executive Board.
- The EB is chaired by the Host State of the next biennial Ministerial Meeting. Currently, India is the Chair of the Executive Board of IEF.

4. Regional 3R Forum
- The Eighth Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific is being held in Indore. The event will see participation of around 40 mayors of cities around the world and mayors of more than 100 cities across India.
- The 8th Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific is co-organized by the Ministry of Housing and Affairs, Government of India, the Ministry of the Environment of the
Government of Japan (MOEJ), and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD).
- The Indore Municipal Corporation, Government of Madhya Pradesh, and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) have been designated as the City Partner, Organizing State Partner and Industry Partner

**Theme:** “Achieving Clean Water, Clean Land and Clean Air through 3R and Resource Efficiency – A 21st Century Vision for Asia-Pacific Communities”.

**3R Forum:**
**Establishment:** In 2009, the Regional 3R Forum in Asia was established at Japan’s proposal as a platform for broad cooperation on promotion of the 3Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – in Asia. After the fourth forum, the name was changed to Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific.
**Members:** Members include central governments, international agencies, aid agencies, private sector entities, research bodies, NGOs and other relevant parties.

**Ha Noi 3R Declaration:**
The Fourth Regional 3R Forum – held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, in March 2013 – adopted the Ha Noi 3R Declaration - Sustainable 3R Goals for Asia and the Pacific for 2013-2023. It is a legally non-binding and voluntary document which aims to provide a basic framework for Asia-Pacific countries to develop measures and programs to promote 3Rs including a set of 3R indicators for monitoring specific progress.

**UNCRD:**
- The United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) was founded in 1971 as an instrument to help achieve the strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade.
- Created by an agreement between the UN and the Government of Japan, its operations are supported by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA).
- UNCRD’s vision is to achieve sustainable living environment for all. Its mission is to assist developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.
- UNCRD’s interventions in developing countries are clustered under three main thematic interrelated and complementary areas of work – (a) Integrated Regional Development Planning; (b) Sustainable Urban Management; and (c) Knowledge Management.

5. Headquarters Agreement between India and the International Solar Alliance
The Union Cabinet has given its ex-post facto approval for entering into Headquarters (Host country) Agreement between India and the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and authorizing the Ministry of External Affairs for signing the Headquarter Agreement.

Significance: It will institutionalize the functional arrangements between India and ISA. It will help in smooth transition of ISA as international inter-governmental organization. Creation of ISA will lead to accelerated solar technology development and deployment in ISA member countries including India.
The Paris Declaration establishes ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries. The ISA is the first international body that will have a secretariat in India.

**Objectives:** The ISA’s major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US$ 1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.

**Function:** As an action-oriented organisation, the ISA brings together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating the deployment of existing solar technologies at scale, and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.

When the ISA Framework Agreement entered into force on December 6th, 2017, ISA formally became a de-jure treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization, headquartered at Gurugram, India.

**Significance of ISA for India:**

- The ISA is not only expected to spur innovation in the RE space but also help make India a technological hub with independent manufacturing capabilities of RE equipment like solar panels, rather than being dependent on imports, through initiatives like ‘Make in India’. India’s Ministry of External Affairs is expected to play a role in “marrying Indian tech and finance capabilities with specific projects around the world”.

- India announced a goal of obtaining 40% of its electricity from non-fossil fuels by 2030 at the Paris climate change summit. It is close to achieving 20 GW grid connected solar power generation capacity this fiscal year (2018), in pursuit of achieving its target of 100 GW by 2022.

**6. UN launches road safety trust fund**

UN has launched road safety trust fund aimed at spurring action to help save lives in road accidents.
Significance:
- It is estimated that every $1,500 contributed to the Fund could save one life, prevent 10 serious injuries and leverage $51,000 towards investments in road safety.
- The United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund has the potential to galvanize our global efforts to address the road safety situation, building on the progress made and experience gained over the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

Resolution on road safety:
The UN General Assembly also adopted a resolution on road safety, sponsored by Russia, in which it called for a host of measures to prevent road accidents and to minimising the resulting damage. One of the measures, it urged, the adoption policies and measures to implement vehicle safety regulations to ensure that all new motor vehicles meet applicable minimum regulations for the protection of occupants and other road users, with seat belts, airbags and active safety systems fitted as standard equipment.

Facts:
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015, contains targets on road safety in two of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals:
- **Sustainable Development Goal 3:** “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.
- **Target 3.6:** By 2020, halve the number of global deaths from road traffic accidents.
- **Sustainable Development Goal 11:** “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. 
7. Asian Premium

India is planning to coordinate with China and other Asian countries to voice against the “Asian Premium” being charged by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Soon, the countries will chalk out the strategy that would result in getting better price from OPEC countries.

Against Asian premium
- India, which sources 85% of its crude oil supplies from OPEC member countries, wants producers to offer discounts rather than charge a premium, as today it has become buyer’s market.
- The direction of crude flow from West Asia has now shifted to Asia. Besides, with OPEC deciding not to reduce production, there is a tilt in the demand-supply balance.
- Earlier, crude flow was from West Asia to North America and the pricing also depended on the market. Now, with the shale revolution, the flow has shifted to Asia.

Impacts: If crude is received at a fair price without paying Asian Premium, gross refining margins will improve and it will result in competitively priced petroleum products.

Asian premium: is the extra charge being collected by OPEC countries from Asian countries when selling oil. The premium is determined in large part by the official selling prices (OSP).
set by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, which supply about 15 percent of the world’s crude among them. They set differential prices against benchmarks on a monthly basis, adjusting them to account for regional variations.

**OPEC**

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the **Baghdad Conference** in September **1960**, by **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia** and **Venezuela**.

Currently, the Organization has a total of 14 Member Countries.

OPEC had its headquarters in **Geneva**, Switzerland, in the first five years of its existence. This was moved to **Vienna**, Austria, on September 1, 1965.

OPEC’s objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.

**8. Weisbaden Conference**

Wiesbaden Conference 2018 was recently held in India. Representatives from the 39 countries, as well as experts from the **UNSC 1540 Committee** and **UN Office for Disarmament Affairs** in New York, participated in the conference.

The conference provides an opportunity to participants to share experiences on their export control systems and to identify legal and technical assistance, action plans and challenges in the national implementation of UNSC 1540.

The **Wiesbaden Process** was initiated by the Government of Germany in **2012** to strengthen the implementation of UNSC 1540 through Government-Industry partnerships.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) establishes **legally binding obligations on all States** to adopt and enforce appropriate and effective measures to **prevent the proliferation to non-State actors of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons** and their delivery systems. It requires, therefore that States implement appropriate and effective measures to prevent non-state actors such as terrorists, from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
Facts:
- The title of the Conference is ‘Securing Global Supply Chains through Government-Industry Partnerships towards Effective Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540’.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in cooperation with Germany and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) hosted the conference.
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) was the industry partner for the event.

The resolution includes three primary obligations:
- All States are prohibited from providing any form of support to non-state actors seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction, related materials, or their means of delivery.
- All States must adopt and enforce laws criminalizing the possession and acquisition of such items by non-state actors, as well as efforts to assist or finance their acquisition.
- All States must adopt and enforce domestic controls over nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, their means of delivery, and related materials, in order to prevent their proliferation.

9. Shanghai Cooperation Organization
India is all set to take part in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, which has been scheduled for April 24. These are the first SCO meetings after India and Pakistan were admitted into the eight-member group.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, also known as the Shanghai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Apart
from Uzbekistan, the other five countries have been a part of the Shanghai 5 since 1996. The cooperation was renamed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001.

**New members:** India and Pakistan joined SCO as full members in June 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia.

**Main goals:** strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

10. **Meeting of the Development Committee (DC) and IMFC of the World Bank Group and the IMF**

Meeting of the Development Committee (DC) of the World Bank Group and the IMF and the Restricted Session of the International Monetary and Finance Committee (IMFC) were recently held in Washington D.C.

**Ministerial Committees:** The IMF Board of Governors is advised by two ministerial committees, the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) and the Development Committee.

**IMFC:**

**Composition:** The IMFC has 24 members, drawn from the pool of 187 governors. Its structure mirrors that of the Executive Board and its 24 constituencies. As such, the IMFC represents all the member countries of the Fund.
**Functions:** The IMFC meets twice a year, during the Spring and Annual Meetings. The Committee discusses matters of common concern affecting the global economy and also advises the IMF on the direction its work. At the end of the Meetings, the Committee issues a joint communiqué summarizing its views. These communiqués provide guidance for the IMF’s work program during the six months leading up to the next Spring or Annual Meetings. **There is no formal voting at the IMFC, which operates by consensus.**

**Development committee:**
The Development Committee is a joint committee, tasked with advising the Boards of Governors of the IMF and the World Bank on issues related to economic development in emerging and developing countries. The committee has 24 members (usually ministers of finance or development). It represents the full membership of the IMF and the World Bank and mainly serves as a forum for building intergovernmental consensus on critical development issues.

**11. South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF)**

Pune hosted the 12th edition of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) meeting. The Forum was attended by meteorologists from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. **This was the sixth SASCOF meeting hosted by India.**

**SASCOF:**
- South Asian nations, supported by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), have been conducting the South Asian Seasonal Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF) since 2010.
- SASCOF was established as a platform where meteorologists from South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries along with Myanmar, could discuss some of the common weather and climate-related matters.
- All these South Asian countries — except for Afghanistan, which is located in extreme northwest — experience common weather and climatological characteristics, like Southwest monsoon.

**Functions:**
SASCOFs prepare consensus seasonal climate information on a regional scale that provide a consistent basis for preparing national level outlooks.
Such forums also serve to interface with user sectors to understand and enhance the use of climate information as orchestrated and supported by the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS).

12. **Kishanganga Project**

Pakistan has informed the World Bank about India’s completing of the Kishanganga hydropower project during the bank’s “pause” period and has urged it to “recognise its responsibility” under the Indus Waters Treaty.

**Issue**
- Pakistan has approached the World Bank, the mediator between the two countries of the water distribution treaty, in the past and raised issues over Kishanganga and Ratle projects in Jammu and Kashmir.
- It has been flagging concern over designs of India’s five hydroelectricity projects – Pakal Dul (1000 MW), Ratle (850 MW), Kishanganga (330 MW), Miyar (120 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW) – being built/planned in the Indus river basin, contending these violate the treaty.
Background:
In December 2016, the world bank had announced that it had “paused” the process for either appointing a Court of Arbitration (COA) or a neutral expert and started mediation between the two countries on how to advance and develop consensus in the light of the treaty on the mechanism for resolution of faulty designs of the two projects. Since then, the bank has arranged two rounds of talks between the two sides.

The Kishanganga Hydroelectric Plant is an $864 million dam which is part of a run-of-the-river hydroelectric scheme that is designed to divert water from the Kishanganga River to a power plant in the Jhelum River basin. It is located 5 km north of Bandipore in Jammu and Kashmir, India and will have an installed capacity of 330 MW. Construction on the dam was temporarily halted by the Hague’s Permanent Court of Arbitration in October 2011 due to Pakistan’s protest of its effect on the flow of the Kishanganga River (called the Neelum River in Pakistan). In February 2013, the Hague ruled that India could divert a minimum amount of water for power generation.

13. India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway
Work on the 1,000 km-long India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway officially started with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) signing an agreement with a joint-venture (JV) between Punj Lloyd and Varaha Infra to upgrade the Yagyi-Kalewa section of the India-Myanmar Friendship Road in Myanmar.

This is NHAI’s first international project agreement. The project has been funded by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and would be executed on EPC mode at a cost of Rs.1177 crores.

**IMT Highway:** The 1,000 km India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway will run from Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar. The highway will facilitate easy movement of goods and people among the three countries.

**Significance of the Highway:**
Once completed, greater flows of trade and investment will take place along the route, stimulating the movement of goods and people, creating jobs, promoting tourism as well as raising the livelihoods of the peoples in the region.
14. Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of Seafarers

India has signed an MoU with the Republic of Korea on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency of Seafarers.

Significance of the MoU:
The MoU will pave way for recognition of maritime education and training, certificates of competency, endorsements, training documentary evidence and medical fitness certificates for seafarers issued by the Government of the other country in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 1/10 of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention, and cooperation between the two countries in training and management of seafarers.

STCW convention:
- The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (or STCW), 1978 sets qualification standards for masters, officers and watch personnel on seagoing merchant ships.
- STCW was adopted in 1978 by conference at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London, and entered into force in 1984. The Convention was significantly amended in 1995.
- The 1978 STCW Convention was the first to establish basic requirements on training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers on an international level.
- The Convention prescribes minimum standards relating to training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers which countries are obliged to meet or exceed.
- One important feature of the Convention is that it applies to ships of non-party States when visiting ports of States which are Parties to the Convention.
- The Manila amendments to the STCW Convention and Code were adopted on 25 June 2010, marking a major revision of the STCW Convention and Code.
15. G7 foreign ministers’ summit

- G7 foreign ministers’ summit is being held in Toronto. Participants discussed tensions with Moscow, Iran and North Korea.
- The Group of 7 (G7) is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The European Union is also represented within the G7.
- These countries are the seven major advanced economies as reported by the International Monetary Fund: the G7 countries represent more than 64% of the net global wealth ($263 trillion).
- A very high net national wealth and a very high Human Development Index are the main requirements to be a member of this group.

16. Peace Mission 2018

It is a multi-nation counter-terror exercise that will take place under the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.
Main aim: to enhance counter-terror cooperation among the eight SCO member countries. Peace Mission exercises are held once in two years. This year’s exercises will be the 10th edition. The last time, it was held in 2016 in Kyrgyzstan.

The 2018 edition will be held in the Ural mountains of Russia.

Significance:
- In a first, India and Pakistan will be part of this exercise.
- It will be for the first time since Independence that India and Pakistan will both be part of a military exercise, though the armies of the two nations have worked together in UN peace keeping missions.

17. US places India under watch list

The United States Treasury Department has put India again on the currency manipulator watchlist as the country’s foreign exchange net addition and the bilateral trade surplus with the US have breached two of the three criteria determining manipulation.

The Treasury report is required by Congress to identify countries that are trying to artificially manage the value of their currency to gain a trade advantage, for example by keeping the exchange rate low to promote cheaper exports.

The US Treasury Department uses three parameters to determine a currency manipulator:

- Bilateral trade surplus with the US to be $20 billion,
- Current account surplus at 3% of country’s GDP,
- Net purchases of foreign currency to 2% of country’s GDP over a year.

In addition to India, the other countries in the list are China, Germany, Japan, Korea and Switzerland.
18. Prime Minister of Nepal visits India

Key agreements:

- **Partnership in agriculture**: The two countries launched a new partnership in the field of agriculture. The partnership will focus on collaborative projects in areas including agricultural research and development, education, climate resilience, and soil health.

- **Rail connectivity**: Both nations agreed to construct a new electrified rail line connecting the border city of Raxaul, Bihar to Kathmandu, Nepal. India will provide financial support for this project.

19. Prime Minister visits United Kingdom

The Prime Minister visited United Kingdom (UK) for a bilateral visit and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

India and UK signed 10 agreements in areas including: (i) rejuvenation of Ganga, (ii) skill development, vocational education and training (strengthening skill delivery in sectors where UK has technical and skilling expertise), (iii) safe nuclear energy use for peaceful purposes, and (iv) international criminality (mechanism for exchange of information in the context of such criminality).

LAW, GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE
1. **Central Vigilance Commission**

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) is planning to use Aadhaar to track the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt bureaucrats.

Aadhaar is being made mandatory for numerous financial transactions and property deals. Information made available through a person’s Permanent Account Number (PAN) and Aadhaar cards could help the CVC check if financial deals carried out by the cardholder were within his or her means.

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**CVC**

It is the apex vigilance institution. It was created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of Santhanam committee) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003. It submits its report to the President of India.

**Composition:** Presently, the body consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.

**Appointment:** They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).

**Term:** Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.

**Removal:** The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

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2. **NCLT**

The government is planning to have more benches of the National Company Law Tribunal on the basis of case load, amid rising number of insolvency cases coming up before the NCLT.
**Background:** Currently, there are 11 NCLT benches in different parts of the country, including two in the national capital.

**National Company Law Tribunal:** is a quasi-judicial body that will govern the companies in India. It was established under the Companies Act, 2013 and is a successor body of the Company Law Board. **Powers:** NCLT will have the same powers as assigned to the erstwhile Company Law Board (which are mostly related to dealing with oppression and mismanagement), Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR)(revival of sick companies) and powers related to winding up of companies (which was available only with the High Courts).

**Background:** The setting up of NCLT as a specialized institution for corporate justice is based on the recommendations of the Justice Eradi Committee on Law Relating to Insolvency and Winding up of Companies.

3. **Competition Commission of India (CCI)**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for rightsizing the Competition Commission of India (CCI) from One Chairperson and Six Members (totalling seven) to **One Chairperson and Three Members (totalling four).**

**Section 8(1) of the Competition Act, 2002** (the Act) provides that the Commission shall consist of a Chairperson and not less than two and not more than six Members.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Act, and was duly constituted in March 2009. **Chairman and members are appointed by the central government.**

**Objectives of the Commission:**
- To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition.
- To promote and sustain competition in markets.
- To protect the interests of consumers.
- To ensure freedom of trade.

The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

4. Drugs Technical Advisory Board

The Union Health Ministry has banned over-the-counter sale of around 14 creams containing steroids and antibiotics under the Schedule H category by making amendments to certain Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.

The decision was made following consultation with the Drugs Technical Advisory Board which recommended a ban on the sale of such creams without prescription and had also submitted their recommendations to the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation.

The move comes in the wake of dermatologists’ complaints that pharmaceutical companies were selling steroid-based creams and ointments without medical guidance.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO is responsible for approval of New Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. Further CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

**Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)** is the highest decision-making body under the Union health ministry on technical matters. Director General of Health Services (DGHS) is the ex-officio chairman of this statutory body which is constituted by the ministry under section 5 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Schedule H is a class of prescription drugs listed under Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 which governs manufacture and sale of all drugs in India. These drugs cannot be purchased over counter without the prescription of a doctor.

5. **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal**

Online search giant Google has filed an appeal at the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal against an order from India’s competition watchdog that found it guilty of “search bias” and abuse of its dominant position.

**Issue-** In February, the Competition Commission of India imposed a 1.36 billion rupees ($20.95 million) fine on Google, saying it was abusing its dominance in online web search and online search advertising markets, in the latest regulatory setback for the world’s most popular internet search engine.
National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June, 2016.

NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).
NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).


- A new website a mobile app has been launched for the ‘National Commission for Safai Karamcharis’.
- The Mobile App will help the Commission in addressing the grievances/complaints of petitioners in an efficient manner.
- National Commission for Safai Karamcharis is an Indian statutory body was established through National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993. It aims to promote and safeguard the interests and rights of Safai Karamcharis.
- The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis seeks to study, evaluate and monitor the implementation of various schemes for Safai Karamcharis as an autonomous organization and also to provide redressal of their grievances.

7. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)
India’s downstream oil and gas regulator Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) is set to take up the role of the market regulator for the natural gas sector, when the planned natural gas trading hub comes into being, much on the lines of the capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

**Need:** to build a vibrant and transparent gas market in India. The idea is to create an ecosystem where the competing buyers would be able to buy gas from competing sellers and transport the same from gas source to the place of their requirement by getting a non-discriminatory access to the pipeline capacity. This end-to-end solution would reduce customer risk and enhance customer confidence on gas as an alternate fuel and feed.

The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) was constituted under The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006. The Act provide for the establishment of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board to protect the interests of consumers and entities engaged in specified activities relating to petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas and to promote competitive markets and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The board has also been mandated to regulate the refining, processing, storage, transportation, distribution, marketing and sale of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas excluding production of crude oil and natural gas so as and to ensure uninterrupted and adequate supply of petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas in all parts of the country.

8. National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI)
The Supreme Court has ruled all questions relating to conferring minority status on educational institutions are to be decided by the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) and quashed the order of the Calcutta high court, which had said the body had no original jurisdiction on the issue.

**Court said:**
- NCMEI has the power to decide any question that might arise, which relate directly or indirectly, with respect to the status of an institution as a minority educational institution.
- As per Section 11 of the Act, NCMEI could declare an establishment as a minority educational institution “at all stages.”
- Only the Commission has the power to decide on granting a ‘no objection’ certificate to an institution that wanted to convert into a minority institution.

**Background:** The Calcutta HC had held that NCMEI had no original jurisdiction to declare the minority status. Other high courts had also taken contradictory stand on the power of the Commission in granting minority status to educational institutions.

Besides Calcutta HC, Bombay HC and Punjab & Haryana HC have also taken the view that the Commission had no original power to decide on minority status. On the other hand, the Allahabad HC had held that Commission had jurisdiction to decide the issue.

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The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions was set up in 2004. The Government brought out an Ordinance in November 2004 establishing the Commission. Later a Bill was introduced in the Parliament in December 2004 and both Houses passed the Bill.

The Commission is mandated to look into specific complaints regarding deprivation or violation of rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

The Commission is a quasi-judicial body and has been endowed with the powers of a Civil Court.

It is to be headed by a Chairman who has been a Judge of the High Court and three members are to be nominated by Central Government.

The NCMEI Act empowers the Commission “to decide all questions relating to the status of an institution as a minority educational institution and to declare its status as such.”
9. Defence Planning Committee (DPC)

The Centre has set up a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) to facilitate “comprehensive” planning for the defence forces besides focusing on military doctrines to deal with emerging security challenges. The DPC will be a permanent body chaired by the National Security Advisor.

The committee will comprise:
- National Security Advisor (NSA).
- Foreign secretary.
- Chairman of chiefs of staff committee.
- The Army, Navy and Air Force chiefs.
- Secretary (expenditure) in the Finance Ministry.

Functions of the committee:
- Prepare drafts of national security strategy and doctrines, international defence engagement strategy and roadmap to build defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- Work on strategy to boost defence exports, and prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces.
- Analyse and evaluate all relevant inputs relating to defence planning and foreign policy imperatives besides focusing on defence acquisition and infrastructure development plans including the 15-year-long integrated perspective plan.
- Work on development of Indian defence industry and technology advancements.

The DPC would submit its draft reports to the Defence Minister according to “given timelines” following which further approvals will be obtained as required.

10. National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has decided to approach the government for granting it Constitutional status to protect the rights of minority communities more effectively.

Need:
- In its present form, the NCM has powers to summon officials, including chief secretaries and director generals of police, but has to rely on departments concerned to take action against them. If granted constitutional status, the NCM will be able to act against errant officials who do not attend hearings, follow its order or are found guilty of dereliction of duty. Also, the NCM can penalise or suspend an officer for two days or send him/her to jail.
- The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2017-18), in its 53rd report had also noted that the NCM is “almost ineffective” in its current state to deal with cases of atrocities against minorities.

NCM:
The Union Government set up the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

Six religious communities, viz; Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by the Union Government all over India. Original notification of 1993 was for Five religious communities Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Christians and Muslims.

Composition: The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson and five Members to be nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity; provided that five Members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities.

Grievance redressal: Aggrieved persons belonging to the minority communities may approach the concerned State Minorities Commissions for redressal of their grievances. They may also send their representations, to the National Commission for Minorities, after exhausting all remedies available to them.

11. Island Development Agency (IDA)

The Union Home Minister recently chaired the third meeting of the Island Development Agency (IDA).

The Island Development Agency reviewed the progress made towards preparation of Development Plans for identified Islands.

The IDA was set up on June 1 this year following Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s review meeting for the development of islands. The meetings of the agency are chaired by the Union Home Minister.

Composition: Members of the IDA include cabinet secretary, home secretary, secretary (environment, forests and climate change), secretary (tourism) and secretary (tribal welfare).
12. National Register of Citizens (NRC)

The verification of citizenship documents of 29 lakh married women, mostly migrant Muslims, for the Supreme Court-monitored exercise to update the 1951 National Register of Citizens (NRC) has begun in Assam. The verification of family trees and the documents of married women has to be completed by May 31, the deadline set by the court.

National Register of Citizens was introduced to identify illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and recognise the Indian citizens in Assam. It was first prepared in 1951 and Assam is the only state having this arrangement.

Under NRC, immigrants who have documents proving that they entered Assam before 1971 will be considered Indian citizens and others have to show that their ascendants have lived in Assam even before 1971.

The publication of the updated NRC is indeed a positive step in so far as it puts to rest wild speculations about the extent of the illegal migrant population in Assam and the resulting polarization that political parties have been exploiting to make electoral gains.

13. One candidate One seat

The Election Commission has told the Supreme Court that it supports the proposal to allow one candidate to contest from only one constituency in an election. The EC expressed this view in an affidavit it filed in the petition over the matter.
The Supreme Court had in December 2017 issued notices seeking replies from the Election Commission and the Centre on the issue. At the time, the Supreme Court had said the practice of one candidate contesting multiple seats was a drain on the exchequer since it necessitated bypolls.

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging Section 33(7) of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 that allows a person to contest elections to Parliament and state assemblies from two constituencies and sought an end to the practice.

Section 33(7) of the Representation of People’s Act permits a candidate to contest any election (Parliamentary, State Assembly, Biennial Council, or bye-elections) from up to two constituencies. The provision was introduced in 1996 prior to which there was no bar on the number of constituencies from which a candidate could contest.

14. NITI Forum for Northeast

The first meeting of Newly constituted NITI Forum for North East was recently held in Agartala, Tripura. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog. Strategies for improving Road, Rail and Air Connectivity in the North East Region, improvements in agriculture and allied sectors, water management were some of the key focus area during the meeting.

NITI Forum for Northeast:
- The Union Government set up the ‘Niti Forum for North-East’ in February 2018.
- The forum will be co-chaired by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog and Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (DoNER).
- The forum will have its Secretariat in the Ministry of DoNER.
The NITI Forum for Northeast is tasked to identify various constraints on the way of accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the North East Region of the country and to recommend suitable interventions for addressing identified constraints. It will also review the development status in the NER.

The Forum includes representation from all NE States, their Chief Secretaries and Secretaries of relevant Central Ministries/Departments, Directors of reputed institutions (IIT, IIM etc), experts and journalists have been included as members.

15. Aspirational District Programme

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has charted a plan to promote micro enterprises in 115 aspirational districts across the country to contribute in their development. The bank has tied up with Common Service Centre (CSC) to meet this objective.

‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ was launched in January with an aim to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts in the country.

Implementation strategy:
- The broad contours of the programme are Convergence (of Central & State Schemes), Collaboration (of Central, State level ‘Prabhari’ Officers & District Collectors), and Competition among districts driven by a mass Movement.
- This will converge the central and state schemes, collaborate central, state and district collectors to strengthen these districts by identifying the low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress and then rank the district by getting the data on a real-time basis.
Selection of backward districts: The 115 districts, including 35 affected by left-wing extremism, were selected on parameters like deprivation (extent of landless households), health & nutrition (institutional delivery, stunting of children and wasting in children), education (elementary dropout rate and adverse pupil-teacher ratio) and infrastructure (un-electrified homes, lack of toilets, villages not connected by road and lack of drinking water).

16. Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

- As part of the “Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan”, the “Swachh Bharat Parva” was recently organized all over the country.
- “Gram Swaraj Abhiyan” is being organised between 14th April to 05th May, 2018.
- The campaign, undertaken under the name of “Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas”, is to promote social harmony, spread awareness about pro-poor initiatives of government, reach out to poor households to enroll them as also to obtain their feedback on various welfare programmes.
- As a special endeavour during the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, saturation of eligible households/persons would be made under seven flagship pro-poor programmes in 21,058 identified villages.
- The programmes covered are Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya, Ujala scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Mission Indradhanush.

17. e-Vidhan project

The central government has launched Central Project Monitoring Unit for e-Vidhan project at Parliament House Annexe.
e-Vidhan is a mission mode project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures in India paperless. It is a part of the broader Digital India Programme of the Government and is likely to contribute to the cleanliness & environment by reducing the use of papers to a great extent. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is the Nodal Ministry for the project.
In 2014, Himachal Pradesh became the first state in the country to implement e-Vidhan as a pilot project.

18. SC/ST Atrocities Act
The government has filed a petition seeking review of the Supreme Court order diluting the provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, which protects marginalised communities against discrimination and atrocities.

Issue:
- On March 20, the Supreme Court banned automatic arrests and registration of criminal cases under the SC/ST Act, triggering widespread criticism and outcry from the dalit community.
- The apex court said public servants can’t be prosecuted without the approval of the appointing authority, and private citizens too should be arrested only after an inquiry under the law.
- It further ruled that preliminary inquiry in a case under the Act would be conducted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police to ensure the allegations are not frivolous.
- The amendment in the law was a bid to protect honest public servants discharging bona fide duties from being blackmailed with false cases under the Act.

Concern: Dalit organisations and some political parties fear the dilution of the provisions of the Act might lead to increase in violence against Dalits.

SC/ST Act:
- The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is popularly known as POA, the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act. The SC/ST Act was enacted on September 9, 1989. The rules for the Act were notified on March 31, 1995.
- The SC/ST Act lists 22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviour inflicting criminal offences and breaking the self-respect and esteem of the scheduled castes and tribes community. This includes denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process.
- According to the SC/ST Act, the protection is provided from social disabilities such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food sexual exploitation, injury etc, atrocities affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.
- For speedy trial, Section 14 of the SC/ST Act provides for a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district.
- The prime objective of the SC/ST Act is to deliver justice to marginalised through proactive efforts, giving them a life of dignity, self-esteem and a life without fear, violence or suppression from the dominant castes.

19. Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018 for better protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

**Salient Features:**
- It proposes to include “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights” as deemed Member of the Commission;
- It proposes to add a woman Member in the composition of the Commission;
- It proposes to enlarge the scope of eligibility and scope of selection of Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission as well as the State Human Rights Commission; and
- It proposes to incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories.
- It proposes to amend the term of office of Chairperson and Members of National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.

20. e-FRRO scheme

The government has launched the web-based application ‘e-FRRO’ (e-Foreigners Regional Registration Office) which aims to provide efficient visa related services online to foreigners visiting India.

**Aim:** The e-FRRO scheme is aimed at building a centralized, transparent online platform for the foreigners to avail visa related services and to provide Faceless, Cashless and Paperless services to the foreigners with user friendly experience.

**Features:** under the scheme, foreigners would be able to get as many as 27 Visa and Immigration related services in India from the comfort of their place of stay. Using the e-FRRO application, foreigners can apply online on the portal and obtain the service(s) through email/post without appearing in person at the FRO/FRRO office.

**Advantages of e-FRRO** include facilitation of legitimate foreigners through “Digital India” vision of the Government, foreigners need not visit FRRO/FRO office – “Services from the comfort of home”, convenient and Time saving, exclusive dashboard for User friendly experience and Uniform & Standardized Services across the Country.

21. Cabinet to discuss death penalty for rape of minors
The Union Cabinet is planning on bringing an Ordinance to award death penalty to those convicted of sexually assaulting a child.

The criminal law amendment ordinance seeks to amend the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Evidence Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to introduce a new provision to sentence convicts of such crimes punishment of death.

Law Ministry has approved a proposal received from the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) to amend the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and a final decision on whether to bring it in the form of an Ordinance will be taken by the cabinet.

**Is death penalty the only solution?** The demand for death penalty for sexual crimes stems primarily from a society’s desire for revenge, not redress. A growing body of literature now emphasises that the death penalty is not a deterrent against any kind of crime — better policing, social welfare and effective implementation of the due processes are. Also, separate courtrooms exclusively for child abuse cases should be established.

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**22. Process to impeach Chief Justice of India**

The Congress and six other opposition parties have moved a notice for the impeachment of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra, accusing him of “misbehaviour” and “misusing” authority. **So far, no Chief Justice has ever been impeached in India.**

**Procedure for removal of CJI:**

Article 124(4) of the Constitution lays down the procedure for removal of a judge of the Supreme Court, including the CJI, who can be impeached on grounds of “misbehaviour or incapacity”.

**The process:**

(i) A removal motion signed by 100 members of Lok Sabha or 50 members of Rajya Sabha has to be submitted to the Speaker of the Lower House or Chairperson (ie
Vice President) of the Upper House. This can be in either of the Houses of Parliament.

(ii) The Speaker/Chairperson can either accept or reject the motion.

(iii) If the motion is admitted, then the Speaker/Chairperson forms a three-member committee comprising a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a judge of a high court and a distinguished jurist to investigate the charges leveled against the CJI.

(iv) If the committee supports the motion, it can be taken up for discussion. It must be passed by a special two-thirds majority of MPs in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

(v) After it is passed in both Houses, it is presented to the President, who can pass a Presidential Order for removal of the CJI.

Can CJI continue to work during this period? Both the Constitution and the Judges (Inquiry) Act of 1968 are silent on whether a judge facing impeachment motion should recuse from judicial and administrative work till he is cleared of the charges against him.

23. Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance 2018
The Union Cabinet has approved the Finance Ministry’s proposal of promulgating the Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018 which will empower authorities to attach and confiscate properties and assets of economic offenders like loan defaulters who flee the country.

Important provisions under the ordinance:
- **Special court:** The ordinance makes provisions for a special court under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender. Scheduled offences worth Rs. 100 crore or more will come under the purview of the ordinance.
- **Power To Attach Properties:** With the assent of the President of India, Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018 is promulgated. The new Law lays down the measures to empower Indian authorities to attach and confiscate the proceeds of crime associated with economic offenders and properties of economic offenders.

- **Trial In The PMLA Courts:** Since the proposed law would utilise the existing infrastructure of the Special Courts constituted under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and the threshold of scheduled offence is high at Rs. 100 crores or more, no additional expenditure is expected on the enactment of the Bill.

- **No Immunity To Offenders:** The ordinance would also enable the courts and tribunals to disallow the fugitive economic offender from putting forward or defending any civil claim.

- **Aim Of Deportation:** Major impact will be that the offenders will return to India to submit to the jurisdiction of Courts in India to face the law in respect of the scheduled offences. Other Major Impact will be that it will help the banks and other financial institutions to achieve higher recovery from financial defaults committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.

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**A Fugitive Economic Offender** is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued in respect of a scheduled offence and who has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

**A scheduled offence** refers to a list of economic offences contained in the Schedule to this Ordinance.

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24. **Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 promulgated**

It amends certain laws related to rape of minors. **Key features of the Bill include:**
Amendments to Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC)

- **Enhanced punishment for rape:** Under the IPC, rape is punishable with a rigorous imprisonment of at least seven years up to life imprisonment, along with fine. The minimum imprisonment has been increased from seven years to 10 years.

- **New offences:** The Ordinance introduces three new offences relate to rape of minor girls, and increases the penalty for one.

25. **Amendments to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO):**
Under the POCSO, for rape of minors (below 18 years), the punishment is at least seven years or life imprisonment, along with a fine. For rape of minors below the age of 12 years or for gang rape of minors, the punishment is rigorous imprisonment of at least ten years or life imprisonment, along with fine. The Ordinance amends the POCSO to state that for all such offences and the new offences, the higher punishment between the POCSO and IPC will apply.

The Bill seeks to amend the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 which provides for the constitution of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs), and Human Rights Courts.

Key features of the Bill approved by the Cabinet are:

- **Inclusion of deemed member**: The Bill seeks to include National Commission for Protection of Child Rights as a deemed member of the NHRC.
- **Inclusion of woman member**: The Bill proposes to add a woman member in the composition of the NHRC. Presently, the Act does not require a woman member to be part of the NHRC.

- **Human rights violations in UTs**: The Bill seeks to incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories (UTs).

- **Amending terms of office**: The Bill seeks to amend the term of office of the Chairperson and other members of the NHRC and SHRCs to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.

27. **Law Commission releases summary of draft paper on simultaneous elections for comments**

The Law Commission of India (Chair: Dr. Justice B. S. Chauhan) released the summary of a draft working paper on ‘Simultaneous Elections – Constitutional and Legal Perspectives’ for public comments.

Some of the recommendations of the Commission included:

- **Restoration of simultaneous elections**: Simultaneous elections may be restored through amendments to the Constitution, the Representation of the People Act 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and those of the state legislative assemblies.

- **No-confidence motion**: The Commission noted that a no-confidence motion, if passed, may curtail the term of Lok Sabha/state assembly. It recommended replacing the ‘no-confidence motion’ with a ‘constructive vote of no-confidence’, through appropriate amendments. In a constructive vote of no confidence, the government may only be removed if there is confidence in an alternate government.

- **Hung Parliament**: If no party secures a majority to form the government, it may result in a hung Parliament. In order to prevent a hung Parliament, the Commission recommends
removal of the anti-defections provisions in the Constitution. This will enable a member to seek support from other political parties to form the government.

- **New Lok Sabha or Assembly:** The Commission recommended that appropriate amendments be made to provide that any new Lok Sabha or state assembly formed after mid-term elections, will be constituted only for the remainder of the previous Lok Sabha or Assembly, and not for five years.

- **Election of Prime Minister or Chief Minister:** The Commission recommended that the Prime Minister or Chief Minister be elected to the Lok Sabha or state assembly by the full House. This will provide stability to the government and in turn to Lok Sabha or state assembly, as the case may be.

28. Law Commission submits report on BCCI vis-à-vis the Right to Information Act

**Issue:** whether the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is covered under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

**Background:** The report follows the Supreme directive in July 2016 where the Court noted that the BCCI discharges public functions and asked the Commission to examine whether the BCCI would fall within the ambit of the Act.

The Commission concluded that BCCI exercised ‘state-like’ powers and that the Act should apply to it.

- **‘State-like’ nature of BCCI:** The Commission noted that BCCI had a monopoly in regulating cricket. Further, it wielded ‘state-like’ powers since it controlled policy formulation related to cricket in the country. Therefore, it fell within the ambit of the Act.

  It further recommended that BCCI be viewed as a state agency. As per the Constitution, a fundamental right can be enforced against a ‘state’ agency. Treatment of BCCI as a state agency would allow for such rights to be enforced against it.
- **Human rights violation:** The Commission noted that certain human rights violations have been identified in sporting events, (such as violence, discrimination, and human trafficking).
  It recommended that BCCI, which performs public functions, **should be held accountable for violation of basic human rights.**

- **Substantial government financing:** Under the Act, a body owned, controlled, or substantially financed by the government is a public authority.
  The Commission noted that BCCI does not receive any direct financing from the central government. However, it noted that **BCCI has received indirect assistance in the form of tax concessions (such as income tax and customs duty) and provision of land at heavily subsidised rates.** The Commission observed that the government foregoes a significant amount of money by providing these concessions to BCCI, and by allowing the body to use its infrastructure. Therefore, **BCCI receives substantial financing from the government.**

29. **Law Commission submits report on Contempt of Court Act, 1971**

Contempt refers to the offence of showing disrespect to the dignity or authority of a court. The Act divides contempt into civil and criminal contempt.

**Civil contempt** refers to the wilful disobedience of an order of any court.

**Criminal contempt** includes any act or publication which: (i) ‘scandalises’ the court, (ii) prejudices any judicial proceeding, or (iii) interferes with the administration of justice. ‘Scandalising the Court’ refers to statements or publications which have the effect of undermining public confidence in the judiciary.
The report examined whether the definition of contempt in the Act should be restricted to civil contempt, i.e., wilful disobedience of judgments of court.

The Commission concluded that there was no requirement to amend the Act, as:

- **High number of cases:** The Commission observed that there were a high number of civil (96,993) and criminal (583) contempt cases pending in various High Courts and the Supreme Court which justify the continuing relevance of the Act.

- **Source of contempt power:** The Commission observed that the superior courts (Supreme Court and High Courts) derive their contempt powers from the Constitution. The Act only outlines the procedure in relation to investigation and punishment for contempt. Deletion of the offence will not impact the inherent constitutional powers of the superior courts to punish anyone for their contempt.

- **Impact on subordinate courts:** The Constitution allows superior courts to punish for their contempt. The Act additionally allows the High Court to punish for contempt of subordinate courts. The Commission argued that if the definition of contempt is narrowed, subordinate courts will suffer as there will be no remedy to address cases of their contempt.

**MACROECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. **Retail inflation decreased to 4.3% in fourth quarter of 2017-18**

   - The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation decreased to 4.3% in March 2018 from 5.1% in January 2018.
   - During this period, food inflation also decreased from 4.7% to 2.8%, year-on-year.
   - The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation (base year 2011-12) was at 2.5% in February and March 2018, marginally low from 2.8% in January 2018, year-on-year.
2. First Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement of 2018-19

- The policy **repo rate** was kept unchanged at 6% by a majority vote of the members.
- The **reverse repo rate** was kept unchanged at 5.75%.
- The **marginal standing facility rate and bank rate** was also kept unchanged at 6.25%.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

1. Insolvency Law Committee submits report

Key recommendations of the Committee regarding issues arising from the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code include:
- **Non-inclusion of home buyers:** Financial creditors include lenders, while operational creditors include entities who are owed dues under a transaction for provision of goods and services.

The Committee noted that the amounts raised under housing contracts are a means of raising finance and therefore, home buyers are financial creditors. It recommended that an explanation be added under the Code to clarify that home buyers would constitute financial creditors.

- **Voting share for CoC decisions:** The Committee observed that the Code mandates that all decisions of the CoC need be taken with a majority of not less than 75% of the voting share of the financial creditors which might prove to be a roadblock in the resolution process.

The Committee recommended that the voting share be reduced from 75% to 66% in certain critical matters, such as approval of the resolution plan. For routine decisions, the voting threshold may be reduced to 51%.

- **Eligibility to submit a resolution plan:** The Code contains provisions prohibiting certain persons from submitting a resolution plan. The Committee noted that certain financial entities (such as asset reconstruction companies) are likely to be related to companies whose assets are classified as non-performing assets (NPAs). Such entities would be barred from participating in the resolution process. The Committee recommended that such financial entities be allowed to participate in the process.

- **Exemption for MSMEs:** The Committee noted that MSMEs are subject to the provisions prohibiting certain persons from submitting a resolution plan. It recommended that the promoters of medium, micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) should be exempted from ineligibility criteria to bid, as long as they are not wilful defaulters. The rationale is that a business of an MSME attracts interest primarily from promoters of an MSME.

**POWER**

*Pilot scheme to procure 2,500 MW power from coal based power plants*
- Power will be procured from generating companies with coal-based power plants which are commissioned and do not have Power Purchase Agreement.
- Under the scheme, a single entity can be allotted maximum capacity of 600 MW. Further, it assures a minimum off-take of 55% of such contracted capacity.
- The bidding process will be conducted by PFC Consulting Limited as the nodal agency and PTC India Limited as the aggregator.

PTC India Limited would sign a three-year agreement (medium-term) to facilitate procurement of power from successful bidders and to supply power to discoms.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT

1. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Draft Bill, 2018 released

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 aims to provide for maintenance and welfare of parents and senior citizens. It also aims to ensure their basic needs, safety and security, and the rights guaranteed and recognised under the Constitution.

Key amendments outlined in the Bill include:

- Application of maintenance: A senior citizen can make an application for maintenance in case he cannot sustain himself on his own earnings or out of his own property. In such an event, if an amicable settlement between the senior citizen and his children/relative could not be arrived at, the Maintenance Tribunal will hold further enquiry for determining the amount of maintenance allowance.
- Order for maintenance: The Act outlines the maximum maintenance at Rs 10,000 per month from those children/relatives who neglect or refuse to maintain the senior
citizen. The Bill states that Tribunal may, on being satisfied of such neglect or refusal, order for maintenance as it may deem fit.

2. **The Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens revised**

**Objectives:** improving the quality of life of the senior citizens by providing basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment opportunities.

The Programme was last revised in 2016 with respect to the terms and conditions of the schemes covered under the Programme. These terms and conditions are related to expenditure and human resources required under the various schemes, and the procedure to be followed for submission of proposals and release of grants.

**Assistance** under the Programme is given to the implementing agencies such as state governments, local bodies, and non-governmental/voluntary organizations.

There are six thematic areas that the schemes aim to cover.

**Schemes covered under the Programme include:** (i) Maintenance of Continuous Care Homes and Homes for senior citizens afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease/Dementia, (ii) Maintenance of Mobile Medicare Units, and (iii) Physiotherapy Clinics.

**HOUSING and URBAN AFFAIRS**

1. **Special Task Force set up to oversee Master Plan for Delhi 2021**

**Objectives of the Special Task Force include:**

(i) identifying encroachments and reclaim government land in Delhi,

(ii) oversee enforcement of applicable laws by local bodies

(iii) monitoring action taken by local bodies regarding violations of use and unauthorised construction

identifying areas of traffic congestion in Delhi and suggesting measures to local bodies and other agencies
CIVIL AVIATION

1. **Task Force constituted for fast-tracking UAV technology**

The terms of reference of the Task Force include:

(i) focusing on areas of research and development, acquisition and commercialization in specific sectors, and giving preference to Make in India,

(ii) developing a roadmap for implementation of UAV technology which will include outcomes, timelines, and review mechanisms along with measurable metrics.

The Task Force will include representatives from the government, Public Sector Undertakings, and various sectoral experts. It will submit its report within six months of its constitution.

RAILWAYS

1. **Cabinet approves the closure of Burn Standard Company Limited (BSCL), a central PSU**

*Reasons:* (i) the poor physical and financial performance of BSCL for over 10 years, and (ii) low probability of its revival in the future.

*Purpose:* to save public funds, which are currently being used for operating BSCL, and use them for other developmental work.

*Pay-off:* The government will provide a one-time grant of Rs 417 crore for clearing the current liabilities of the company. In addition, an outstanding loan of Rs 35 crore given to the company by the Ministry of Railways will be written off.
Ministry of Finance

Smooth roll out of e-Way Bill system from 01st April, 2018

- As per decision of the GST Council, e-Way Bill system became mandatory from 01st April, 2018 for all inter-State movement of goods. The implementation of the nationwide e-Way Bill mechanism under GST regime is being done by GSTN in association with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and is being run on portal namely https://ewaybillgst.gov.in.

- E-way Bill can be generated through various modes like Web (Online), Android App, SMS, using Bulk Upload Tool and API based site to site integration etc. Consolidated e-way Bill can be generated by transporters for vehicle carrying multiple consignments.

- Transporters can create multiple Sub-Users and allocate roles to them. This way large transporters can declare their various offices as sub-users.

- There is a provision for cancellation of e-way Bill within 24 hours by the person who has generated the e-way Bill. The recipient can also reject the e-way Bill within validity period of e-way bill or 72 hours of generation of the e-way bill by the consignor whichever is earlier.

Government of India, Government of Maharashtra and the World Bank sign New Project to benefit over 25 Million Small and Marginal Farmers in Maharashtra

The Government of India, Government of Maharashtra and the World Bank signed a US$ 420 million project to help Small and Marginal farmers in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra. The project will help in increasing climate resilient practices in agriculture and ensuring that farming continues to remain a financially viable activity for them.

The aforesaid project is expected to benefit over 7 million people spread over an area of 3.0 million ha and cover 5,142 villages across 15 most climate vulnerable districts of the region. The $420 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a 6-year grace period, and a maturity of 24 years.

The Maharashtra Project for Climate Resilient Agriculture will be implemented in rural areas largely dependent upon rainfed agriculture. The project will take up a series of activities at the
farm and watershed level. It will scale up climate-resilient technologies such as micro irrigation systems, expand surface water storage, and facilitate aquifer recharge, which is expected to directly contribute to a more efficient use of scarce water resources. By adopting climate-resilient seed varieties which have short maturity, are drought and heat resistant, and salt tolerant, the project will help reduce risks of climate-related crop failure, and help enhance farmer’s income.

**Growth of Indian Economy**

As per the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 report of the United Nations, the Indian economy is projected to grow at 7.2 per cent in 2018-19 and 7.4 per cent in 2019-20. The report indicates that the outlook for India remains largely positive, underpinned by robust private consumption and public investment as well as ongoing structural reforms.

**Functions of National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) from Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC)**

The National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 read with Chapter XV of the Central Goods and Services Tax Rules, 2017 (CGST Rules for short) to determine whether the reduction in tax rates or benefit of input tax credit is being passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices. As per rule 137 of the CGST Rules, the Authority shall cease to exist after the expiry of two years from the date on which the Chairman enters upon his office unless the Council recommends otherwise.

Whereas, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) eliminates practices having adverse effect on competition to promote and sustain competition to protect the interest of the consumers and to ensure freedom of trade.

The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) (now rechristened Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs- CBIC) deals with the task of formulation of policy and laws and implementing the same on the levy and collection of the following duties/taxes: customs duties; central excise duties on certain items; central tax on intra-State supplies of goods and services; integrated tax on inter-State supply of goods and services and Narcotics.
AIIB decides to invest $140M to improve Rural Connectivity in India

Approximately 1.5 Million rural residents in State of Madhya Pradesh are going to directly benefit from improved livelihoods, education and mobility with the USD $ 140-Million loan approved by the Board of Directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in a Meeting held recently in Beijing.

The Project, co-financed with the World Bank, aims to improve the rural road connectivity and management for residents of about 5,640 villages who use the rural roads for daily activities.

The planned activities under the Project are:

- Upgrading the gravel surfaced roads to a sealed surface standard.
- Providing additional linkages to villages with potential for high growth.
- Enhancing institutional capacity through implementing/upgrading a rural road asset management system and strengthening design and research and quality assurance capacity of the implementation agency.
- Developing road safety management capacity with road accident data management system and piloting a comprehensive road safety program.
- Supporting design, implementation and management.

Benefits:

- Project will provide sustainable and safe last-mile connectivity to small villages and improve mobility of the rural population of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Project will stimulate economic development in the entire State of Madhya Pradesh and improve the livelihoods of the rural population, especially rural women and girls.

India Signs Loan agreement with World Bank for USD 48 million for Meghalaya Community-Led Landscapes Management Project

A Loan Agreement for IBRD loan of USD 48 million for the “Meghalaya Community - Led Landscapes Management Project (MCLLMP)” was signed with the World Bank.

Objective of the Project is to strengthen community-led landscapes management in selected landscapes in the State of Meghalaya.
The Project consists of **three components:**

(i) Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity for Natural Resource Management;

(ii) Community-led landscape planning and implementation and

(iii) Project Management and Governance.

Meghalaya’s natural resource such as land, water sources and forests is a source of livelihood for a majority of the population in the State.

**The Project will help manage these depleting resources, by strengthening the communities and traditional institutions.** Restoration of degraded and highly degraded landscapes under the Project will increase water for local communities and improve the soil productivity which will in turn increase incomes and reduce poverty.

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**Two day Regional Conference on “Urban Development: Technological Solutions and Governance Challenges” begins in Ahmedabad**

- The Ministry of Finance, Government of India in collaboration with the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Gujarat Council along with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), an autonomous research organization under the Ministry of External Affairs organized the 2-day Regional Conference on **“Urban Development: Technological Solutions and Governance Challenges”** which began in Ahmedabad.

- The Conference is a lead-up event to the 3rd Annual Meeting of AIIB scheduled to be held on 25th and 26th June, 2018 in Mumbai.

- Total investments of at least $640.2 billion are needed for urban infrastructure and services until 2031 to meet the needs of the growing urban population and improve the standard of living of the existing urban population.
To bridge this gap it has been emphasized that the private sector who is not only the primary user of the economic infrastructure but is the key stakeholder in implementation, designing, operations etc.

- It is equally pivotal to ensure private sector participation in resource generation through effective mechanisms of costs, risks and benefit sharing.

**Ministry of Textiles**

**Textiles Minister emphasises need of Skill Development in Craft Sector**

- 7th edition of Home Expo India 2018 at India Expo Centre and Mart, Greater Noida.
- Academy of Convention, Trade Fair, Event Research & Management: First institute in India to impart professional education in the spheres of trade fair and convention management.
- The three-day Expo organized by EPCH, has 700 participants, representing a cross section of exhibitors drawn from manufacturing hubs across the country with special focus on the North East region.

**Ministry of Communications**

**India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2018**

India Mobile Congress is one of the biggest marquee Mobile, Internet and Technology events in Asia, organized by Department of Telecommunications, Government of India and Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI).

**Theme:** “NEW DIGITAL HORIZONS: Connect. Create. Innovate.”

India Mobile Congress will be held from 25th to 27th October 2018, at Aerocity, New Delhi, with a slew of parallel events taking place at the same venue.

**Aim:** building ideas, forging lasting Industry relationships, showcasing leading-edge mobile technology and product trends, and providing sectoral insights and impactful solutions.

IMC started in 2017.

**Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs**
Smart Imprest Cards & E- Measurement Book (e-MB) On PFMS Portal for CPWD

With the launch of e-MB module on PFMS Portal in CPWD, this will be the first integrated web based module in Civil Ministries to monitor both the financial progress i.e. utilization of funds along with related physical progress captured as per schedule of various items of works through e-MB in all projects/works undertaken by CPWD. The launch of Smart Imprest cards with end to end digitization of entire process introduced for the first time in Civil Ministry will enable maximization of Digital payments to achieve ultimately 100% digitization of payments in MoHUA thereby also fulfilling objectives of Digital India mission. The Smart Imprest cards are proposed to be introduced in more than 400 offices of Ministry spread all over the country. Three accredited banks i.e Axis bank for main Ministry, SBI for CPWD and IDBI bank for Printing are partnering with MoHUA for this roll out on all India basis.

Government’s major construction organization Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has undergone a major digital transformation. This has been done by networking of all the 400 field offices of CPWD across the country by rolling out a special integrated web based system of Public Financial Management System (PFMS) ensuring digital payments and accounting w.e.f July 2017. With this, CPWD has become the first organization of any civil ministry to become 100% digital at the field level.

CDDO module of PFMS is an advanced online web based end-to-end integrated system/solution of e-payments (digital), e-accounting with Management Information System. This module enables real time monitoring of expenditure in respect of all CPWD projects thereby ensuring efficient utilization of funds along with greater transparency and accountability in expenditure.

Diu Smart City

Diu has become the first city in India that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime. It is saving 13,000 tonnes of carbon emissions every year through utilizing solar energy.

Traffic management in Bengaluru - a prototype of an intelligent traffic management solution is currently being tested in collaboration with the Electronics City Township Authority (ELCITA). It
will enable typical traffic management tasks (vehicle detection, control of traffic lights etc.) using artificial intelligence.

Ministry of Road Transport and highways:

India Exploring Signing of MoU with South Korea for Road Information System – it would be developed on lines of the system run by the Express Highways Information Corporation of South Korea, with integrated monitoring of a highway at a centralized control room.

29th National Road Safety Week – from 23 Apr to 29 Apr with focus on schools and commercial drivers. 4E principles of Education, Enforcement, Engineering and Emergency care have been adopted to address the problem of road safety.

*The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017*, passed by Lok Sabha which would promote the development of an efficient, seamless and integrated multi-mode public transport system, is waiting to be cleared by Rajya Sabha.

*Provisions of Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill 2017:*

1. The Bill amends the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to address issues such as third party insurance, regulation of taxi aggregators, and road safety.

2. Under the Act, the liability of the third party insurer for motor vehicle accidents is unlimited. The Bill caps the maximum liability for third party insurance in case of a motor accident at Rs 10 lakh in case of death and at five lakh rupees in case of grievous injury.

3. The Bill provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.

4. The Bill defines taxi aggregators, guidelines for which will be determined by the central government.

5. The Bill also provides for: (i) amending the existing categories of driver licensing, (ii) recall of vehicles in case of defects, (iii) protection of good samaritans from any civil or criminal action, and (iv) increase of penalties for several offences under the 1988 Act.
6. It provides power to State Governments to regulate the activities of pedestrians and non-motorised road users in a public space.

7. It makes it mandatory for every child to be secured by a safety belt or a child restraint system. It also provides for adult accountability for not seating children in a safe manner with a penalty of Rs. 1000.

8. It empowers Central Government to recall vehicles which do not meet standards.

9. It holds road contractors accountable for faulty road designs, construction and maintenance and failure to do so will lead them to being fined up to Rs. 1 lakh.

10. The licensing system would be digitized and the identification of the applicant would also be linked as per the UID mechanism.

11. Minimum educational qualifications for transport drivers has been omitted.

12. The renewal period of a license has been fixed at intervals of 10 years.

13. It empowers the Central Government to implement a National Transportation Policy in consultation with the States.

14. It establishes a National Road Safety Board.

15. It has also broadened the scope of the definition of “dangerous driving” to include the acts that are considered driving in manner dangerous to the public such as jumping a red light, violating a stop sign, use of hand-held communication devices while driving, driving against the flow of traffic, and passing or overtaking any motor-vehicle in a manner contrary to law.

IRSC (youth led national mission promoting road safety) organizes an annual road safety championship called as the Safer India Challenge in collaboration with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and various state polices involving the youth to come up with innovations in this area. A short story collection on road safety theme entitled “Have a safe journey” was released.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
**Environment Ministry notifies Plastic Waste Management (amendment) rules**

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018.
- The amended Rules lay down that the phasing out of Multilayered Plastic (MLP) is now applicable to MLP, which are “non-recyclable, or non-energy recoverable, or with no alternate use.”
- The amended Rules also prescribe a central registration system for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.
- The Rules also lay down that any mechanism for the registration should be automated and should take into account ease of doing business for producers, recyclers and manufacturers.
- The centralized registration system will be evolved by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.
- While a national registry has been prescribed for producers with presence in more than two states, a state-level registration has been prescribed for smaller producers/brand owners operating within one or two states.
- In addition, Rule 15 of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018 on “explicit pricing of carry bags” has been omitted.

**Three-Day Regional Conference Inaugurated in Hyderabad**

Agricultural experts from SAARC nations will present a position paper on ways and means of addressing impact of climate change on agriculture and discuss adaptation measures for climate resilient agrarian systems at the three-day SAARC regional Conference on “**Climate Resilient Agricultural Policies, Strategies and Programmes**”.

The consultation will not only strengthen partnership amongst SAARC countries on climate resilient agricultural systems, but also cover research, economics and innovative policy towards climate smart agriculture in South Asia. A discussion on the UNFCCC decision on agriculture will also be held during the Conference.
SAARC accounts for one-fourth of the global population and around 67 percent of its population lives in rural areas (as per 2014 statistics). Almost half of the workforce is employed in the agriculture sector and around 42 percent of South Asia’s landmass is under agricultural operation. Much of the agricultural production in the region is undertaken by small holders and an average range of landholding in SAARC countries varies between 0.3 to 1.4 hectares. Agriculture plays a central role in South Asian economies, lives and livelihoods. Crops grown in the region are important, both for regional and global food security.

Ministry of Rural Development

Key Priorities for PMGSY for financial year 2018-19

All eligible habitations under PMGSY-I are targeted to be completed by March 2019. Accordingly, Ministry has set a target of construction of 61,000 km road length by providing connectivity to 19,725 habitations during the financial year 2018-19. Similarly, a target of about 12,000 km has been set for construction of roads using green technologies. During the financial year 2018-19,
about 8,670 inspections of National Quality Monitors and 35,630 inspections of State Quality Monitors are targeted to be completed.

Deendayal Antodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission: Alleviating rural poverty & fostering diversified livelihoods through sustainable community institutions of poor

Key Priorities for the Mission for FY 2018-19

Mission Expansion

The Mission seeks to expand to 750 additional blocks during FY 2018-19. The focus of expansion will be 102 aspirational districts, 50000 Mission Antyodaya GPs, clusters identified under Shayama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission and Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) GPs. It is proposed to mobilize 100 lakh households into 9 lakh Self Help Groups during the financial year.

Promotion of Farm Livelihoods

DAY-NRLM plans to include another 5 lakh women farmers under its farm livelihoods interventions like sustainable agriculture, livestock and NTFP based activities with major focus on North East states. Further, the Mission aims at supporting an additional 75000 SHG member households through farm-based value chain initiatives. It would also promote 15 large size farm-based producer enterprises to provide market linkages to women producers. In addition, organic cultivation will be promoted in 1000 village clusters across States. Besides, to strengthen the extension services to small and marginal farmers on sustainable agriculture, improved livestock management and NTFP related activities an additional 3000 Community Resource Persons would be developed through intensive training. DAY-NRLM has also planned to promote another 1500 Custom Hiring Centre to enable the small and marginal farmer having timely access to agriculture implements and machinery.
Promotion of Non-Farm Livelihoods

It is also expected that Start Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) will support an additional 25000 entrepreneurs during the year 2018-19. In addition, it is expected that by March 2019, about 1500 vehicles will be operating across 17 States under Aajeekva Gram Express Yojana (AGEY).

Setting up of Rural Haats

Development of haats has emerged as one of the most important strategies to market SHG products and agricultural produce. To facilitate marketing of rural produce, it is proposed to set up haats at village and block levels in convergence with MGNREGS and the District and State level using DAY-NRLM resources. The maintenance of the haats will be entrusted to a committee comprising of representatives of women SHGs, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and local government officials.

It is proposed to set up 4567 rural haats across the country during FY 2018-19

Enabling rural poor’s access to formal sources of finance

The Mission will continue to promote access of SHGs to bank credit and other financial services. In FY 18-19, it is planned to link 22 lakh SHGs to bank credit for total loan amount of Rs. 42500 crores, taking the SHG Bank loan outstanding to Rs. 75000 crore.

The Mission will make efforts to expand Banking services to underserved regions through alternate channels in partnerships with various banks.

Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
More emphasis will be placed on long-term training for better placement outcomes. The Industries will be invited to partner as Project Implementing Agency (PIA) and/or own a training batch. It is proposed to have proactive engagement with Industry heads through workshops & conferences. It is envisaged that the increased engagement of Institutions of MSME & other prestigious Government Institutions for taking up DDUGKY program will lead to high end training with better salaries & District-wise survey for skilled manpower requirement.

The overall budgetary allocation has been increased from Rs 810 Crores in 2017-18 to Rs 1200 Crores in 2018-19

**Rural Self Employment Training Institutes**

An increased involvement of State Government has been envisaged in planning and implementation of skill development of rural poor through RSETIs. This would facilitate better mobilization (using Kaushal Panjee app) and identification of needy candidates in rural poor households. The mission is launching Standard Operating Procedures for greater transparency, efficiency and Quality assurance in the implementation of skill training in RSETIs. Mission is facilitating partnership of Industry Bodies with RSETIs to enable scaling up of rural entrepreneurs.

**Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**

**India-US Strategy Energy Partnership Joint Statement**

- The Partnership affirms the strategic importance of energy cooperation to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship and sets the stage for deeper and more meaningful engagements through government and industry channels. As leading global partners, the United States
and India believe that energy cooperation can serve as a centerpiece in the bilateral relationship.

- Through the Partnership, the United States and India collectively seek to enhance energy security, expand energy and innovation linkages across our respective energy sectors, bolster our strategic alignment, and facilitate increased industry and stakeholder engagement in the energy sector.

- Under the Partnership, the United States and India will pursue four primary pillars of cooperation: (1) Oil and Gas; (2) Power and Energy Efficiency; (3) Renewable Energy and Sustainable Growth; and (4) Coal.

Both parties may consider establishing additional pillars of cooperation based on mutual agreement.

- The Strategic Energy Partnership elevates the role of energy in advancing shared goals, including universal energy access, strengthened energy security and increased energy efficiency. The Partnership will create important opportunities for advancing favorable policies and commercial investments in support of these goals, including in natural gas markets.

**Tripling of gas demand in next 25 years**

In order to meet the demand of natural gas in the country, as well as to reduce the dependence on imports Government has taken several steps to enhance domestic natural gas production through several policy initiatives such as.

As per British Petroleum (BP) Energy Outlook 2018, India’s natural gas consumption will rise and almost triple by 2040 and projected energy consumption will reach 1921 MTOE by 2040 as the largest growth market for global energy by 2040. The following measures have been taken by Government of India:

a. Marginal Field Policy - Discovered Small Field Policy
b. Uniform Licensing Policy-Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy

c. Policy for Grant of Extension to small and medium sized discovered fields


e. Government has granted marketing, including pricing, freedom for the gas produced from difficult areas.

f. Marketing freedom has also been provided under Discovered Small Field budding rounds as well as under Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP).

**Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**

‘Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities (GITC), 2018’ to be held in New Delhi from 8th To 11th November, 2018

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard was signed between Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Rehabilitation International Korea.

This event will have around 300 participants including 120 Youth with disabilities from 24 Asia Pacific countries. GITC is being held every year in Asia- Pacific region.

This competition is amongst four categories of disabilities namely, Physical, Visual, Hearing and Intellectual. The competition is a testing ground for individual as well as group competencies in the field of IT. Awards will be given to the most successful candidates from different categories of event. This competition is expected to enrich further the IT skills of Youth with Disabilities further and help them emerge as future leaders.

India is co-hosting the event along with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Korea and its organising partners namely Rehabilitation International Korea and LG Group. The event will also have a Seminar for IT Forum in which the countries will present their work and achievement in ensuring accessibility to persons with disabilities in the IT sector.

**4th National Workshop for Training on Autism Started in New Delhi**
The three day National Workshop for Training of Master Trainers on Autism Tools - INCLEN and ISAA for Diagnosis and Management of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children has started in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

The workshop is organised by the National Trust under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with AIIMS, New Delhi.

**Objective:** make Doctors from across the country aware about Autism Tools to describe the diagnostic criteria as well as to clinically evaluate a child with suspected autism spectrum disorder using Autism Tools.

**National Trust** is a statutory body set up by an Act of Parliament for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities under DEPwD.

**Autism** is a developmental disorder characterized by troubles with social interaction and communication, and by restricted and repetitive behavior. Parents usually notice signs in the first two or three years of their child's life.

**Ministry of Corporate Affairs**

MoS P.P. Chaudhary to embark on a 10-day visit to St Vincent & Grenadines, Barbados, Washington DC and New York

- Shri P.P. Chaudhary, Minister of State for Corporate Affairs and Law & Justice, is embarking on a 10-day tour of St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Barbados, Washington DC and New York today.

- The Government of India has initiated the “Brihad Sampark Yojna” programme to reach out to 193 countries of the world. Union ministers will visit different countries as part of this reaching out programme. The Ministry of External Affairs is coordinating all aspects of “Brihad Sampark Yojna” and it will culminate on 15th May 2018.

- During his visit, Shri P.P. Chaudhary meet St. Vincent & Grenadines’ Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and will hold delegation and ministerial level talks with senior representatives of the countries besides participating in community programmes involving Diaspora in the visited nations.
The visit will ensure international cooperation with various nations and is expected to renew connections with Indian Diaspora living in the region. During these visits, Shri P.P. Chaudhary shall take part in various social and cultural programmes organised in Washington DC and New York, including “Pravasi Rajasthani Milan” programmes.

**Ministry of Home Affairs**

**NDMA conducts training programme for CBRN emergencies at Patna airport** - CBRN emergencies pertain to threats emanating due to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear material. The training programme is being conducted in collaboration with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS). NDMA stands for National Disaster Management Authority.

**Modern Weapons to Tackle Terrorist and Naxalite activities**

To equip the security system with state-of-the-art technology in view of the increasing terrorist and naxalite activities in the country, the Government has approved an enhanced outlay under the umbrella scheme of “Modernisation of Police Forces (MPF)” with a total outlay of Rs. 25,061 crore.

Under this umbrella scheme, a sub-scheme of “Assistance to States for Modernization of Police” with an outlay of Rs. 7,380 crore has been approved for the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20. This sub-scheme is in continuation of the scheme of Modernisation of State Police Forces. Under this sub-scheme central assistance to States is provided for acquisition of security/surveillance/communication equipments, modern weaponry, forensic equipments etc.

**Ministry of Commerce & Industry**

**Think tank on the Framework for National Policy on E-commerce**

It was developed recently by Department of Commerce.
It seeks to collectively deliberate on the challenges (physical and digital infrastructure, regulatory regime, taxation policy, data flows, server localization, intellectual property rights protection, FDI, technology flows, responding to disruptions in industrial organization, need for skill development and trade-related aspects) confronting India in the arena of digital economy with a view to developing recommendations for a comprehensive and overarching national policy on e-commerce.

Representatives of almost fifty organizations are expected to participate in the first meeting of the think tank on the Framework for National Policy on E-commerce to be held on 24 April 2018.

**Digital platform for MSME Exporters launched**

The FIEO GlobalLinker- a digital platform for MSME exporters to digitize their businesses and join a global community of growing businesses was launched in New Delhi.

**FIEO GlobalLinker** is setup with a view to make the business growth of SMEs simpler, more profitable and enjoyable. It is a growing global network currently comprising over 140,000 SME firms, who are seeking business collaboration and growth opportunities through the use of their electronic business card and digital profiles created on the platform.

FIEO is available free of cost and it offers exporters a range of features and benefits like:

- **Business Opportunities**: Exporters will be able to find clients, suppliers and advisors using the search and review facilities. Creating a free e-commerce store for direct sales and improved chain management.

- **Up-to-date Business Knowledge through business articles, industry news and common interest groups.**

- **Improved Efficiencies**: Platform provides services like company intranet, integrating email, a business calendar.

- **FIEO's Services**: Application for new RCMC/endorsement/renewal/participation in FIEO's promotional programme and alerts.
Plan for Accelerating Growth of Districts by 3%

- To involve the districts more actively in the growth of the Indian economy and to formulate a common development vision starting from the district level, through a participatory mechanism, it has been decided by Union Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu that District Plan will be created for achieving this goal.

- An addition of 3% growth at the district level will ensure that USD 5 trillion target for the Indian economy becomes achievable.

- The Plan will provide specific interventions taking into account resources, strengths of the districts, sectoral interventions for agriculture including mapping of cropping pattern, industry including MSME and services relevant for the districts, skilling initiatives, Ease of Doing Business, access to credit and convergence of existing efforts in public and private sectors. Active participation of the State governments and district administration will be sought for effective implementation of the plan.

- The initiative will begin with 6 districts, including Sindhudurg & Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Vishakapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Solan in Himachal Pradesh have been selected.

- A Steering Committee will be formed to oversee creation and implementation of the plan. It will be headed by Minister for Commerce and Industry with members from different Ministry of Union Government and representatives from State Governments of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

- The Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) in the selected States will prepare the plan. An implementation committee is proposed at the District level to ensure implementation of the plan. The Committee will be headed by the District Collector/ District Magistrate.

Digital Initiatives by Export Inspection Council for Ease of Export launched
EIC is the official export certification body of Government of India and has launched this flagship project of Digital India Initiative to keep pace with changing dynamics of the world.

In order to continue the vision for credible inspection and certification and to strengthen the confidence on Indian produce, three portals have been developed to reduce transaction time and cost in a transparent manner. The portals not only provide an opportunity for ease of export but also play an important role in the Go Green initiative by reducing paper usage and saving millions of trees.

To provide fast, efficient and transparent services for ease of doing business in all sectors the complete export food chain has been integrated in this digital platform. Primary production, chain catch, aquaculture pond, dairy farms and apiaries are all linked. Processing units, testing laboratories, official controls and exports have complete traceability.

One lab one assessment portal provides a unified approach to all stakeholders like accreditation bodies, regulators, and laboratories by bringing them together on a common platform. Simplified procedures for granting joint certification and joint decisions help in reducing cost, time, and multiplicity of assessment.

The Export Alert Monitoring portal monitors non-compliances raised by importing countries. The portal will enable monitoring of alerts and action taken by multiple organizations involved in initial certification in the food safety & biosecurity and analysing the trend, understanding the trade barriers to reduce the alerts and enhance the export trade.

EIC has worked towards building the analytical capability for the country by providing accredited Proficiency Testing (PT) providers at Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai by reducing dependency on foreign PT providers and ease of access.

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
Pashu Chikitsak Mahasangh website launched
- An effective platform for sharing of knowledge and developing a database.
- A seminar on 'Role of Veterinarians in doubling farmer’s income' organized by Pashu Chikitsak Mahasangh.

Ministry of Defence

Exercise Gaganshakti-2018
An all encompassing coordinated and composite exercise named Gaganshakti is being conducted by the IAF from 08-22 Apr 18.

Aim: real time coordination, deployment and employment of Air Power in a short & intense battle scenario.
During Gaganshakti IAF will exercise the entire machinery to validate its concept of operations and war waging capability. While it is an IAF centric exercise, it is planned to be executed keeping in mind the "Joint Operational Doctrine". The requirements of the other services are being met and the same has been factored while planning the exercise settings. Joint operations, including CSFO, Airborne Ops, Air Landed Ops and Maritime Ops, have also been planned.
Full spectrums of operations are planned by IAF with special focus on 'Network Centric Operations', and 'Effect Based Operations'.
This exercise is aimed at coordinating operations, maintenance and administrative responses to achieve the stated objectives of the Indian Air Force, in case of any contingency. This exercise will hone the war fighting skills of the air warriors in a real time scenario thus affirming the IAF's role as the cutting edge of our nation's military capability.

First Ever Joint Army exercise on Malaysian Soil Commences with Handing-Over of Troops Ceremony
Exercise Harimau Shakti 2018, between the Indian Army and the Malaysian Army commenced on 30 April at Wardieburn Camp, Kuala Lumpur with a brief and impressive handing over of troops ceremony. It is a two week long joint military exercise.

Exercise Harimau Shakti is a positive step in the bilateral relations between the two nations. The conduct of such exercises in future will enable mutual capacity enhancement and assist in building strong bonds of friendship and cooperation between India and Malaysia.

Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises

Khadi Store Locator App Launched

- A mobile phone application for locating 4,000 Khadi stores in the country was launched (There are more than 8,000 Khadi stores in India)
- KVIC expects to surpass the sales target of Rs. 5,000 crore by the end of 2017-18. KVIC is also setting up export cells to promote overseas sales of Khadi products in order to make Khadi an international brand.
- The Khadi and Village Industries products are manufactured by about 7 lakh privately owned household units which are funded through schemes like the Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).

Financial assistance to Women Entrepreneurs in 2016-17

Government has provided financial assistance to women entrepreneurs in setting up 14,768 projects in 2016-17 under Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) aimed at generating employment in rural and urban areas of the country.

Under the PMEGP scheme women entrepreneurs are provided 25% and 35% subsidies for the project set up in urban and rural areas respectively. The maximum cost of the project under
PMEGP scheme is Rs. 25 lakhs for manufacturing sector units and Rs. 10 lakhs for units under service sector. For women beneficiaries, their own contribution is only 5% of the project cost. Besides PMEGP, Coir Board under the MSME Ministry is implementing the Skill Upgradation & Mahila Coir Yojana for attracting rural women artisans to set up coir industrial units.

**Ministry of Railways**

**Indian Railways inducts New Machine 09-3x Dynamic Tamping Express for improved Mechanised Track Maintenance**

Indian Railway has inducted three numbers of 09-3X Dynamic Tamping Express machines, the state of the art integrated track maintenance.
The New 09-3X- Dynamic Tamping Express costing about ₹ 27Cr each is a latest high output integrated tamping machine having multiple functions, so far being carried out by different machines.

- It can measure pre & post track geometry, correct the track to required geometry, can tamp three sleepers simultaneously, stabilize and measure post tamping track parameters under load to ensure quality of work done.
- This eliminates the need for a separate stabilisation machine which reduces operating costs and track possession time. This machine will vibrate & compact the loose stone ballast after tamping for safe movements of trains.
- These machines have been manufactured in India under MAKE IN INDIA initiative with imported components. 42 more such machines have been planned to be included in Indian Railway maintenance fleet over next three years.
- This will further improve the safety, reliability and economy in maintenance of tracks over Indian Railways. This will also eliminate manual measurement of track quality after maintenance.

Three operations including manual interface is now combined in one machine.

Tamper + Stabilizer + Post Tamping Parameters = 09-3XDynamic

For practical hands-on training to operate such advanced track maintenance machines a new 3D state-of-the-art tamping simulator has been installed and commissioned at Indian Railway Track Machine Training Centre Allahabad (IRTMTC) recently. This type of advanced technology simulator is presently available only in five countries including India.

India Railway has planned complete mechanization of inspection, monitoring, relaying and maintenance of track by 2024.

**AYUSH**

**Science Convention on World Homoeopathy Day**

A two-day scientific convention is being organised in New Delhi by Ministry of AYUSH on the occasion of World Homoeopathy Day, on 10-11th April 2018. This day is observed to
commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder of Homoeopathy Dr. Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann.

The theme of this convention is "**Innovate: Evolve; Progress: Exploring Science since 40 years**". AYUSH awards relating to Homoeopathy for Life Time Achievement, Best Teacher, Young Scientist and Best Research paper will be conferred on this occasion.

**Department of Atomic Energy**

**Crops and vegetables developed by BARC**

By using radiation induced mutagenesis along with cross breeding, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed two mutants of rice {Trombay Raipur Rice-1(TRR-1), Trombay Konkan Kolam (TKKR-13)*} and one mutant of cowpea {Trombay Cowpea 901 (TC901)*} which are identified for release.

BARC has also developed several mutants of groundnut, mustard, cowpea, blackgram, greengram, soybean, rice and wheat which are undergoing advance field trials in State Agricultural Universities.

The major desirable traits in these crops include higher yield, seed size, improved agronomic and quality traits, early maturity and stress tolerance.

The BARC developed mutant crop varieties have high patronage from the farming community and are extensively grown in different states of the country. Popularization is done by linkages established with State Agricultural Universities (through kisan mela, frontline demonstrations / exhibitions and awareness programmes).

**Ministry of Tourism**

**Government targets to increase India’s share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals to 1% in world’s International tourist arrivals by 2020 and 2% by 2025**
The share of India’s Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in world’s International Tourist Arrivals during 2016 was 0.71%, whereas the share of India’s International Tourist Arrivals (which includes Foreign Tourist Arrivals and arrival of Non Resident Nationals) in world’s International Tourist Arrivals during 2016 was 1.18%.

Government has targeted to increase India’s share of Foreign Tourist Arrivals in world’s International tourist arrivals to 1% by 2020 and increase to 2% by 2025.

Ministry of Tourism has two flagship schemes viz. Swadesh Darshan - Integrated Development of Theme Based Tourist Circuits, and PRASHAD - Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive for creation of tourism infrastructure and thereby generating pro-tourism culture in the people.

Ministry has launched Social Awareness Media Campaigns with the objective of sensitizing stakeholders in the tourism industry as well as the general public about the importance of good conduct and behavior towards tourists and to reinforce the spirit of ‘Atithi devo Bhava’.

Ministry of Women and Child Development

Intensive training programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats

Ministry of Women & Child Development is implementing a project on “Capacity Building Programme for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayati Raj”. The project is being implemented by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), an autonomous body functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

The training of EWRs is being done through a two tier training programme. In the first phase, an intensive training program for EWRs of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Resource persons/Master Trainers was organized on 27th November, 2017. The training in second phase
is being imparted through these Master trainers. As of now, 424 Master trainers have been able to impart training to 18,578 EWRs from 406 districts of 14 States/UTs.

This programme would go a long way in realizing the Prime Minister’s vision of moving the country from “women development to women-led development”.

Ministry of Women & Child Development has also developed training modules regarding laws for protection of women and children, development schemes and programmes (State and Center), Information Communication Technology (ICT) for the EWRs, participatory planning and asset creation, monitoring of Public Works and leadership qualities. This targeted approach to build capacities of these grassroots leaders has been envisaged to yield more desired development outcomes. It will help to empower the women members and heads of panchayats so that they can govern the villages more effectively.

Schemes for welfare of Women and Children

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) implements several schemes supporting for the welfare of the women and children including SC/ST and minority of different age groups.

**SwadharGreh Scheme**

MWCD implements SwadharGreh Scheme which targets the women victims of unfortunate circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.

The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for the women victims of difficult circumstances which includes widows, destitute women and aged women.

**Ujjawala Scheme**

Ujjawala Scheme is being implemented for Prevention of trafficking and for Rescue, Rehabilitation, Re-integration and Repatriation of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
‘Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme’
The Ministry is administering ‘Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) Scheme’ to provide skills that give employability to women and to provide competencies and skill that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs. The Scheme is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country.

National Nutrition Mission (NNM)
Government of India has approved for setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) on 30.11.2017, which aims to achieve improvement in nutritional status of Children, pregnant women and lactating mothers and reduce anemia among children and women. It strives to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and the States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.

Scheme for Adolescent Girls
The Government on 16.11.2017 approved continuation of the Scheme for Adolescent Girls for out of school adolescent girls of age 11-14 years for a period of one year i.e. up to 30.11.2018. The scheme aims at providing supplementary nutrition containing 600 calories, 18-20 grams of protein and micronutrients per beneficiary per day for 300 days in a year, motivating out of school girls to go back to formal schooling or skill training under non-nutrition component of the scheme. The cost norms for nutrition have also been revised from existing rates of Rs.5.00 per beneficiary per day to Rs.9.5 per beneficiary per day. The scheme has been extended to all the districts of the country w.e.f. 01.04.2018.

One Stop Centre (OSC)
One Stop Centre (OSC) scheme is being implemented by the Ministry to support women affected by violence w.e.f. 1st April, 2015, which aims to facilitate access to an integrated range of services including medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/case management, psychosocial counseling and temporary support services. At present, 170 OSCs are functional in various districts in 32 States. 97,961 cases have been registered as on 07.02.2018.

**Universalisation of Women Helpline**

The Ministry also implements the scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline through States/UTs Government since 1st April, 2015 to provide 24-hour emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence. Women Helplines are functional in 28 States. As on date, a total of 12,14,763 complaints have been addressed from the Women Helplines.

**Schemes for achieving gender Equality and Emancipation of Rural Women**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing various schemes/programmes for achieving gender equality and emancipation of women including rural women such as:

i. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**: to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

ii. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**, (erstwhile Maternity Benefit Programme) to contribute towards better enabling environment by providing cash incentives for improved health and nutrition to pregnant and nursing mothers.

iii. **Scheme for Adolescent Girls** aims at girls in the age group 11-14, to empower and improve their social status through nutrition, life skills, home skills and vocational training.
iv. **National Nutrition Mission** (NNM): aims to attain a "Suposhit Bharat" and has also the objective of improving the nutritional status of pregnant women and lactating mothers and reducing anaemia among women along with children.

v. **Rastriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**, for extending micro-finance services to bring about socio-economic upliftment of poor women,

vi. **Mahila e-Haat**, a unique direct online digital marketing platform for women entrepreneurs/ SHGs/ NGOs,

vii. **Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra**, which will empower rural women through community participation to create an environment in which they realize their full potential,

viii. The Ministry also conducts **Training of Trainers of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayati Raj** to deliberate upon issues related to empowerment of women and functioning of PRIs; describe processes of participatory planning in local governance; and enable women to identify their own leadership potential to contribute effectively as change agents.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing various schemes/programmes for combating all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the country including rural women such as:

i. **One Stop Centres (OSCs):** for facilitating access to an integrated range of services including police, medical, legal, psychological support and temporary shelter to women affected by violence.

ii. **Women Helpline:** to provide women with a 24x7 service, Women Helplines with the uniform code 181 have been set up across the country. These Helplines provide 24 hour emergency response to women affected by violence, and also provide counselling through phone and awareness about government schemes.

iii. **Mahila Police Volunteers:** The Ministry, in collaboration with MHA has recently started the engagement of Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in States/UTs. These MPVs will act as a link between police and community and facilitate women in distress.
iv. **SwadharGreh**: this scheme caters to primary needs of women in difficult circumstances.

v. **Ujjawala**: a comprehensive scheme to prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, to facilitate rescue victims and placing them in safe custody, to provide rehabilitation services by providing basic amenities/needs, to facilitate reintegration of victims into the family and society, to facilitate repatriation of cross border victims.

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**Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**

**Special Area Games**

Government of India through Sports Authority of India (SAI), is implementing Special Area Games (SAG) Scheme to identify sporting talent in the age of 10-18 years from the tribal, backward and hilly areas of the country. The scheme also helps to tap talent in Indigenous Games and Martial Arts and from the communities which are either genetically or geographically advantageous for excellence in a particular sports discipline. The selected trainees under SAG Scheme are provided with financial support in the form of expert coaches, sports equipment, boarding and lodging, sports kit, competition exposure, educational expenses, medical/ insurance and stipend as per the approved scheme norms. Presently, there are 20 Special Area Games Centres functional in the country where 2167 talented sports persons (1189 boys and 978 girls) are being trained.

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**Ministry of Coal**

**UTTAM APP for Coal Quality Monitoring launched**

UTTAM stands for – Unlocking Transparency by Third Party Assessment of Mined Coal (uttam.coalindia.in). The Ministry of Coal and Coal India Limited (CIL) developed UTTAM which aims to provide an App for all citizens and coal consumers to monitor the process of Third Party Sampling of coal across CIL subsidiaries.
UTTAM App ensures accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency in coal ecosystem. It provides a platform for monitoring of sampling and coal dispatches. The App is designed with an aim to make the citizens a stakeholder in the coal ecosystem.

**Specific benefits of the UTTAM App would be**

(i) **For Subsidiary structure**: The information about subsidiary wise declared GCV will help citizens and coal consumers to compare and assess the coal quality coming from a particular mine. It will provide a proper mapping of declared grade of coal dispatch to the consumers.

(ii) **For Coal consumer portal** – The portal would give detailed information for coal consumers regarding the Third Party Sampling parameters. The App will give access for monitoring coal quality to individual coal consumers.

The **salient features of UTTAM APP** are:

1. **Sampling Coverage** – The App provides coverage of Third Party Sampling which includes information on production, dispatch and quantity sampled of coal.

2. **Subsidiary wise quality parameters** – An interactive map based view provides holistic coverage of coal quality across subsidiaries, along with subsidiary details on quality parameters (Declared Gross Calorific Value [GCV], Analysed GCV) and coverage parameters (Locations, Quantity sampled).

3. **Declared Vs Analysed GCV** – With CIL’s aim of having minimum variation between declared and analysed GCV of coal, an accurate representation of the same is incorporated in the App.

4. **Complaints pertaining to quality of Coal** – Complaints are reflection of coal quality and transparency in the coal ecosystem. The App reflects the trend of complaints, which validates CIL’s efforts for quality improvement through Third Party Sampling. With the reduction in imports and gap minimising between analysed and declared grade, the reduction of complaints have been observed.

5. **Sampled volume** – The App presents the latest quantity sampled in the power and non-power sector, bringing transparency in the coal quality assessment system.
6. **Imports of coal** – The amount of coal imported is a clear reflection of the quality of coal that is produced within the country. The trend of coal imports over the last years is presented in the App.

**Ministry of Human Resource Development**

**Promotion of e-learning**

The key e-learning initiatives run by MHRD are as follows:-

**(i) SWAYAM:** The ‘Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM) an integrated platform for online courses, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and covering school (9th to 12th) to Post Graduate Level. At present, about 1000+ MOOCs Courses are listed on SWAYAM, wherein about 30 Lakhs students have enrolled to these courses. It also offers online courses for students, teachers and teacher educators

**(ii) SWAYAM Prabha:** SWAYAM Prabha is an initiative to provide 32 High Quality Educational Channels through DTH (Direct to Home) across the length and breadth of the country on 24X7 basis. It has curriculum based course content covering diverse disciplines.

**(iii) National Digital Library (NDL):** The National Digital Library of India (NDL) is a project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. There are more than 153 Lakhs digital books available through the NDL.

**(iv)E-pathshala:** E-books of the resources developed by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) / State Institutes of Education (SIEs), State boards etc. SIEs in multiple languages and uploaded on e-pathshala website and disseminated through mobile app (android, iOS and Windows). E-pathshala has been listed/made available on the UMANG App of Govt. of India, which was launched by Hon’ble Prime Minister of India on 23 November, 2017 during GCCS-2017.
(v) National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER): To make digital resources available for teachers and students as free and open source material. To enable the participation of the community in development and sharing of digital resources. To facilitate the adoption and creation of digital resources in different Indian languages.

**Ministry of Culture**

**More than 1 lakh art objects digitized under Project ‘JATAN’ till date**

Ministry of Culture has taken up a project named as JATAN in collaboration with C-DAC, Pune for creating an online digital repository of museum collections on the national portal www.museumsofindia.gov.in for the museums under the administrative control of this Ministry. Till now, 1,08,881 art objects have been digitized and uploaded on the portal.

**A first of its kind Israeli Modern Art Exhibition to be inaugurated in the Capital**

The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi in collaboration with the Embassy of Israel in India and the Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Israel is organizing an exhibition titled ‘To the End of Land’-contemporary art from Israel on the occasion of 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The exhibition -open to the public throughout May 2018- will revolve around connection of human beings with land, territory, locality and identity projected through innovative modern art pieces and installations.

The chosen title, ‘To the End of Land’, strives to draw attention to some of the cultural, social, and political aspects embodied in their artistic explorations of land.

On one hand, it points at the broad environmental-ecological dimension. It refers to the depletion of natural resources in the Anthropocene era, typified by acceleration of geological and environmental processes due to human activity, and to the resulting fear of “the end of land” as a meta-cultural concern which goes beyond national boundaries.
On the other hand, it offers a porthole through which to look at some of the major cultural issues in present-day Israel, alluding, among others, to its land being a source of an ongoing strife.

**Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**

**MNRE calls for ‘Expression of Interest’ for first offshore wind energy project of 1000 MW capacity**

The National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) an autonomous body under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has called for ‘Expression of Interest’ (EoI) for the first offshore wind energy project of India.

The global EoI is intended to shortlist prospective offshore wind energy developers for a **1000 MW offshore wind energy project in Gulf of Khambat, off the coast of Gujarat**. The proposed area is located 23-40 km seaward side from Pipavav port. MNRE plans to install at least 5 GW of offshore wind capacity by 2022.

As per the National Offshore Wind Energy Policy notified on October, 2015, **National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE), Chennai is the nodal agency to carry out the necessary studies/surveys before final bidding and act as a single window for facilitating necessary clearances required for development of offshore wind project in India**.

The first offshore LiDAR was installed in Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat for measurement of wind resource and NIWE is collecting wind speed data from November, 2017 onwards. **Areas off the coasts of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are two identified areas for development of offshore wind power. The second LiDAR would be installed off Tamil Nadu coast by September, 2018.** In addition NIWE is planning to set up few more LiDARs for assessment of offshore wind resources. Besides necessary Geo-Technical and Geo-Physical studies off the coast of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are underway.

*LiDAR is a surveying method that measures distance to a target by illuminating the target with pulsed laser light and measuring the reflected pulses with a sensor*
At global level, it has been observed that, offshore wind energy while being better than onshore wind in terms of efficiency is also becoming competitive and comparable in terms of tariffs. With a large energy market in India, the EoI is expected to evince keen interest from leading players of offshore wind turbine manufacturers and developers. Indian industry can also participate along with suitable tie up with global players.
MISCELLANEOUS

1. National Safety Council

NSCI Safety Awards for the year 2017 were recently awarded.

**National Safety Awards:**

The NSCI Safety Awards are much coveted national level Awards in the field of occupational safety, health and environment and are given in recognition for effective Safety Management System and excellent safety & health performance by the organizations in Manufacturing, Construction and MSME Sectors during the relevant assessment periods. These Awards are adjudged and declared every year by the National Safety Council.

**National Safety Council:**

- a premier, non-profit, self-financing and tripartite apex body at the national level in India.
- It is an autonomous body, which was set up by the Government of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment in 1966 to generate, develop and sustain a voluntary movement on Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) at the national level.
- It was registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and subsequently, as a Public Trust under the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950.
- To fulfil its objective NSC carries out various activities. These include organising and conducting specialised training courses, conferences, seminars & workshops; conducting consultancy studies such as safety audits, hazard evaluation & risk assessment; designing and developing HSE promotional materials & publications.

2. TRIFED
Due to the massive drive of scaling up the retail marketing activities by TRIFED, the value of Sales has increased from Rs. 11.37 crores in 2016-17 to Rs.20.08 Crores during 2017-18, a record increase of 77% and a record sale in the history of TRIFED.

TRIFED is an apex organisation at National Level and functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. TRIFED is serving the interests of Tribals, who are engaged in collection of NTFP and making of Tribal Art & Handicraft Products for their livelihood so as to ensure better remunerative price for their products as well as for the socio-economic betterment through Self Help Groups, Empanelled NGOs, State level Tribal Development Corporations, Forest Development Corporations for undertaking marketing development of the tribal products. It also organizes exhibitions like National Tribal Craft Expo called “Aadi Mahotsav” etc. in which it promotes and markets tribal products.

3. Civil Services Day
- 12th Civil Services Day was celebrated on April 21st, 2018.
- It focussed on ‘Evolving Strategies for Transforming Aspirational Districts’.
- The Government of India celebrates April 21 every year as ‘Civil Services day’ as an occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves to the cause of citizen and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
- This date is chosen to commemorate the day when first Home Minister of Independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi.
- As part of Civil Servant Day, Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.

4. Phosphorus pentoxide
- The government has imposed anti-dumping duty on import of Phosphorus pentoxide from China to protect the domestic manufacturers from cheap shipments.
- Phosphorus Pentoxide is used as a powerful desiccant and dehydrating agent and is a useful building block and reagent in the chemical industry.
- Phosphorus pentoxide is not flammable.
- It reacts vigorously with water and water-containing substances like wood or cotton, liberates much heat and may even cause fire. It is corrosive to metal.

5. **DARPAN – PLI App**

The government has launched DARPAN-Postal Life Insurance App. The App will help in collection of premium for postal life insurance and rural postal life insurance policies at branch post offices anywhere in India, with online updation of the policies.

With a view to achieve total digitisation of postal operations in the country, the department has launched Digital Advancement of Rural Post office for a new India (DARPAN) Project, which aims at connecting all one lakh 29 thousand Rural Branch Post Offices.

6. **First woman lawyer to be appointed as a Supreme Court judge**

- Senior lawyer Indu Malhotra will be the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a Supreme Court judge.
- Of the top court’s 24 judges, only one is a woman, Justice R Banumathi. She was elevated to the top court in August 2014. Justice Banumathi was the sixth woman to become a Supreme Court judge. Justice Fathima Beevi was the first in 1989.
- The Supreme Court of India comprises the Chief Justice and not more than 30 other Judges appointed by the **President of India**. Supreme Court Judges retire upon attaining the age of **65 years**.

- In order to be appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court, a person must be a citizen of India and must have been, for **atleast five years**, a Judge of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession, or an Advocate of a High Court or of two or more such Courts in succession for at least 10 years or he must be, in the **opinion of the President**, a **distinguished jurist**. Provisions exist for the appointment of a Judge of a High Court as an Ad-hoc Judge of the Supreme Court and for retired Judges of the Supreme Court or High Courts to sit and act as Judges of that Court.

7. **National Culture Fund**

As per latest data released by the government, 34 projects have been successfully implemented under National Culture Fund Scheme till date, thus, promoting, protecting and preserving India’s cultural heritage.

National Culture Fund (NCF) was set up as a Trust under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890 in November 1996 by the Government, with a view to mobilize extra resources through Public Private Partnerships.

The Fund aims at inviting the participation of the corporate sector, non-government organizations, private/public sector as well as individuals in the task of promoting, protecting and preserving India’s cultural heritage.

8. **11th World Hindi Conference (WHC)**
The 11th World Hindi Conference (WHC) is being organized in **August 2018 in Mauritius** by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in association with the Government of Mauritius.

**The event, held once in three years, is dedicated to Hindi language.** It sees participation from Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world who contribute to the language.

The main theme of the Conference is “**Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti**”.

9. **Adilabad Dokra and Warangal Diaries get GI tag**

Two craft forms that are unique to Telangana were recently granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the GI registry in Chennai.

**Adilabad Dokra:** It is an ancient metal craft that is popular in the state’s tribal regions.

**Warangal durries:** In this style of durries, weavers create beautiful patterns and dye them using vegetable colours, which are washed in flowing water after the printing process.

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

10. **International Buddhist Conference**
As part of 2562nd Buddha Jayanti celebrations, International Buddhist Conference was held in Lumbini, the birth place of Gautama Buddha.

Objective: disseminate teachings of Gautam Buddha and spread the messages of nonviolence, brotherhood, co-existence, love and peace to the international community.

11. Samridhi

- SIDBI celebrated its Foundation day on April 2nd with launch of ‘Samridhi – the virtual assistant’. It will answer standard queries of aspirants 24*7.
- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) was set up on 2nd April 1990 under an Act of Parliament.
- It acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Promotion, Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector as well as for co-ordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.

12. World Press Freedom Index

World Press Freedom Index for the year 2018 has been released. Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the World Press Freedom Index is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states. The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists. It is a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country.

Highlights:
- In this year’s index, Norway is first for the second year running, followed — as it was last year — by Sweden.
- India has dropped from rank 136 last year to rank 138 this year. India fared poorly on indicators such as hate speeches, attacks on journalists on social media, trolling them and targeting their reputation.
- SAARC nations: Afghanistan (118), Bhutan (94), Nepal (106), the Maldives (120), and Sri Lanka (131), all performed better than India; with Pakistan (139) and Bangladesh (146) performing worse. North Korea continues to rank last.

QUESTIONS

Q.1) Which of the following is a mission mode project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures paperless in India?
   [a] e-karya
   [b] e-Sabha
   *[c] e-Vidhan
   [d] None of the above

Q.2) Civil Services Day is celebrated on which of the following date?
   *[a] 21 April
   [b] 25 April
   [c] 15 April
   [d] 12 April

Q.3) What is the name of Kishanganga river in Pakistan?
   [a] Resham
Q.4) Which of the following statements are true regarding Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB)?
   1. AIIB started its operations in 2016.
   2. The headquarters of AIIB is in Russia.

   *[a] 1 only
   [b] 2 only
   [c] Both 1 and 2
   [d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) Consider the following statements about International Energy Forum and identify the correct ones:
   1. It is an inter-governmental arrangement set up in 1991.
   2. It is based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
   3. India is not a member of IEF.

   *[a] 1 and 2 only
   [b] 2 and 3 only
   [c] 1 and 3 only
   [d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.6) Which of the following is true regarding Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme?

   1. The scheme was introduced in 2015.
   2. The bonds are restricted for sale to individuals and HUFs.
   3. These bonds can be used as collateral for loans.
Q.7) Which of the following statements is/are true regarding Great Barrier Reef?

1. It is the world’s largest coral reef system.
2. It was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
*[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.8) Consider the following statements about Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and identify the correct ones.

1. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the EU.
2. Its objective is to combat money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

[a] 1 only
*[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2
Q.9) Which of the following is called the ocean point of inaccessibility?

*[a] Point Nemo
[b] Point Kermadec
[c] Point Puerto Rico
[d] None of the above

Q.10) Consider the following statements about IRNSS and identify the correct ones:

1. NavIC is the operational name for the IRNSS.
2. Currently there are eight IRNSS satellites in the orbit.
3. IRNSS-1I has been launched to replace India’s first navigation satellite IRNSS-1A.

*[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.11) Consider the following statements about Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) and identify the false statements:

1. TESS is a mission of European Space Agency.
2. It will look for planets orbiting the brightest stars.

*[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2
Q.12) Which of the following is a mission to study the heat of Mars planet?

[a] Aspire  
*[b] Insight  
[c] Gagan  
[d] None of the above

Q.13) Consider the following statements about Sentinel – 3B satellite and identify the correct ones:

1. It was launched by European Union for its ambitious Copernicus mission.  
2. Its main aim is to monitor the Earth’s ocean.

[a] 1 only  
[b] 2 only  
*[c] Both 1 and 2  
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.14) Which of the following statements about Viral Hepatitis is/are correct?

1. Hepatitis is the inflammation of intestines.  
2. It is caused by the hepatitis bacteria A, B, C, D and E.

[a] 1 only  
[b] 2 only
Q.15) Which of the following statements is/are true regarding Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)?

[a] FSSAI lays down science based standards for articles of food meant for human and animal consumption.
[b] Ministry of Food Processing Industries is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.
*[c] FSSAI has launched ‘Project Dhoop’ to address rising incidence of Vitamin ‘D’ Deficiencies (VDD).
[d] All of the above

Q.16) Consider the following statements regarding National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)?

1. NIRF rankings were introduced in the year 2016.
2. It outlines a methodology to rank schools across the country.
3. Teaching, Learning and Resources is 1 of the parameters measured by NIRF.

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
*[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3
Q.17) Consider the following statements about POSHAN Abhiyan and identify the correct ones:

1. It was launched on 8 Mar 2018 to boost nutrition among women and children.
2. One of the targets of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years to 25% by 2022.

[a] 1 only  
[b] 2 only  
*[c] Both 1 and 2  
[d] Neither 1 nor 2
Q.18) BeiDou is the navigation system of which of the following countries?

[a] Russia  
[b] European Union  
*[c] China  
[d] Japan

Q.19) Which of the following is the National Coordinating Institute for Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0?

[a] IIT- Roorkee  
[b] IIM- Bengaluru  
*[c]IIT-Delhi  
[d] None of the above

Q.20) Which of the following elements is the major difference between BS IV and BS VI?

*[a] Presence of Sulphur  
[b] Presence of Hydrogen  
[c] Presence of Nitrogen  
[d] Presence of Carbon

Q.21) Consider the following statements about Assam Spring festival and identify the correct ones:

1. It was held in Kaziranga National Park.  
2. Its aim is to promote the local food and culture of the fringe villagers.  
[a] 1 only
Q.22) Consider the following statements about Olive Ridley turtles?
1. They are classified as Vulnerable as per IUCN.
2. They are medium sized sea turtles, mainly found in cold waters.
3. They are best known for their behavior of synchronized nesting in mass numbers.
[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.23) Consider the following statements about United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and identify the correct ones:
1. UNCCD was established in 1994.
2. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention.
3. The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.
[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.24) Which of the following is an armour panel developed by BARC which gives personal protection against bullets of different threat levels?
[a] Divya Kavach
*[b] Bhabha Kavach
[c] Sampoorn Kavach
Q.25) Consider the following statements about Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)?

1. It was set up in 2001.
2. Its objective is to counter corruption and speed up decision making in military equipment.
3. It is headed by Home Minister.

*a* [a] 1 and 2  
[b] 2 and 3  
[c] 1 and 3  
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.26) Consider the following statements about Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)?

1. The scheme is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above.
2. It has been rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY).
3. It is available for first three live births.
4. The maternity benefits under the scheme are available to all Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers.

*a* [a] 1 and 2  
[b] 2 and 3  
[c] 3 and 4  
[d] 1, 2 and 4

Q.27) Which of the following was launched on International Women’s Day (8 Mar 2018) to boost nutrition among children and women?

[a] BHOJAN Abhiyan
Q.28) Which of the following programmes brings focus on promotion of breastfeeding and provision of services towards supporting breastfeeding?
   *[a] MAA
   [b] MAMTA
   [c] MATRITVA
   [d] None of the above

Q.29) Which of the following is not a parameter of Economic Freedom Index?
   [a] Open Market
   *[b] Role of democracy
   [c] Rule of Law
   [d] Government size

Q.30) Which of the following is the online complaint management system for easy and direct reporting of sexual offences against children and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act, 2012?
   [a] POCSO e-complaint
   *[b] POCSO e-box
   [c] POCSO e-nirnay
   [d] POCSO e-report

Q.31) Consider the following statements about TRIFED and identify the correct ones:
1. It is an apex organization working under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
2. TRIFED serves the interests of Tribals, who are engaged in making of Tribal Art & Handicraft Products for their livelihood.
3. “Aadi Mahotsav” was organized by TRIFED.

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
*[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.32) Consider the following statements and identify the correct ones:
1. The 11th World Hindi Conference (WHC) is being organized in August 2018 in Mauritius.
2. The annual event is dedicated to Hindi language.
3. The main theme of the Conference is “Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiya Sanskriti”.

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
*[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.33) Consider the following statements about World Press Freedom Index and identify the correct ones:
1. Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).
2. Sweden topped the index.
3. The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists.
   [a] 1 and 2
   [b] 2 and 3
   *[c] 1 and 3
   [d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.34) Consider the following statements about Shanghai Cooperation Organization and identify the correct ones:
   1. It is Eurasian political, economic, and military organization.
   2. It was founded in 2015.
   [a] 1 and 2
   *[b] 1 and 3
   [c] 2 and 3
   [d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.35) Consider the following statements about OPEC and identify the correct ones:
   1. It is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the Baghdad Conference in September 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
   2. It has a total of 14 Member Countries.
   3. It has its headquarters in Saudi Arabia.
   *[a] 1 and 2
   [b] 2 and 3
   [c] 1 and 3
   [d] 1, 2 and 3
Q.36) Consider the following statements regarding the draft Defence Production Policy 2018 and identify the correct ones:

1. Its vision is to make India one of the top five countries in aerospace and defence industries.
2. It aims to allow FDI up to 74% under automatic route.
3. It provides setting up of an aeronautical university to promote manufacturing in India.

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
*d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.37) Which of the following statements are true regarding National Bamboo Mission?

1. It was launched in 2006-07 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
2. It envisages promoting holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting area-based, regionally differentiated strategy and to increase the area under bamboo cultivation and marketing.

[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.38) Which of the following statements are true regarding Draft Code on Social Security?

1. Under the draft code, the employer will contribute 2% of the wage payable to each employee in case of gratuity fund.
2. The draft code will apply to all establishments of the Central and State Governments.

[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2
Q.39) Which of the following statements are true in relation to Contempt of Court, 1971?

1. Criminal contempt refers to the wilful disobedience of an order of any court.
2. Civil contempt includes interference with the administration of justice.

[a] 1 only  
[b] 2 only  
[c] Both 1 and 2  
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.40) Which of the following is a portable social security account for the registration of workers under the Draft Code on Social Security, 2018?

[a] MAZDOOR  
[b] SAFAL  
[c] VIKAS  
[d] SAATH

Q.41) Consider the following statements regarding the $420 million project of World Bank in Maharashtra and identify the correct ones:

1. The project’s aim is to help Small and Marginal farmers in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra.
2. It has a 6-year grace period, and a maturity of 24 years.
3. The project will help in increasing climate resilient practices in agriculture.

[a] 1 and 2  
[b] 2 and 3
Q.42) As per the World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018 report of the United Nations, the Indian economy is projected to grow at what percentage in 2018-19?

[a] 7 %
*[b] 7.2%
[c] 7.5%
[d] 6.8%

Q.43) A loan worth $140 million has been approved by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) for the state of MP recently. Which of the following facilities is aimed to be improved at?

*[a] Rural road connectivity
[b] Primary education
[c] Provision of appropriate healthcare facilities
[d] None of the above

Q.44) Consider the following statements about Meghalaya Community-Led Landscapes Management Project (MCLLMP) and identify the correct ones:

1. A loan agreement of US $ 48 million was signed with New Development Bank.
2. Objective of the Project is to strengthen community-led landscapes management in selected landscapes in the State of Meghalaya.

[a] 1 only
*[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
Q.45) Consider the following statements about India Mobile Congress (IMC) - 2018 and identify the correct ones:

1. Its theme was “NEW DIGITAL HORIZONS: Connect. Create. Innovate.”
2. It aim is to build ideas, forge lasting Industry relationships, showcase leading-edge mobile technology and product trends, and provide sectoral insights and impactful solutions.
3. It was the third edition with beginning in the year 2016.

*a* 1 and 2  
*b* 2 and 3  
*c* 1 and 3  
*d* 1, 2 and 3

Q.46) Which of the following has become the first organization of any civil ministry to become 100% digital at the field level?

*a* Department of Publication  
*b* Director General of Civil Aviation  
*c* Central Public Works Department  
*d* Department of Science & Technology

Q.47) Which of the following is the objective of “Brihad Sampark Yojana” programme initiated by Government of India?

*a* To reach out to 193 different countries of the world.  
*b* Establishing international connectivity through a universal SIM.  
*c* Inviting FDI from different countries.  
*d* None of the above
Q.48) Which of the following has become the first city in India that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime using solar energy?

[a] Coimbatore
[b] Kochi
[*c] Diu
[d] Surat

Q.49) Which of the following are advantages of MSMEs?

1. Lead to Inclusive growth
2. Generate employment
3. Vital for big enterprises

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
*[d] All of the above

Q.50) Which of the following organizes annual road safety championship called “Safer India Challenge”?

[a] KRSC
[b] YCSR
*[c] IRSC
[d] None of the above

Q.51) Which of the following is not the part of 4E principles adopted for road safety?

[a] Emergency
[b] Enforcement
[c] Education
*[d] Environment
Q.52) As per Motor Vehicles Amendment Bill 2017, fine up to which amount can be imposed on contractors for faulty road designs?
   [a] 25,000
   [b] 50,000
   *[c] 1 lakh
   [d] 2 lakh

Q.53) Consider the following statements about Think tank on the Framework for National Policy on E-commerce and identify the correct ones:
   1. It has been developed recently by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
   2. It seeks to collectively deliberate on the challenges confronting India in the arena of digital economy to develop recommendations for a comprehensive and overarching national policy on e-commerce.
   [a] 1 only
   *[b] 2 only
   [c] Both 1 and 2
   [d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.54) Which of the following is a digital platform for MSME exporters to digitize their businesses and join a global community of growing businesses?
   [a] FIEO GlobalComm
   [b] FIEO GlobalBiz
   *[c] FIEO GlobalLinker
   [d] FIEO GlobalDigi

Q.55) Consider the following statements about Exercise Harimau Shakti 2018 and identify the correct ones:
1. It was between Indian Army and Singapore Army.
2. It is a two week long joint military exercise.
3. The exercise was held in Kuala Lumpur.

[a] 1 and 2
[b] 2 and 3
[c] 1 and 3
[d] 1, 2 and 3

Q.56) Consider the following statements about Science Convention on World Homoeopathy Day and identify the correct ones:

1. World Homoeopathy Day is observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder of Homoeopathy Dr. Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann.
2. Theme of the convention was "Innovate: Evolve; Progress: Exploring Science since 40 years".

[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.57) Which of the following has been launched as an app for Coal Quality Monitoring?

[a] QCOAL
[b] UTTAM
[c] SARVOTTAM
[d] KOYLA

Q.58) Which of the following is a project for creating an online digital repository of museum collections?

[a] e-Museum
[b] TASVEER
Q.59) Consider the following statements about The New 09-3X- Dynamic Tamping Express and identify the correct ones:
1. It has been manufactured in India under MAKE IN INDIA initiative with imported components.
2. Three operations (tamper, stabilizer and post tampering operations) are now combined in 1 machine.
[a] 1 only
[b] 2 only
*[c] Both 1 and 2
[d] Neither 1 nor 2

Q.60) Which of the following schemes aims at targeting the women victims of unfortunate circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity?
*[a] SwadharGreh Scheme
[b] Ujjawala Scheme
[c] STEP scheme
[d] One stop Centre