JULY 2018 CURRENT FOR RBI PHASE II

WHAT

WHY

TELL ME MORE
CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018:

WHAT:
Cases of violence against women have been on a rise despite strong laws and stringent implementation of such amendments. This new amendment intends to make laws even more stringent on violence against women and children.

WHY:
To make India a safe and secure place for women. To improve statistics on women related violence.

TELL ME MORE:
Highlights of the bill-

Punishment:
- stringent punishment including death penalty for those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years.
- The minimum punishment in case of rape of women has been increased from rigorous imprisonment of seven years to 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment.
- In case of rape of a girl under 16 years, the minimum punishment has been increased from 10 years to 20 years, extendable to imprisonment for rest of life, which means jail term till the convicts’ “natural life”.
- The punishment for gang rape of a girl below 16 years will invariably be imprisonment for the rest of life of the convict.
- Stringent punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years has been provided with the minimum jail term being 20 years which may go up to life in prison or death sentence. Gang rape of a girl under 12 years of age will invite punishment of jail term for the rest of life or death.

Speedy investigation:
- The measure also provides for speedy investigations and trial. The time limit for investigation of all cases of rape has been prescribed, which has to be mandatorily completed within two months.
- The deadline for the completion of trial in all rape cases will be two months. A six-month time limit for the disposal of appeals in rape cases has also been prescribed.

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have passed a Bill providing for death penalty to those convicted of raping girls of 12 years and below.

CENTRAL ROAD AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (CRIF) - FROM BUDGET 2018
**WHAT:**
The CRF was launched in 2000 as a cess imposed along with excise duty on petrol and diesel, in order to finance construction of central road projects. The cess revenue was accrued to the CRF which was uniquely created and out of this major road projects were financed ever since its launch.

**WHY:**

**WHY THE AMENDMENT?**

Conversion of CRF into Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF):
The budget 2018 has amended the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, and has renamed the Central Road Fund as Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF).

Main purpose of the amendment is to use the proceeds of the road cess under CRIF to finance other infrastructure projects including waterways, some portion of the railway infrastructure and even social infrastructure including education institutions, medical colleges etc.

**TELL ME MORE:**
The amendment prescribes that road cess is first credited to the Consolidated Fund of India and later, after adjusting for the cost of tax collection, should go to the CRIF.

The administrative control of Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) has been transferred to the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Finance Ministry. So far, it was under the domain of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The transfer has been made because the fund will no longer be limited to road infrastructure.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS- ASSAM**

**WHAT:**
The National Register of Citizens was first published in 1951 to record citizens of Assam, their houses and holdings.

The Citizenship Act of 1955 was amended after the Assam Accord for all Indian-origin people who came from Bangladesh before January 1, 1966 to be deemed as citizens.
Those who came between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971 were eligible for citizenship after registering and living in the State for 10 years while those entering after March 25, 1971, were to be deported.

**WHY:**
The NRC process will address the issue of illegal migrants, specifically from Bangladesh. The National Register of Citizens was first published in 1951 to record citizens, their houses and holdings. Updating the NRC to root out foreigners was a demand during the Assam Agitation (1979-1985).

**TELL ME MORE:**

**Who is a D-voter?**
Short for ‘dubious’ or ‘doubtful’, this is a category of voters disenfranchised by the government for alleged lack of proper citizenship documents. Some 2.48 lakh people got the D-voter tag during NRC process.

**Who is a declared foreigner?**
D-voters are tried by special tribunals under the Foreigners’ Act and if they fail to defend their citizenship claim they are marked as declared foreigners and sent to any of six detention camps, which are within jails for criminals, for deportation. There were 91,206 declared foreigners as on December 31, 2017.

**40 Lakh people left out**
More than 40 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants in Assam were left out of the complete draft National Register of Citizens (NRC), which was published on Monday. The five year exercise was completed at a cost of ₹1,220 crore.

People left out have been considered as applicants. Each of them will be sent letters individually for the next step. They might have missed out because of some reasons such as unsubstantiated documents.

**DEEP OCEAN MISSION**

**WHAT:**
Ministry Of Earth Sciences Plans Rs 8000 Crore ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ To Boost India’s Sea Exploration Capabilities. The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.

**WHY:**
India has been allotted 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploration of poly-metallic nodules. It is envisaged that 10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years. It has been estimated that 380 million metric tonnes of polymetallic nodules are available at the bottom of the seas in the Central Indian Ocean.

TELL ME MORE:

The focus of the mission will be on deep-sea mining, ocean climate change advisory services, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics related technologies. Two key projects planned in the ‘Deep Ocean Mission’ report include a desalination plant powered by tidal energy and a submersible vehicle that can explore depths of at least 6,000 metres.

DOMESTIC COUNCIL FOR GOLD

WHAT:

DGC is an organization created by the government for promotion of exports of jewellery. DGC will include a body of jewellers from India, whose primary purpose will be to aid promotion and expansion of gold trade in the country.

WHY:

The Council will work towards-
- Industry development.
- Job creation.
- The building of regional clusters.
- Strengthening of value chains.

TELL ME MORE:

The council will represent all the jewellers of India who will form the electoral college. They will form different interest groups and elect those who will sit in the council.
MANIPUR PEOPLE’S PROTECTION BILL AND INNER LINE PERMIT

WHAT:

WHAT IS THE INNER LINE PERMIT?

The Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document issued by the Government of India to grant inward travel of an Indian citizen into a protected area for a limited period. It is obligatory for Indians residing outside those states to obtain permission prior to entering the protected areas. Currently, the Inner Line Permit is operational in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. The document has been issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 and the conditions and restrictions vary from state to state. It can be issued for travel purposes only. Visitors are not allowed to purchase property in these regions. However, there might be a different set of rules for long term visitors, though they are not valid for central government employees and security forces.

The Manipur People’s Protection Bill, 2018 seeks to regulate the entry and exit of “outsiders” on the lines of the British-era inner-line permit system prevalent in three other north-eastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.

WHY:

The influx of foreign tourists has increased exponentially in Manipur, thus creating a demographic imbalance in the region. Illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar has also contributed to the crisis. This has created fear among the locals over employment and availability of resources. At a time where there already exists stiff competition between the locals and outsiders over jobs, the outsiders mostly settle for low paid work.

TELL ME MORE:

If approved by the Governor and made an Act, people who came to Manipur after 1951 would be viewed as ‘foreigners’ and would have no voting or land rights.

The bill sets 1951 as the base year to identify locals and prevent an influx of outsiders.

According to the bill, Manipur people include Meitis, the Pangal Muslims, scheduled tribes as listed under the Constitution in terms of Manipur and all those citizens of India who have been living in Manipur before 1951.
The rest have been put in the category of non-Manipuris and will have to register themselves within one month of the notification of the law. They will be issued a pass extendable up to six months. While those who have trade licences can get a pass extendable up to five years, which will have to be renewed every year. Any outsider visiting Manipur would need a pass.

NATIONAL VIRAL HEPATITIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

WHAT:

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver.

The Programme aims at both prevention and treatment of hepatitis which is among leading causes of liver cancer, cirrhosis of liver and acute liver failure.

The Programme is part of National Health Mission. Under it, expensive antiviral for hepatitis B and C infections will be made available free of cost at all government hospitals.

WHY:

It aims to treat minimum of 3 lakh hepatitis C cases over a period of three years for eliminating deadly condition by 2030.

TELL ME MORE:

It will set up and upgrade facilities for diagnosis and treatment primarily of hepatitis B and C. These designated treatment centres will provide free anti-viral to hepatitis C patients. They will also provide hepatitis B vaccine to babies born to mothers carrying the virus within 24 hours of birth.

It aims to treat minimum of 3 lakh hepatitis C cases over a period of three years for eliminating deadly condition by 2030.

DRAFT PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL 2018

WHAT:

Data is the new currency. It is considered as the oil of 21st century. With the dawn of information age and mass digitalization there has been generation of huge data. In order to protect people’s privacy and make companies accountable, India needs a data protection law “as soon as possible” as it is a “fundamental thing” so that the users can
demand from the domestic or foreign companies to share their data when needed. This is not a technology problem, but a policy problem.

WHY:

The right to privacy is a fundamental right which necessitates protection of personal data as an essential facet of informational privacy says the draft Personal Data Protection bill, 2018.

TELL ME MORE:

Justice B.N. Srikrishna- headed expert panel has proposed that critical personal data of Indian citizens be processed in centres located within the country.

It proposes setting up of a DPA, an independent regulatory body responsible for the enforcement and effective implementation of the law, consisting of a chairperson and six full-time members.

Other personal data may be transferred outside the territory of India with some riders. However, at least one copy of the data will need to be stored in India.

Made specific mention of the need for separate and more stringent norms for protecting the data of children, recommending that companies be barred from certain types of data processing such as behavioural monitoring, tracking, targeted advertising and any other type of processing which is not in the best interest of the child.

It recommended that the penalty may extend up to ₹5 crore or 2% of the data misuser’s total worldwide turnover of the preceding financial year, whichever is higher in situations where the company fails to take “prompt and appropriate action” in response to a data security breach.

In situations where the norms on personal data, sensitive personal data, and the personal data on children are violated, the report has recommended a penalty of ₹15 crore or 4% of the total worldwide turnover of the preceding financial year of the company.
**DIGI YATRA INITIATIVE**

**WHAT:**

DigiYatra is an [industry-led initiative coordinated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation](https://www.civilaviation.gov.in) in line with Digital India programme.

- It aims to **transform the flying experience for passengers** and position Indian Aviation amongst the most innovative aviation networks in the world.
- The facility will use digital technology to enhance air passenger experience all the way from **ticket booking to airport entry check**, security check and aircraft boarding.

**WHY:**

To transform the flying experience for passengers and position Indian Aviation amongst the most innovative aviation networks in the world.

**TELL ME MORE:**

- For this, a passenger needs to enrol into DigiYatra program through [AirSewa app](https://www.civilaviation.gov.in) and a DigiYatra verified passenger will get hassle free entry at the airport through E-Gates.
- At the entry gate, a single token for the passenger will be created. This will also facilitate walk-through security scanners swiftly owing to advanced biometric security solutions.

**Security concerns:**

- This facility will be optional for passengers. If somebody does not want to disclose the identity, there will be a separate provision for them.
- The ID verification will be done by the BCAS-approved Government ID.

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**MUKHYANMANTRI KISSAN AAYE BADHOTRI SOLAR YOJNA**

**WHAT:**

Farmers in the national capital will be able to lease out a part of their agricultural land for **setting up of solar panels** to get additional income.

**WHY:**

Any farmer can rent out **not more than one-third of his land** to a private firm to set up solar panels at a rate of **Rs one lakh per annum per acre**. The panels will be set up at a height of **3.5 metres**, so that the land can also be used for agriculture.
The **Delhi Government departments will buy solar power** from the companies participating in the scheme.

**TELL ME MORE:**

**Benefits of the scheme:**

- The annual income of the beneficiary farmers, which is estimated at present to be between Rs 30,000 and Rs 50,000 per acre per year, will increase to between Rs 1.30 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakh following the implementation of this scheme.
- Besides getting additional income, the farmers will **also get 1,000 units of free solar power without any investment.**
- The departments currently buy electricity at Rs 9 per unit but with the implementation of the scheme, the expense will come down to Rs 5 per unit, saving the department Rs 400 crore to Rs 500 crore annually.

**NASAMS-II:**

**WHAT:**
India is in talks with United States to procure **National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II)**

**TELL ME MORE:**

- It is an advanced air defence system.
- It is highly adaptable mid-range solution for any operational air defence requirement.
- It provides tailorable, state-of-the-art defence system that can maximise the ability to quickly identify, engage and destroy current and evolving enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.
- It is part of the air defence network guarding US capital city Washington DC. It is also deployed in several NATO countries.

**WESTERN DEDICATED CORRIDOR (WDFC)**

**WHAT:**

These are freight-only railway lines to move goods between industrial heartlands

The dedicated freight-only lines are being built along the four key transportation routes – known as the Golden Quadrilateral and connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Howrah and its two diagonals (Delhi – Chennai and Mumbai – Howrah).
WHY:

*Increased burden:* Covering a total of 10,122 km, these corridors carry the heaviest traffic and are highly congested. The route carries 52% of passenger traffic and 58% of freight traffic, according to the Make-in-India report of 2017. Also, these routes are highly saturated, with line capacity utilisation reaching as high as 150%.

*Rise in demand:* Considering increased transport demands, overtly congested routes and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with road transport, these freight corridors will help reduce the cost and allow faster transportation.

*Revenue generation:* They will open new avenues for investment, as this will lead to the construction of industrial corridors and logistic parks along these routes.

TELL ME MORE:

*Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL):* The DFCCIL is a corporation run by the Ministry of Railways (India) to undertake planning & development, mobilisation of financial resources and construction, maintenance and operation of the Dedicated Freight Corridors. DFCC has been registered as a company under the Companies Act 1956 on 30 October 2006.
MISSION SATYANISHTHA

WHAT:
This mission aims at sensitizing all railway employees about the need to adhere to good ethics and to maintain high standards of integrity at work.

WHY:
To improve quality of services by Indian Railways

TELL ME MORE:
- To train every employee to understand the need and value of ethics in Personal and Public life.
- To deal with ethical dilemmas in life and Public Governance.
- To help understand the policies of Indian Railways on ethics and integrity and the employee’s role in upholding the same.
- To develop inner governance through tapping inner resources.

TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION) BILL, 2018

WHAT:
The Lok Sabha has passed the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018. The Bill provides for the prevention, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked persons.

WHY:
More than 300,000 children went missing in the country between 2012 and 2017, government data shows. Around 100,000 are yet to be traced and it is feared that many of them could have been trafficked.
- In 2016, for instance, 111,569 children were reported missing. Of these, 55,944 children were traced but only 8,132 trafficking cases were reported. Many of these children are victims of modern slavery — forced into prostitution, labour or domestic work.
- They are also used as drug mules and even given up for adoption illegally. Poverty and lack of opportunity also pushes a lot of young women, especially from the interior parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand, into prostitution.
Despite the enormity of the problem, India lacks a single comprehensive law for human trafficking. At present, trafficking is covered under half-a-dozen laws resulting in confusion and poor enforcement.

TELL ME MORE:

**National Anti-Trafficking Bureau:** The Bill provides for the establishment of a National Anti-Trafficking Bureau to investigate trafficking cases and implement provisions of the Bill.

**Functions of the Bureau:**
coordinating and monitoring surveillance along known routes, facilitating surveillance, enforcement and preventive steps at source, transit and destination points, maintaining coordination between law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders, increasing international cooperation

**Anti-Trafficking Units:** The Bill also provides for the setting up of Anti-Trafficking Units (ATUs) at the district level.
ATUs will deal with the prevention, rescue, and protection of victims and witnesses, and for the investigation and prosecution of trafficking offences.

**Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committee:** The Bill provides for the establishment of Anti-Trafficking Relief and Rehabilitation Committees (ATCs)

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**FDI CONFIDENCE INDEX**

**WHAT:**

FDI Confidence Index was recently released by global consultancy firm A T Kearney annual survey of the business executives that ranks countries which are likely to attract the most FDI in the next three years.

**WHY:**

Which country has the ability to attract more FDI and why

**TELL ME MORE:**

The United States (US) topped the index, followed by Canada at 2nd and Germany at the 3rd place.
India- 11th rank
Fall in India’s rankings may be due to teething troubles in implementation of goods and services tax (GST) and Government’s demonetisation decision in 2016.
Several of India’s reforms such as removing Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) and liberalising FDI limits in key sectors such as retail, aviation, and biomedical industries have maintained India’s high rankings in terms of FDI attractiveness.

NATIONAL WATERWAYS

WHAT:

National Waterways Act:
- The National Waterways Act 2016 declared 106 new waterways as national waterways (NWs) in addition to the existing five NW.
- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has estimated that approximately Rs 25,000 crore would be required for development of identified projects on NWs till 2022-23.

WHY:

Promotion of Water Transport to reduce pollution, reduce Congestion on roads and rails, save energy usage as water transport is considered more efficient.

TELL ME MORE:

20 National Waterways out of 111 are in North Eastern Region (NER). **NW-2 (river Brahmaputra) from Dhubri to Sadiya (891 km) is operational**
INDIA’S CHALLENGE IN URBANISATION

WHAT: (What Is the issue?)

Over 34% of India’s current population lives in urban areas, rising by 3% since 2011. More importantly, while existing large urban agglomerations (those with a population above 50 lakh) have remained mostly constant in number since 2005, smaller clusters have risen significantly (from 34 to 50 clusters with 10-50 lakh population).

By some estimates, India’s urban population could increase to 814 million by 2050. And yet, cities look and feel downtrodden, riven with poverty and poor infrastructure, with little semblance of urban planning.

With an increase in urban population will come rising demands for basic services such as clean water, public transportation, sewage treatment and housing.
WHY: (Why Is Urbanization a Challenge For India?)

One primary problem is that of the definition of what’s urban. Urban development comes under State governments, with the Governor notifying an area as urban based on parameters such as population, density, revenue generated for the local administration and percentage employed in non-agricultural activities. This notification leads to the creation of an urban local government or municipality, classifying the area as a “statutory town”. With such a vague definition, discretionary decisions yield a wide variance in what is considered a town.

The Central government considers a settlement as urban:
- If it has a urban local government, a minimum population of 5,000;
- over 75% of its (male) population working in non-agricultural activities; and
- population density of at least 400 per sq. km
- it has an urban local government.

However, many States consider such “census towns” as rural and establish governance through a rural local government or panchayat.

TELL ME MORE:

Perhaps we need a different model of urbanisation. The announcement of a new urbanisation policy that seeks to rebuild Indian cities around clusters of human capital, instead of considering them simply as an agglomeration of land use, is a welcome transition.

We need to empower our cities, with a focus on:
- land policy reforms,
- granting urban local bodies, the freedom to raise financing and
- enforce local land usage norms.

Key areas to have fulfil Smart city mission
- Socio economic aspect
- Physical components
- Institutional mechanism
POSHAN ABHIYAAN

POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission) was launched by the Hon’ble Prime Minister on 8th March, 2018 in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.

- **Targets:** 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.

**WHY:**

To tackle malnutrition in the country
TELL ME MORE:

Benefits & Coverage:

More than 10 crore people will be benefitted by this programme. All the States and districts will be covered in a phased manner i.e. 315 districts in 2017-18, 235 districts in 2018-19 and remaining districts in 2019-20.

Financial Outlay:

An amount of Rs. 9046.17 crore will be expended for three years commencing from 2017-18. This will be funded by Government Budgetary Support (50%) and 50% by IBRD or other MDB. Government budgetary support would be 60:40 between Centre and States/UTs, 90:10 for NER and Himalayan States and 100% for UTs without legislature. Total Government of India share over a period of three years would be Rs. 2849.54 crore.

Implementation strategy and targets:

Implementation strategy would be based on intense monitoring and Convergence Action Plan right upto the grass root level. NNM will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20. NNM targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. Although the target to reduce Stunting is atleast 2% p.a., Mission would strive to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (Mission 25 by 2022).

GREEN MAHANADI MISSION

WHAT:

Odisha government has launched Green Mahanadi Mission. Under the mission, a total of two crore saplings will be planted on the banks of the Mahanadi.

WHY:

To rejuvenate Mahanadi and its tributaries

TELL ME MORE:

The Green Mahanadi Mission envisages rejuvenating Mahanadi river and its tributaries Tel and Ib by increasing recharging capacity through massive plantation. Under the mission, a green belt with width of 1 km will be created on both sides of the river beginning from the place, where the river enters Odisha to Paradip, where it merges with the Bay of Bengal.
The plantation will be undertaken over 75,760 hectares government land besides 47,470 hectares private land.

REASONS FOR LOWER INVESTMENTS IN INDIA- ESSAY

WHAT:

In recent times, India is experiencing lower investments because of following reasons:
- Impact of Demonetization on domestic as well as foreign investors.
- Non-performance of banking institution.
- Implementation of complex Goods and Service Tax.
- Political instability and difference in global situation.
- Low capacity of utilization in various sectors such as Infrastructure, Health, and communication etc.

TELL ME MORE:

Data suggests weakness on two fronts as the reason for the decline in investments:

One, the sticky share of private corporate sector investments in GDP-

CSO data shows private non-financial corporate investments have remained subdued. Data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also suggests that capital expenditure by the private sector declined for the sixth straight year in fiscal 2017.

Two, a secular decline in household investments-

The household sector was the biggest contributor to investments in fiscal 2012 (share of about 45%), but its share has declined consistently since then and was about 31% in fiscal 2017. Purchase of houses is generally the largest part (more than three-fourths) of household investments, so a slowdown on that score becomes a key reason for the decline.

COMMITTEE TO CHECK MOB LYNCHING

WHAT:

Union Government has constituted a High-Level Committee chaired by the Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba

WHY:

The move comes after a number of mob lynching incidents were reported in several areas, stemming from fake social media rumours of child kidnappers as well as cow vigilantism.
TELL ME MORE:
At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognizance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).

The Supreme court passed a slew of directions in this regard to deal with the mob lynching.

Directions:
- There shall be a “separate offence” for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- The state governments will have to designate a senior police officer in each district for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments need to identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- The nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- Every police officer shall ensure to disperse the mob that has a tendency to cause violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise.
- Central and the state governments shall broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.
- The State Governments shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment.
- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfill his duty, it will be considered an act of deliberate negligence.
PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

WHAT:

Gifts criminalised: Gifts received for established undue advantage/mala-fide motive are now considered an act of corruption.

Timely trial mandated: To conclude the investigation and trial within 2 yrs, extendable up to 4 yrs.

WHY:

To reduce cases of corruption and bribery in India. To empower citizens against demands for bribery by public officials.

GIRINKA PROGRAMME

WHAT:

The programme was initiated by RWANDAN President Paul Kagame in response to alarmingly high rate of childhood malnutrition and as way to accelerate poverty reduction and integrate livestock and crop farming.
WHY:
Covered above

TELL ME MORE:
Under this programme, poorest residing in region get cows from Government and gift first female calf to neighbour to promote brotherhood. The programme is based on premise that providing dairy cow to poor, transforms livelihoods, reconciles communities improving agricultural productivity through use of manure as fertilizers. The program has contributed to increase in agricultural production in Rwanda – especially milk production and products and has reduced malnutrition and increased incomes.

NATIONAL MISSION FOR MANUSCRIPTS (NMM)

WHAT:
A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.

In 2003, National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM), a Mission mode Project, was launched by the Ministry of Culture for documentation, conservation, preservation and digitization of manuscripts.

WHY:
The manuscripts documented and digitized by the NMM will be made available to researcher and scholars through a Trusted Digital Repository

TELL ME MORE:
National mission for manuscripts (NMM) has digitized 283 lakh pages of 2.96 lakh manuscripts till date.

SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA

WHAT:
Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) is a small deposit scheme for the girl child launched as a part of the ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ campaign.
WHY:
The scheme is aimed at promoting gender equality and the significance of educating girls.

TELL ME MORE:
By amending Sukanya Samriddhi Account Rules, 2016, the Union Government has reduced minimum yearly deposit required under popular girl child savings scheme, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana to Rs 250 from Rs 1,000 earlier. This has been lowered to enable more people to enjoy benefits of this scheme.

- It is currently 8.1 per cent and provides income-tax benefit under section 80 C of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Even the returns are tax free in the scheme.
- A Sukanya Samriddhi Account can be opened any time after the birth of a girl till she turns 10, with a minimum deposit of Rs 250 (Earlier it was Rs 1,000). In subsequent years, a minimum of Rs 250 and a maximum of Rs 1.5 lakh can be deposited during the ongoing financial year.
- The account can be opened in any post office or authorized branches of commercial banks.
- The account will remain operative for 21 years from the date of its opening or till the marriage of the girl after she turns 18.
- To meet the requirement of her higher education expenses, partial withdrawal of 50% of the balance is allowed after she turns 18.
- It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

TRANSFORMATION OF ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS’ PROGRAMME

WHAT:
Launched in January this year, the ‘Transformation of Aspirational Districts’ programme aims to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts of the country.

To enable optimum utilization of their potential, this program focuses closely on improving people’s ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy. Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure are this programme’s core areas of focus.

WHY:
The NITI Aayog and Lupin Foundation are collaborating to improve indicators in education, health & nutrition, financial inclusion and skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure in Aspirational Districts of India.
TELL ME MORE:
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 or a Jan Andolan

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TEACHER EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

WHAT:
The Bill seeks to grant retrospective recognition to institutions that have been notified by central government, funded by Central Government or State/UT government but do not have recognition under the parent Act. Besides, these institutions must have offered teacher education courses on or after establishment of NCTE until academic year 2017-2018.

WHY:
To grant retrospective recognition to Central/State institutions that are conducting teacher education courses without NCTE approval. This has been done as a one-time measure to ensure that the future of students studying in these institutions is not jeopardised.

TELL ME MORE:
National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE):
- It is statutory body of Central Government set up under NCTE Act, 1993 in 1995 to formally oversee standard, procedures and processes in Indian education system.
- NCTE plans and co-ordinates the development of teacher education system throughout the country (for both central as well as state governments).
- It also ensures the maintenance of norms and standards in the teacher education system. Its headquarters are in New Delhi.
- This council functions for the central as well as state governments on all matter with regard to the Teacher Education.

NEGOTIABLE INSTRUMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

WHAT:
- The bill amends Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 to primarily address issues of dishonor of cheques and deal with unnecessary delay in disposal of such cases.
The Act defines promissory notes, bills of exchange, and cheques. It also specifies penalties for bouncing of cheques, and other violations with respect to such negotiable instruments.

**WHY:**
To reduce the number of cheque dishonour cases pending in courts

**TELL ME MORE:**
*Interim compensation:* The Bill inserts new Section 143 A in parent Act to allow court trying offence related to cheque bouncing to direct drawer (person who writes cheque) to pay interim compensation to complainant. It will not exceed 20% of cheque amount and will be paid by drawer within 60 days of trial court’s order to pay such compensation.

*Returning interim compensation:* In case drawer is acquitted during trial or by appellate court, then court will direct complainant to return interim compensation along with interest. This amount will be repaid within 60 days of court’s order.

The Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 defines promissory notes, bills of exchange and cheques. It also specifies penalties for bouncing of cheques and other violations with respect to such negotiable instruments.

**TRIBAL ATLAS OF ODISHA**

**WHAT:**
Odisha Government has unveiled first-ever ‘Tribal Atlas of Odisha’, a compilation of demographic and cultural information of the tribal population in the state.

**WHY:**
provide comprehensive data on tribal population

**TELL ME MORE:**
- It is claimed to be first-of-its-kind tribal compilation in the country. The book was published by SC and ST Research and Training Institute in collaboration with Academy of Tribal Language and Culture (ATLC).
Background: As per Census 2011, Odisha has the second highest tribal population in the country after Madhya Pradesh.

ANNUAL STUDY OF STATE GOVERNMENT FINANCES BY THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI)

WHAT:
States missed the fiscal deficit target of 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) for the third year in a row.
The fiscal deficit of states is estimated to be at 3.1% of GDP in 2017-18.

WHY:
None

TELL ME MORE:
This higher fiscal deficit at the state level in recent years has moderated the benefit of fiscal consolidation by the Central government. Higher borrowing, either by the Union or state governments, puts pressure on available financial resources and increases interest rates. India’s general government deficit is one of the highest among its peers.

While the deterioration in 2015-16 and 2016-17 was largely due to the takeover of debt of power distribution companies under the Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana (Uday) scheme, government finances in the last fiscal were affected by factors such as a shortfall in revenue, implementation of pay commission recommendations and farm loan waivers. Some of these factors will continue to affect state government finances in the current year as well. As states aim to consolidate their finances by reducing the fiscal deficit to 2.6% of GDP in the current year, fiscal slippage in recent years has also led to deterioration in the quality of expenditure, with a rise in revenue expenditure (but not Capital Expenditure).

Debt waivers dented state governments’ budget to the extent of 0.32% of GDP

The share of market borrowing in the financing of fiscal deficit is expected to top 90% in the current year, compared with about 61% in 2015-16.

This has macroeconomic implications, as it is perhaps crowding out the private sector. Large general government borrowing keeps interest rates elevated and affects private investment.
This is one reason why, despite the currency risk, large businesses tend to borrow from international markets. A sharp movement in currencies can always make debt servicing more difficult and also increase complexity in macroeconomic management.
PROPOSAL FOR PERMANENT COMMISSION FOR DENOTIFIED (DNT), SEMI-NOMADIC (SNT), AND NOMADIC TRIBES (NT)

WHAT:

The NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by “Idate” panel constituted by the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi-Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT)

What are denotified tribes?
Denotified tribes are those that were labelled as criminals through a legislation by British government and were denotified post-independence, the Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility while semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to fixed habitations once a year, mainly for occupational reasons.

TELL ME MORE:

The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence. The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data. The Renke Commission report of 2008 had arrived at a rough estimate of their population being between 10-12 crore but none of its recommendations were implemented.

URJA GANGA GAS PIPELINE PROJECT

WHAT:

The gas pipeline project aims to provide piped cooking gas to residents of Varanasi and later to millions of people in states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha

WHY:

With the Urja Ganga project, 20 lakh households will get PNG connections. The project is said to be a major step towards collective growth and development of the Eastern region of India

TELL ME MORE:

Five public sector oil and natural gas companies have signed the joint venture agreement to implement the Rs 6000 Crore gas pipeline grid project in Northeast.
The five companies are Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), ONGC, GAIL, Oil India Limited and Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL). The joint venture company will have equal equity contribution from all the partners for development of the natural gas pipeline project.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS INDEX (PAI) 2018

WHAT:

- Released by the think tank Public Affairs Centre (PAC)
- The index is released since 2016 by Bengaluru base Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not for profit think tank.

WHY:

To Gauge performance of states in various fields of governance

TELL ME MORE:

- It covers wide range of themes such as support to human development, social protection, essential infrastructure, women and children, crime, law and order, delivery of justice, transparency and accountability, environment, fiscal management and economic freedom.

Larger states-

- **Kerala tops the list** as best-governed state in the country. Kerala has topped PAI as the best-governed state for the third consecutive year.
- Kerala is followed by Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat.
- Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar ranked the lowest, indicating higher social and economic inequalities in the states.

Smaller states (with population less than two crore)-

**Himachal Pradesh** topped the list followed by Goa, Mizoram, Sikkim and Tripura. Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya were ranked at bottom of the index among small states.

**Index on children of India**-

In the index on children of India- **Kerala**, Himachal Pradesh and Mizoram topped the index.

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE (ISA)
**WHAT:**

The **Paris Declaration** established ISA as an alliance dedicated to the promotion of solar energy among its member countries.

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**.

**WHY:**

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**.

Bringing together solar resource rich countries located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

**TELL ME MORE:**

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.

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**.

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**Scientific Research Infrastructure Management and Networks (SRIMAN)**

**WHAT:**

Under the policy, the government plans to **hire out to researchers all lab equipment** that cost more than **₹10 lakh**. This would also reduce the amount of time such expensive instruments remain idle.

**WHY:**

Rent a lab policy to bring revenues to institutions

**TELL ME MORE:**

Currently, the practice of researchers bidding for time-slots to use lab instruments is typically seen more with very expensive equipment, such as radio telescopes and particle-accelerators, which cost crores of rupees.
Therefore, it was “common” to find in Indian laboratories, expensive equipment lying idle. A “large number” are not shared and are plagued by issues such as maintenance and availability of spares. This adds to the burden of research infrastructure costs.

SAFAR (SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING)

WHAT:

SAFAR
SYSTEM OF AIR QUALITY AND WEATHER FORECASTING AND RESEARCH

Research based management system where air pollution mitigation go hand in hand with nation's economic development.

Objective of SAFAR is to increase awareness among general public so that pollution mitigation measures can be taken.

Near real time data recorded at local station is transferred to server at SAFAR-Control room located at IITM, Pune for quality check by expert scientific team.

Dissemination of air quality, weather, climate and harmful UV radiation are made through press release, media conferencing, TV, radio, generating SMS alerts, E-Mail alerts etc.

www.moes.gov.in

WHY:

It is integral part of India’s first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi. It will monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction.

TELL ME MORE:
SAFAR was developed indigenously by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD). It has been introduced for greater metropolitan cities of India to provide location-specific information on air quality in near real time and its forecast 1-3 days in advance for the first time in India.

Pollutants monitored- PM1, PM2.5, PM10, Ozone, CO, NOx (NO, NO2), SO2, BC, Methane (CH4), Non-methane hydrocarbons (NMHC), VOC’s, Benzene, Mercury.

CONTRIBUTION OF GIRLS IN DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNTRY- ESSAY
WHAT:

Female literacy is one of the most powerful levers to improve a society’s health and economic well-being. Ensuring that the girl child is educated sets off a virtuous chain reaction—improved literacy leading to delayed age of marriage, fewer and heathier children and corresponding reduction in poverty.

Female literacy = Delayed marriage

Female literacy rates in Kerala and Tamil Nadu are 92% and 73.9%, respectively, while the same rates for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are about half, at 42.2% and 33.1%, respectively.

Average age at marriage for women in these states is 21.4 for Kerala and 21.2 for Tamil Nadu, above the national average of 20.7 years. The same figures for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are significantly lower at 19.4 and 19.5, respectively.

WHY:

Development & empowerment of women (50% population of a country) = more equal and sustainable development of a nation

TELL ME MORE:

Female literacy + delayed marriage = Fewer babies per woman

In many parts of rural India there is immense pressure on women to produce boys, who will supposedly be the “breadwinners”. The sex ratio at birth (girls born per 1,000 boys) has fallen and is only around 800 in some North Indian states. Multiple pregnancies with inadequate spacing adversely affect the health of mother and child.

The good news is that where there has been an improvement in literacy and delayed marriage, the fertility rate (average number of children per woman) has reduced. Kerala (1.7) and Tamil Nadu (1.6) perform better than the national average of 2.3, while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are significantly worse at 3.1 and 3.3, respectively, though these figures are improving.

Female literacy + delayed marriage + fewer babies per woman = Higher child survival

A woman who is educated, older when she gets married and plans fewer babies will proactively seek out good antenatal care. The percentage of women receiving full antenatal care is 61.2 and 45 in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, respectively. These figures are only 5.9 and 3.3 in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, respectively, though improving. Fewer babies receiving better care mean that fewer children die in their first four weeks.
The neonatal mortality rate in all states is improving, but Kerala and Tamil Nadu are way ahead of the national average (28), with figures of 6 and 15, respectively. The Kerala figure is the same as that in the US.

RANI-KI-VAV

WHAT:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon be releasing a new lavender Rs 100 currency note. The banknote highlights the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India as it prominently displays a photograph of ‘Rani-ki-vav’ (The Queen’s Stepwell), an 11th century architectural wonder.

Located in Gujarat’s Patan, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016. It is located on the banks of Saraswati River.

WHY:

It is important because it has been selected by RBI for display on Rs 100 rupee note

TELL ME MORE:

It was built by the Solanki dynasty’s queen Udayamati in the 11th century as a memorial to her deceased husband Bhimdev I.

STUDENT POLICE CADET PROGRAMME

WHAT:

The programme focuses on students of class 8 & 9

WHY:

The programme seeks to build a bridge between the Police and the larger community through school students by inculcating values and ethics in them through classes in school and outside

TELL ME MORE:

- The programme does not have any prescribed text book nor is any exam envisaged. Only one class in a month is proposed.
• The programme seeks to cover broadly two kinds of topics: Crime prevention and control and Values and ethics.
• The Programme shall be at first implemented in Government schools in both urban and rural areas.

GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX

WHAT:
The report of the Global slavery Index 2018 has been released. It is published by the Australia-based human rights group Walk Free Foundation.

WHY:
MODERN SLAVERY- It is used as an umbrella term which refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and abuse of power.

TELL ME MORE:
• North Korea is at the top of the list with 104.6 per 1,000 and Japan registering the lowest prevalence rate of 0.3 per 1,000.
• Globally, nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of modern slavery’s victims are women and girls. There are more female than male victims across all forms of modern slavery.
• The 10 countries with the largest number of absolute numbers of people in modern slavery include India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Nigeria, Iran, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russia and the Philippines. These 10 countries account for 60 percent of people living in modern slavery.
• Among 167 countries, India ranked 53

DELHI DIALOGUE

WHAT:
10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD-X) was held in New Delhi.
Theme: “Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation”.

What is Delhi Dialogue?

- It is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
- It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.

WHY:

Convergence of visions of India and ASEAN members

TELL ME MORE:

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):

- ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It was established with the signing of an ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the ministers of the founding countries.
- Its founding countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Eventually, Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, VietNam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up to ten Member States of ASEAN.

SOLAR PARK SCHEME

WHAT:

Ministry of New and renewable Energy (MNRE) has drawn a scheme to set up number of solar parks across various states in the country, each with a capacity of above 500 MW

WHY:

The Scheme proposes to provide financial support by Government of India to establish solar parks with an aim to facilitate creation of infrastructure necessary for setting up new solar power projects in terms of allocation of land, transmission and evacuation lines, access roads, availability of water and others, in a focused manner.
The state will be able to reduce its carbon footprint by avoiding emissions equivalent to the solar park’s generated capacity.

- They will also generate large direct & indirect employment opportunities in solar and allied industries like glass, metals, heavy industrial equipment etc.

**TELL ME MORE:**

These solar parks will be developed in collaboration with the State Governments. *The implementation agency would be Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)* on behalf of Government of India (GOI).

**NATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLAR AND OCEAN RESEARCH**

**WHAT:**

The government has renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) — since 1998, charged with conducting expeditions to India’s base stations to the continent — as the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

**WHY:**

Climate change was a decisive factor in India re-thinking priorities. Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century. That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes.

**TELL ME MORE:**

In 2015, set up an underground observatory, called IndARC, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

**INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS (ICWA)**

**What:**

It was established in 1943 by a group of Indian intellectuals as think tank. It was established as non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under Registration of Societies Act 1860.

It was declared institution of national importance by Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), 2001 enacted by Parliament.
The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA, while the Minister of External Affairs is its Vice-President.

**Why:**
ICWA is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs. Vice President of India is its ex-officio President. It had conducted historic international conferences like Asian Relations Conference in 1947 under leadership of Sarojini Naidu and United Nations and New World Order in 1994.

**Tell Me More:**
Dr. TCA Raghavan is the new Director General (DG) of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).

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**WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION (WCO)**

**What:**
- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- Today, the WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- As the global centre of Customs expertise, the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.

**Why:**
As a forum for dialogue and exchange of experiences between national Customs delegates, the WCO offers its Members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services provided either directly by the Secretariat, or with its participation.

Besides the vital role played by the WCO in stimulating the growth of legitimate international trade, its efforts to combat fraudulent activities are also recognized internationally.

**Tell me more:**
WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization’s Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity.
India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO) for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020. Being the Vice Chair of AP Region of WCO will enable India to take on leadership role.

**U.N. AGREES FIRST-EVER GLOBAL COMPACT FOR MIGRATION**

**What:**
The compact is the first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration in holistic and comprehensive manner, agreed upon by all the UN member states minus the United States.

It sets out 23 objectives to deal issues ranging from factors that compel people to move, legal channels for migration, combating trafficking and smuggling, harnessing the economic benefits of migration and return of the migrants.

It is not legally binding

**Why:**

United Nations for first time has finalized Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development. The agreement will be formally adopted by world leaders in Morocco in December 2018.

Tell me more:

Over 250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world’s entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP). Migrants remittance is huge contributor to their home countries’ development.

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) offers the international community the opportunity to improve workplace productivity and deliver decent work outcomes for migrant and national workers, as well as to shift current misperceptions of migration, by readjusting migration policies to effectively include all labour market aspects.

The GCM is meant to be consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration.

**BRICS REGIONAL AVIATION PARTNERSHIP**

**What:**

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
• The acronym “BRICs” was initially formulated in 2001 by economist Jim O’Neill, of Goldman Sachs, in a report on growth prospects for the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China – which together represented a significant share of the world’s production and population.

• The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

**Why:**

• The objective is that BRICS countries would benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation.

• The MoU signifies an important landmark in the civil aviation relations between India and other BRICS Member States and has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

**Tell me more:**

• The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

**Among the areas of cooperation, following areas have been identified:**

• Public Policies and best practices in regional services.

• Regional Airports.

• Airport infrastructure management and air navigation services.

• Technical cooperation between regulatory agencies.

• Environment Sustainability; including deliberation of global initiatives.

• Qualification and Training.

• Other fields as mutually determined.

**NELSON MANDELA INTERNATIONAL DAY**

**What:**

• Nelson Mandela International Day is a global event held annually to honor former South African president and anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.

• The event started after the Nelson Mandela Foundation and 46664, a concert series that benefits AIDS victims referencing Mandela’s prison number 46664, first proposed the idea of a worldwide day honoring the work and legacy of Nelson Mandela in April 2009.

• **The first Mandela Day was held on Mandela’s 91st birthday on July 18, 2009** to promote volunteering and community service, being marked worldwide with community service events, art exhibits, fundraisers and a concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

• The United Nations soon took interest and supported the idea of a global day honoring Mandela, declaring in November 2009 the marking of **July 18** as Nelson Mandela International Day.
Why:
• For his efforts promoting social justice, democracy and peace, he was awarded dozens of prestigious accolades, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Tell me more:
• Nelson Mandela was the former President of South Africa as well as an anti-apartheid activist, philanthropist and political leader.
• Mandela emerged as a key leader in the resistance to racist apartheid laws, being arrested multiple times and later being sentenced to life in prison in 1964 after being trialed for conspiring to overthrow the government.
• Amid growing pressure both internally and throughout the world, the South African government finally released Mandela after 27 years in 1990. He soon worked alongside President F.W. de Klerk to dismantle the apartheid regime in 1991 and usher in the peaceful 1994 general election in which he was elected as the country’s new president.
• During his presidency from May 1994 to June 1999, Mandela worked to promote racial reconciliation, fight poverty and expand healthcare for all South Africans. After leaving office, he remained active in many philanthropic efforts throughout the world, particularly ending the HIV/AIDS crisis and reducing poverty.

IFFCO IMANDI

What:
It is an e-commerce platform launched by IFFCO to address all needs of the farming community associated with it. For this initiative, IFFCO has partnered with Singapore-based technology firm iMandi.
IFFCO is large scale fertiliser cooperative federation in India which is registered as Multistate Cooperative Society. It is one of India’s biggest cooperative society which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.

Why:
Through this e-commerce platform, IFFCO is targeting to reach GMV (gross merchandise value) of $5 billion in the next two years by catering needs of 5.5 crore farmers already associated with it.

Tell me more:
The e-commerce platform is one stop shop for agri inputs and produce, FMCG, electronics, loans, insurance etc.
It has features like buy-sell, communication, entertainment and information/advisory content to keep farmers engaged.
Using it, farmers buy all agri inputs of IFFCO, including fertilisers, agro chemicals and seeds at discounted price and get free delivery at their doorstep.
CENTRAL ADOPTION RESOURCE AUTHORITY (CARA)

What:
Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
It functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.
CARA is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.

Why:
• CARA primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies
• The mandatory registration of CCIs and linking to Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) has been provided in Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Tell me more:
Taking cognizance of the recent cases of illegal adoptions, Ministry of Women and Child Development directs state governments to ensure registration of all child care institutions and linking to CARA within the next one month.
The Hague Convention protects children and their families against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad.

Hague Convention puts:
Safeguards in place to make sure that all intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of the child and respects their human rights.
A system in place of cooperation among countries to guarantee that these safeguards are respected, and to prevent the abduction of, sale of, or traffic in children.
For Hague adoptions, the authorities in both countries must agree to go ahead with the adoption. For non-Hague adoptions, requirements may vary from one country to another.
The Hague Convention does not allow private adoptions in the child’s home country.

RIGHT OF TEMPLE ENTRY

What:
• Women are not allowed to enter Sabarimala temple. The discrimination is based on physiological reason as women between the age group of 10-50 undergo menstruation.
• In its first preliminary observations on a rule barring women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala due to biological reasons, the Supreme Court has
said women have the constitutional right of equal access to public places of worship to pray. Any rule that stood in their way would be against this right, the apex court said.

Why:

• The age old rule that bans the entry of women in the temple exists as the local people, mostly male believe that this taboo maintains the sanctity of the god in the temple.
• However, the Supreme Court questioned it citing,
  o Can right of women to pray at the place of their choice be discriminated against solely based “on a biological factor (menstruation) exclusive to the female gender”?
  o All Hindus have the right to enter the temple and denying them the right was a kind of “untouchability” which was abolished by Article 17 of the Constitution.
  o It also goes against the spirit of Articles 14, 15 and 21.

Tell me more:

Observations made by the Court:

• In a public place of worship, a woman can enter, where a man can go. What applies to a man, applies to a woman.
• Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature. Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?
• Article 25 (1) mandates freedom of conscience and right to practice religion. “All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”. This means right to pray is a constitutional right.
• Also, the Constitution upholds the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.

Therefore, the discrimination is a violation of the rights to equality and gender justice.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS PLATFORM (WEP)

What:

• The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses. This will be done through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.
• From providing unique services such as credit evaluation of women-led startups by CRISIL and potential equity investments through an INR 10 crore fund established by DICE Districts, the WEP opens up avenues of growth and opportunity for women entrepreneurs.

Why:

• Economically empowered women are major catalysts for development. There is greater recognition of the positive relationship between increased economic activity by women
and improved social outcomes. Women often tend to reinvest their income in their children’s education, health and nutrition. This has a positive impact on the potential for economic growth.

Tell me more:

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**SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMEEN 2018**

**What:**
- SSG is a rural cleanliness survey to rank all states and districts on basis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation.
- Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) has launched Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018).

**Why:**
- The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters. The rankings will be based on taking into account set of comprehensive cleanliness parameters.
- The criteria of SSG-2018 include survey of public places, citizens’ perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G. As part of it, 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered. It will cover total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages.

Tell me more:
- The SSG 2018 will assign 65% weightage to findings and outcome and 35% to service level parameters to be obtained from Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the MDWS.
- The weights to different elements of SSG are direct observation of sanitation in public places (30%), citizen’s feedback on sanitation parameters (35%), service level progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBMG-MIS (35%).
- The SSG 2018 will be conducted by independent survey agency in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018. It will also take feedback from over 50 lakh citizens on SBM related issues through direct interaction as well as online feedback. The top performing states and districts are expected to be awarded on 2nd October 2018.
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

What:
• The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
• It works under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development.

Why:
• The Commission’s Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Tell me more:
• The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.
• NCPCR has been receiving reports that children were being harassed by school administrations and that they considered committing suicide over the fee hike issue.
• NCPCR has come up with a model fee regulatory framework for unaided private schools.
• The framework is for private unaided schools – which are 23% of the total schools in India and cater to 36% of the total population of children attending school.
• The framework is a model document that may be recommended to states where the fee regulation mechanism does not work effectively.
• According to the draft regulations, if a school violates the norms provided in the uniform fee framework, the respective government can bar the school from taking new admissions for the next academic year or impose fine equivalent to 10% of the total revenue generated by the school or society or trust in the preceding year.
• A 10% yearly cap on fee hike in private, unaided schools.
• Set up a district fee regulatory authority in states to monitor school fee increases.

DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER (DBT)

What:
• With the aim of reforming Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of information/funds and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) was started on 1st January, 2013.
• DBT by leveraging the JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobiles) trinity and the technological prowess offers to drastically improve the benefit delivery system in the
country. The JAM Trinity will enable this novel system to transfer benefits in a leakage-proof, well targeted, cashless and timely manner.

**Why:**
- Cash transfer mode reduces the need for large physical movement of food grains.
- Given the wide inter-State and intra-State variations in food consumption habits, the DBT provides “greater autonomy” to beneficiaries to choose their consumption basket, apart from enhancing dietary diversity.
- It also reduces the leakage in the PDS, as the Central government has to absorb a huge food subsidy bill under the existing system of distribution of food grains in fulfilment of provisions of the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

**Tell me more:**
- Acknowledging that problems have been experienced by three Union Territories (UTs) in the implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for food subsidy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has advised States that are planning to shift to cash transfer to be cautious while effecting the migration.
- **Problems highlighted by the RBI:**
  - Inadequacy of transfers to maintain pre-DBT consumption levels.
  - Insufficiency of last-mile delivery mechanisms.
  - A weak grievance redressal system.

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**PETCOKE**

**What:**
- Petroleum coke, the bottom-of-the-barrel leftover from refining Canadian tar sands crude and other heavy oils, is cheaper and burns hotter than coal. But it also contains more planet-warming carbon and far more heart- and lung-damaging sulphur.

**Why:**
- Petcoke is used as it is cheap and burns hotter than coal.

**Tell me more:**
- **The Petroleum Ministry has told the Supreme Court that it is in favour of a ban on the import of petroleum coke.** However, the environment ministry is yet to take the final call and will consult with all stakeholders before arriving upon a decision.
- The apex Court had, in December last year, refused to lift the ban on the use of pet coke and furnace oil in many industrial units in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana keeping in view the increasing level of pollution. It had also refused to give any relief to industrial units like the National Thermal Power Corporation Limited (NTPC) and Hindalco.
TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION) BILL 2018

What:

- It takes into consideration **aggravated forms of trafficking**. It includes trafficking for purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity etc.
- It prescribes **punishment for promoting and facilitating trafficking of person**. It includes producing, printing, issuing or distributing unissued, tampered or fake certificates, registration or stickers as proof of compliance with Government requirements, or commits fraud for procuring or facilitating acquisition of clearances and necessary documents from Government agencies.
- It deals with **confidentiality of victims and witnesses and complainants** by not disclosing their identity. It will be maintained by recording their statement through video conferencing (it will help trans-border and inter-State crimes).
- It has provision for **time bound trial and repatriation of the victims**. It will be within a period of 1 year from taking into cognizance. It provides immediate protection of rescued victims and their rehabilitation. The victims will be entitled to interim relief immediately within 30 days to address their physical, mental trauma etc. and further appropriate relief within 60 days from the date of filing of charge sheet.
- It creates dedicated **Institutional mechanisms at District, State and Central level**. They will be responsible for prevention, protection, investigation and rehabilitation work related to trafficking. The tasks of Anti-Trafficking Bureau at the national level will be performed by National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- The **punishment prescribed** under it ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and **fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh**. In order to break the organized nexus, both at national and international level, it mandates for attachment & forfeiture of property and also proceeds for crime.
- It comprehensively addresses **transnational nature of the crime**. It entrusts National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) to perform functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organizations.

Why:

- More than **300,000 children went missing in the country between 2012 and 2017**, government data shows. Around 100,000 are yet to be traced and it is feared that many of them could have been trafficked.
- In 2016, for instance, **111,569 children were reported missing**. Of these, **55,944 children were traced but only 8,132 trafficking cases were reported**. Many of these children are victims of modern slavery — forced into prostitution, labour or domestic work.
• Despite the enormity of the problem, India lacks a single comprehensive law for human trafficking. At present, trafficking is covered under half-a-dozen laws resulting in confusion and poor enforcement.

Tell me more:
• The new law will make India a leader among South Asian countries to combat trafficking. Trafficking is a global concern also affecting a number of South Asian nations. Amongst them, India is now a pioneer in formulating a comprehensive legislation. UNODC and SAARC nations are looking forward to India to take lead by enacting this law.
• Many have spoken out against the devastating effects that the new bill could have on several stakeholders which include marginalised groups such as children, the trans community and consenting sex-workers. In fact, it is claimed that the bill is essentially nothing but a veiled attempt to further criminalise sex work.
• The new bill includes a clause that makes transmission or even exposure to HIV in an instance of trafficking among one of the ‘Aggravated Offences’. This would have a grave impact on those suffering from HIV.
• Consenting sex workers will be severely hit by the bill.

COMMITTEE SET UP TO SYNERGISE NCC AND NSS

What:
• National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS).
• NSS is a Central Sector Scheme. The Scheme was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service. The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Very appropriately, the motto of NSS is “NOT ME, BUT YOU”.
• National Cadet Corps (NCC) is a youth development movement. It came into existence under the National Cadet Corps Act of 1948.
• It is a Tri-Services Organization, comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens.
• Government has decided to set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup to suggest measures to strengthen National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS)

Why:
• The Committee will deal with on issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalizing resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS. The Committee will also submit recommendations for building synergies between
these two institutions viz. NCC and NSS and further strengthen them for empowering the youth.

Tell me more:
- Briefly, the NSS volunteers work on issues of social relevance, which keep evolving in response to the needs of the community, through regular and special camping activities. Such issues include (i) literacy and education, (ii) health, family welfare and nutrition, (iii) environment conservation, (iv) social service programmes, (v) programmes for empowerment of women, (vi) programmes connected with economic development activities, (vii) rescue and relief during calamities, etc.

**FASTags**

**What:**
It is a device that uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid account linked to it. It is affixed on the windscreen of vehicle and enables to drive through toll plazas without waiting. The tag has a validity of 5 years and after purchase, it only needs to be recharged or topped up. The service is applicable to all kinds of vehicles but use of the service is currently voluntary.

**Why:**
It helps quicken passage through toll barriers and helps avoid use of cash. Long queues of vehicles waiting while cumbersome cash transactions happen at the counter can be avoided. Here, it helps reduce use of fuel and pollution due to high waiting-times at the barriers. It can also help the government identify the quantum of road use and types of vehicles passing through, aiding budgets for road widening and other infrastructure expenses. Theoretically, it could help increase accruals to the government as some operators managing toll plazas have, in the past, have been suspected of under reporting their revenues.

Tell me more:
- The Transport Ministry has proposed to dispense with fitness certificate for new vehicles and make it mandatory to have vehicle tracking system and FASTags for electronic toll collection for all commercial vehicles in its draft amendment to the Commercial Motor Vehicles Act.
RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION (SECOND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

What:
- The Bill amends the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The Act was having provision of no detention policy i.e. no child can be held back in any class until completion of elementary school (classes 1-8).
- **The Bill amends provision related to no detention policy in the parent Act** to empower central or state government to allow schools to hold back child in class 5, class 8, or in both classes. It mandates conducting, regular examination in class 5 and class 8 at end of every academic year.
- In case, child fails class 5, class 8 examinations, he will be given additional instruction and opportunity for a re-examination (within two months from the declaration of the result). If child fails again in re-examination, he may be held back in class 5, class 8, or in both classes.
- **The Bill empowers Union and State governments to decide whether to not hold back child in any class till completion of elementary education.** Further, Union or State governments will decide manner and conditions subject to which child may be held back.

Why:
- The provision of no detention had attracted criticism with several states and schools complaining that it compromised on academic rigour and learning levels and quality at schools.

Tell me more:
- Lok Sabha has passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 to abolish the ‘no detention policy’ in schools.
- The **TSR Subramanian committee** for formulation of the National Policy on Education has also suggested that ‘no detention’ policy should be discontinued after Class V. It had recommended restoration of detention provision, remedial coaching and two extra chances to each student such to move to a higher class.
- A sub-committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education also studied the issue closely and recommended a provisional detention clause at Classes V and VIII. In 2013, a parliamentary panel had also asked the ministry to ‘rethink’ on its “policy of automatic promotion up to Class VIII”.

SOCIAL MEDIA HUB

What:
- The hub proposes to monitor social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and even email) handles at the very local level in multiple languages to carry out “sentiment analysis”, track down the influence-making social media users and to categorise the conversations on social media into positive, negative and neutral sections.
It also aimed to track real-time the way social media receives news on government’s schemes and announcements and also political events.

As per the proposal, the project is meant to strengthen the social media division and recruit social media managers to be deployed in 712 districts of the country. Each district will have one social media manager who will be entrusted with the tasks of keeping a close eye on the regional and local media, collecting data of regional media and of local events, providing content for social media and supporting media units at the regional level for social media publicity.

These social media managers will also monitor local editions of newspapers, local cable channels, local audio channels (FM) and key local social media handles for important local developments. They will make a daily analysis report incorporating local sentiments to be sent to region head in the PIB as well as the media hub (command centre).

Why:

This information would help the government in formulating policies, schemes or rectify any flaws in their implementation at the ground level so that the ultimate beneficiary who is the common man is benefited and has a direct way to communicate any complaints regarding the same to the Government.

Tell me more:

The proposal to set up such a hub had turned controversial, as many called it an indirect measure to “snoop” on and influence voters.

The Supreme Court has taken a strong note of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry’s decision to set up a social media hub for monitoring online data and said that it will be like creating a surveillance state. These observations were made by the court based on a petition filed.

The petition alleged that though the stated aim of the project was to enable the government to understand the impact of social media campaigns on welfare schemes and improve the reach of such campaigns, the project had two aspects — “mass surveillance apparatus that aims at collecting and analysing huge volumes of data, and profiling people based on that” and “utilising this data to predict the mood of people online and issue responses, including those targeted at individuals or groups”.

The social media analytical tool is expected to ‘listen’ to conversations on all major digital channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Tumblr, as well as blogs and news channels.

Therefore, the petition contended that “such intrusive action on the part of the government, is not only without the authority of law, but also infringes fundamental right to freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.” The move is violative of Articles 14, 19(1)(a) and 21.
**What:**

- The project, which will connect **Lucknow with Ghazipur**, will start from Chand Sarai area near NH-56 in Lucknow and is estimated to cost around **Rs 23,000 crore**.
- It will also be connected to Varanasi through a separate link road.
- **The 354-km Purvanchal Expressway** project, the country’s longest, is on stream with the Uttar Pradesh government awarding the eight packages of the project to five companies — PNC Infratech Limited, Gayatri Projects, GR Infra, Oriental Structural Engineering and Apco Infra.
- The Project is being implemented on Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode.

**Why:**

- Once completed, the Purvanchal Expressway will provide uninterrupted connectivity to 9 districts of Lucknow, Ghazipur, Amethi, Ajamgarh, Faizabad, Barabanki, Mau, Ambedkar Nagar and Sultanpur.
- It would provide seamless access to the national capital Delhi via the 302-km long Lucknow-Agra expressway and the 165-km Agra-Greater Noida Yamuna Expressway.

**Tell me more:**

- With the Construction of Purvanchal Expressway, accelerated convenient mode of Transportation shall be available between the Eastern boundary of the State and the National Capital via State capital through other similar Expressways in the State viz. ‘Agra to Lucknow Expressway’ and ‘Yamuna Expressway’.
- Being an Access Controlled Expressway, it would provide benefits like fuel saving, time saving and Control in Pollution level, along with reduction in accidents.
- The areas covered by this Expressway would be benefited in Social & Economical way. The agriculture, commerce, tourism and other industrial development will also get a fillip.
- Industrial Training Institutes, Educational Institutes, Medical Institutes, New Townships and other various Commercial set ups shall be developed, especially near the Expressway areas, which will result into more opportunities for employment in the region. The overall social/economic development in the state will get a boost.
- The proposed Expressway will prove to be a catalyst for development of the region and State.
- The proposed Purvanchal Expressway getting connected with existing Agra-Lucknow Expressway shall become a vast Industrial Corridor connecting Eastern boundary to Western boundary of the state which will result into overall development of the state.

**ASSAM BILL AGAINST WITCH-HUNT**
What:
• President Ram Nath Kovind has Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 passed by State Assembly in August 2015.
• The Bill contains provisions for imprisonment up to seven years along with a fine up to Rs 5 lakh for identifying and calling a person witch. This will come with Section 302 of the IPC if someone is killed after branding as witch.
• The punishment for leading a person to commit suicide after intimidating, stigmatising, defaming and accusing as witch may be extended to life imprisonment and fine up to Rs 5 lakh.

Why:
• The law was prepared to rein in the rising incidents of witch-hunting cases across the State, following demand from cross-section of society.
• It was prepared in lines with spirit of universal declaration of human rights, crimes in witch hunting cases cause gross violation of basic human rights.

NATIONAL DATABASE OF ARMS LICENSES SYSTEM

What:
• All the arms licence holders, new or old, will be included in a national database of arms licenses system and they will be issued a unique identification number (UIN) as well.
• Every licensing and renewing authority will have to enter the data in the National Database of Arms Licenses system, which will generate a UIN, and with effect from April 1, 2019, any arms licence without UIN shall be considered invalid.

Why:
• It is aimed at keeping tab on authorised private gun holders, many of whom are often found involved in crimes and celebratory firing leading to loss of lives. It will also eliminate possibilities of issuing arms licence to persons whose antecedents are not bona.

Tell me more:
• Under Section 3 of the Arms Act, it is essential to obtain an arms possession licence issued by a competent licensing authority, by any person for acquisition, possession or carrying any firearms or ammunition.
• Union Home Ministry is planning to create National Database of Arms Licenses system from April 2019.

INDIA PIPS FRANCE TO BECOME WORLD’S 6TH LARGEST ECONOMY
What:
• India has now become world’s sixth-largest economy, pushing past France, according to the updated World Bank figures for 2017.
• The US remains the world’s largest economy followed by China, Japan, Germany and Britain.

Why:
• India is reclaiming its place as a growth leader after a short slowdown. Just in the last decade, India has doubled the size of its economy outpacing that of France. While India’s GDP has risen by an average 8.3% over the decade, that of France’s actually declined by 0.01%. To add more perspective, in the past 10 years India’s GDP grew by 116.3% while France witnessed a 2.8% decline in GDP. Certainly, this tells us that India is gaining economic size consistently and is emerging as one of the powerhouses.

Tell me more:
• When compared with $2.582 trillion for France, India’s GDP stood at $2.597 trillion at 2017 end. However, India has an estimated per capita income of $7,060 while France has $43,720, some six times more than that of India.
• India ranks at the 123rd position when it comes to per capita income at PPP while France ranks at the 25th position. An average Indian is far poorer than the average Frenchman if one uses this yardstick.
• The size of the economy is linked to the size of geography, its population, and workforce. India has a population of 1.34 billion while France has 67 million. If one talks about the prosperity of the people in an economy, PPP is the right metric to look at.
• Employment scenario in the country is disturbing. Almost 80% of all Indians rely on the informal sector to make a living — a large chunk of them are still dependent on farming, the contribution of which to the economy has shrunk from 50% at the time of independence to 15-16% now.
• Till recently, India was home to the largest number of poor in the world but it got rid of the dubious title. Nigeria has about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India’s 73 million.

RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL (ROFR)

What:
• Right of first refusal is a contractual right, but not obligation, to enter into a business transaction with a person or company before anyone else can.
• If the entity with the right of first refusal declines to enter into a transaction, the owner of the asset who offered the right is free to open the bidding up to other interested parties.

Why:
- Many commercial leases have these provisions. They give businesses more security if a landlord goes bankrupt or decides to sell the property they rent. Venture capital investors and other companies often use the right of first refusal to get the best price on stocks or entire companies.

- Holding an ROFR and waiting is usually more profitable than buying an asset right away. Also, **business partners in joint ventures usually grant each other this right** so they can keep a newcomer from buying a stake in their firm if one of them wants to sell their shares. Shareholder agreements in private companies often have similar terms.

- **A publisher could even ask for the right of first refusal on future books from a new author.** If no one is already holding a right of first refusal for a property or company, the first bidder can ask for it or the seller can offer it to attract buyers.

**Tell me more:**

- A proposed move by the Centre to **abolish the ROFR clause for transportation of Indian cargo by Indian-flagged vessels**, the only benefit available to Indian shipping companies is threatening the existence of the domestic shipping industry.

- **If the clause is scrapped, it could hurt the Indian shipping industry.** Indian shipping companies have a combined fleet of 1,372 ships with a total capacity of 12.35 million Gross Tonnage (GT).

- The move may also prompt Indian Shipping firms to de-register their vessels from India and flag them in tax havens of Panama and Bahama to survive and compete with foreign lines.

- Currently, **92% of India’s export import trade is carried by foreign flag ships.** And the 8% that is assured to Indian ships is likely to go if the ROFR is scrapped.

- The right of first refusal is the only incentive to the Indian flag, which suffers from many disadvantages versus foreign flags.

- De-registering of vessels from the Indian flag will be a strategic blow to Indian security as **merchant naval fleet always acts as a second line of defence** for coastal security.

### STATE BANKS (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

**What:**

- Parliament passes **State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017** to merge six subsidiary banks with State Bank of India after it was approved by Rajya Sabha.

- By repealing these two acts, **five subsidiary banks will be merged with SBI.** The bill also seeks to amend State Bank of India (SBI) Act, 1955 to remove references to subsidiary banks and powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for subsidiary banks.

**Why:**
• The purposes of merger were rationalisation of public bank resources, reduction of costs, better profitability, lower cost of funds leading to better rate of interest for public at large and improve productivity and customer service of the public service banks.

Tell me more:
• The Union Cabinet in February 2017 had approved merger of five associate banks along with Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI.
• The merger had made SBI one of 50 biggest banks of world.
• merger of State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur (SBBJ), State Bank of Mysore (SBM), State Bank of Travancore (SBT), State Bank of Patiala (SBP), State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH) and BMB.

BRAHMS MISSILE

What:
• BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia.
• The name BrahMos has been taken from two rivers – Brahmaputra and Moskva.
• The BrahMos cruise missiles have an effective strike range of around 290-300 km.

Why:
• The heavyweight missile, integrated with the long-range fighter, is seen as a force multiplier for the IAF.

Tell me more:
• BrahMos, the supersonic cruise missile was successfully test-fired recently. The test-firing conducted from a Mobile Autonomous Launcher was part of service life extension programme for Indian Army under extreme weather condition.

IIT-MADRAS UNVEILS WORLD’S FIRST REMOTELY OPERABLE LEAP MICROSCOPE

What:
• LEAP is high-performance microscope that can provide a precise atom-by-atom view of materials.
• It is claimed to be world’s first remotely operable LEAP microscope
• Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) allows the user to extract atoms from materials sequentially and are detected using a Time of Flight Mass spectrometer.
Why:
- It provides atomic-scale insights into metallic, which will influence wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.
- It will also give major thrust to research in nanotechnology, among other fields.

Tell me more:
- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras has commissioned remotely operable Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) microscope.
- It can be remotely operated through special terminal by researchers divided geographically.

BANSAGAR CANAL PROJECT

What:
- Bansagar Dam is a multipurpose river Valley Project on Son River situated in the Ganges Basin in Madhya Pradesh.
- Bansagar Dam project is a joint venture between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- The total canal network under it is 171 kms long.
- Canals under this project will bring waters from Shahdol district in Madhya Pradesh for Adwa Barrage, Meza Dam and Jirgo reservoir.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Bansagar canal project in Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

Why:
- The project aims to provide a big boost to irrigation in the region. It promises to be greatly beneficial for the farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts of Uttar Pradesh.
- As per the projections, the project will benefit 1 lakh 70 thousand farmers of Mirzapur and Allahabad districts.

Tell me more:
- Son River of central India is the second largest of the Ganges’s southern tributaries after Yamuna River.
- The Son originates near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh just east of the headwater of the Narmada River, and flows north-northwest through Madhya Pradesh state before turning sharply eastward where it encounters the southwest-northeast-Kaimur Range.
- Son is an extension of the Narmada Valley, and the Kaimur Range an extension of the Vindhya Range.