JULY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR RBI PHASE II (PART II)

Follow Our Three-Pronged Strategy Of “What”, “Why” And “Tell Me More” To Understand Everything You Need To Know In A Fun And Structured Way

BY : WWW.ANUJJINDAL.IN
STATUE OF RAMANUJA

WHAT:
- A 216-foot-tall statue of Ramanuja will be built at Hyderabad.
- It is set to become the world’s second tallest statue of a seated figure.
- Currently, the Great Buddha of Thailand is the tallest seated statue, at 302-feet.
- Presently, the second tallest is Guanyin figure on Mount Xiqiao in China’s Guangdong region, at 203 feet.

WHY:
- The statue would be unveiled as ‘Statue of Equality.’

TELL ME MORE:
- Ramanuja was a Hindu theologian, philosopher, and one of the most important exponents of the Sri Vaishnavism tradition within Hinduism.
- His philosophical foundations for devotionalism were influential to the Bhakti movement.
- He was the chief proponent of Vishishtadvaita subschool of Vedānta.
- He wrote influential texts, such as bhāsyā on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.

WORLD SANSKRIT CONFERENCE

WHAT:
- The 2018 World Sanskrit Conference (WSC) is being hosted by the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. It is 17th such conference.

WHY:
- The World Sanskrit Conference is the premier international forum for professional researchers and educators of the Sanskrit language and its literatures, and of the history, religion, and cultures of premodern South Asia.

TELL ME MORE:
- It is convened every three years under the auspices of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies.
- At the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, held in Paris in 1973, Sanskritists from various countries endorsed the formation of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies and drafted its constitution.
• The main task of the IASS was agreed to be the organizing of a World Sanskrit Conference at different venues around the world.
• The 1972 International Sanskrit Conference in New Delhi was recognised retrospectively as the First World Sanskrit Conference.
• Indologica Taurinensia is the journal of the IASS.

INDIA GETS ITS 37TH WORLD UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

WHAT:
• The decision was taken at the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO at Manama in Bahrain.
• 37th site: Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai.
• India now has 29 Cultural, 07 Natural and 01 Mixed sites.

WHY:
• A World Heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space which requires special protection.

TELL ME MORE:
• In 1982, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) announced, 18 April as the “World Heritage Day”, approved by the General Assembly of UNESCO in 1983, with the aim of enhancing awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage of humankind.
• While India stands second largest in number after China in terms of number of World Heritage properties in ASPAC (Asia and Pacific) region, it is overall sixth in the world.

GOLDEN GLOBE RACE (GGR)

WHAT:
• The Golden Globe Race is being conducted by Sir Robin Knox Johnston of UK to commemorate 50 years since the world’s first solo non-stop circumnavigation undertaken by him in 1968 onboard the Indian built boat, Suhaili.

WHY:
• The uniqueness of the race is that boat designs and technology newer than 1968 is not permitted, hence use of Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite communication, navigational aids, etc is forbidden.

TELL ME MORE:

• Commander Abhilash Tomy of the Indian Navy is the only invitee from Asia.

KALIDAS AWARD

WHAT:

• Kalidas Samman is a prestigious arts award presented annually by the government of Madhya Pradesh in India.
• Noted artist Anjolie Ela Menon has received the National Kalidas Samman for visual arts from the Madhya Pradesh government.
• The award was conferred in recognition of her insightful and sensitive portrayal of the identity and spirit of women through her meaningful paintings in a variety of media.

WHY:

• The award is named after Kālidāsa, a renowned Classical Sanskrit writer of ancient India. The Kalidas Samman was first awarded in 1980. It was initially conferred in alternate years in the fields of Classical Music, Classical Dance, Theatre and Plastic Arts. From 1986-87 onwards, the awards were presented in all four fields every year. The award is presented for outstanding achievement in one of the four categories.

KUDANKULAM POWER PLANT

WHAT:

• The Supreme Court has granted the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) an extension of time till April 30, 2022, to build an Away From Reactor (AFR) facility to store spent nuclear fuel from the Kudankulam power plant.
• Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant is situated in Koodankulam in the Tirunelveli district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
• It is the single largest nuclear power station in India.
• The reactors are pressurised water reactor of Russian design.
• KKNPP is scheduled to have six VVER-1000 reactors with an installed capacity of 6,000 MW of electricity.

**WHY:**
• The AFR facility was supposed to be built in five years, but this had not been done. In 2013, the court granted five years to NPCIL, till July 2018, to build the storage unit.

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**UNITED NATIONS MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN (UNMOGIP)**

**WHAT:**
• **UNMOGIP**, one of the oldest UN mission, was deployed in January 1949 to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
• The tasks of UNMOGIP have been to observe, to the extent possible, developments pertaining to the strict observance of the ceasefire of 17 December 1971 and to report thereon to the Secretary-General.
• Since the Simla Agreement of 1972, India has adopted a non-recognition policy towards third parties in their bilateral exchanges with Pakistan over the question regarding the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

**WHY:**
• The military authorities of Pakistan have continued to lodge alleged ceasefire violations complaints with UNMOGIP.
• The military authorities of India have lodged no complaints since January 1972 limiting the activities of the UN observers on the Indian-administered side of the Line of Control, though they continue to provide necessary security, transport and other services to UNMOGIP.

**TELL ME MORE:**
• UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Major General Jose Eladio Alcain of Uruguay as Chief Military Observer and Head of Mission for the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which monitors the ceasefire in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir.
• The group, based in Rawalpindi, is composed of 43 military observers and 23 international civilian personnel.
AGARTALA AIRPORT RENAMED

WHAT:
- Cabinet approves renaming of Agartala Airport, Tripura as Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala.

WHY:
- Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore, who ascended the throne of the erstwhile Tripura Princely State in 1923, was an enlightened and benevolent ruler. Agartala Airport was constructed in 1942 on the land donated by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.

‘KHAN PRAHARI’

WHAT:
- It is a Mobile Application ‘Khan Prahari’ developed by CMPDI, Ranchi a Subsidiary of CIL and Bhaskarcharya Institute of Space Application and Geoinformatics (BISAG).
- Khan Prahari is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc. One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system.

WHY:
- Community participation in controlling illegal coal mining

GUJARAT GOVERNMENT GRANTS RELIGIOUS MINORITY STATUS TO JEWS

WHAT:
- Gujarat Government has granted religious minority status to Jews living in the state.
- With this, Now Jews living in Gujarat will get religious minority rights envisaged in Constitution of India and various acts and rules of the state government.
- Gujarat is third state in India to grant religious minority status to Jews after West Bengal and Maharashtra.
- Constitution of India has not defined word ‘Minority’ and only refers to ‘Minorities’ but it speaks of those ‘based on religion or language’ and rights of minorities have been spelt out in Constitution in detail.
TELL ME MORE:

- Six religious communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by Union Government all over India.

WORLD POPULATION DAY

WHAT:
- July 11 was established as World Population Day in 1989 by the United Nations and since then it has been celebrated on this date every year.
- Theme for 2018: World Population day will run on the theme “Family Planning is a Human right” this year.

WHY:
- The United Nations recognises World Population day as an important event to spread information of population-related issues across the globe.
- The world population is currently pegged at around 7 billion and according to UN reports is growing at a fast pace, adding 83 million people every year.

TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME

WHAT:
- The Mission Olympic Cell has included the entire Indian hockey team in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, rewarding the players for their silver medal-winning performance at the Champions Trophy.
- It was launched by Ministry of Sports within the ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).

WHY:
- Athletes from different sports have been included in Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) individually but it is first instance that an entire team has been made beneficiary of the financial assistance scheme.
- It aims at identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for upcoming Olympic Games.
TELL ME MORE:

- It will provide selected sportspersons customized training at institutes having world class facilities and also other necessary support is being provided to the elite athletes. It will also provide a benchmark for selection of athletes on par with international standards.
- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursal for fund. They will make payments directly to beneficiary person and institution concerned on behalf of athletes.

SANGITA KALANIDHI AWARD

WHAT:
- Renowned Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam has been selected for 2018 Sangita Kalanidhi award of Music Academy for her contribution to Carnatic music.

WHY:
- Sangita Kalanidhi Award was instituted by the Music Academy, Chennai.
- It is the title awarded yearly to a Carnatic Musician.

NEWEST PHASE IN EARTH’S HISTORY NAMED AFTER MEGHALAYA ROCK

WHAT:
- Scientists have created a new phase in Earth’s geological history and named it Meghalayan, after a stalagmite from a cave in the Indian state of Meghalaya that helped define climatic events 4,200 years ago, marking the beginning of the phase that continues till today.

WHY:
- The Meghalayan Age began with a mega global drought that devastated ancient agricultural civilisations from Egypt to China. It is part of a longer period known as the Holocene Epoch, which reflects everything that has happened over the past 11,700 years.

TELL ME MORE:
• Evidence of the climatic event has been found in sediments on all seven continents, including those from Meghalaya.
• The Meghalayan is unique because it is the first interval in Earth’s geological history that coincided with a major cultural event, as agricultural societies struggled to recover from the shift in climate.
• The droughts over a 200-year period resulted in human migrations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and the Yangtze river valley.
• *International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)* has officially accepted the new phase. Besides, two other ages — *the Middle Holocene Northgrippian Age and the Early Holocene Greenlandian Age* — with beginnings defined at climatic events that happened about 8,300 years and 11,700 years ago, respectively, were also approved by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which is responsible for standardising the geologic time scale.

**REGIONAL INTEGRATED MULTI-HAZARD EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (RIMES)**

**WHAT:**
- The Odisha government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for effective management of disasters.

**WHY:**
- This will contribute to global efforts targeted to substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems as articulated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

**TELL ME MORE:**
- RIMES was established on 30 April 2009 to provide user-relevant early warning services to its Member States and others.
- It is a UN registered international and inter-governmental institution.
- It is owned and managed by its 48 members and collaborating states for building capacities in the generation and application of user-relevant early warning information.

**AMCDRR 2018**

**WHAT:**
• The **Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018 (AMCDRR 2018)** will be held in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**. It is convened by the UN Office for DRR (UNISDR) and the Government of Mongolia.

**WHY:**

• The conference will represent a key milestone for reflection on three years into the implementation of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**.

• Specifically, the conference will enable governments and stakeholders to review progress made against the commitments at the AMCDRR 2016, i.e. the New Delhi Declaration, the Asia Regional Plan, and ten stakeholder voluntary action statements.

**TELL ME MORE:**

• **Theme of the AMCDRR 2018**: ‘Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development’.

• Established in 2005, AMCDRR is a biennial conference jointly organized by different Asian countries and the UNISDR.

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**ICAT RELEASES FIRST BS-VI ENGINE CERTIFICATE**

**WHAT:**

• The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. India has been following the **European (Euro) emission norms**, though with a **time-lag of five years**.

**TELL ME MORE:**

• **International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)**, is a division of NATRiP implementation society (NATIS), under the administrative control of the Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, Government of India.

• ICAT is the first of new world-class centers established under the **National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRiP)** with the main objective of carrying out Research & Development besides extending homologation facilities in the field of Automotive Engineering.

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**UTTARAKHAND HC DECLARES ANIMAL KINGDOM A LEGAL ENTITY**

**WHAT:**
• The Uttarakhand high court has declared the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity having rights of a “living person”. The move aims to ensure “greater welfare” of animals.
• The entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

WHY:
• A legal entity means an entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law. This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.
• Invoking Article 21 of the Constitution, the court said: “Article 21 of the Constitution, while safeguarding the rights of humans, protects life and the word ‘life’ means animal world”.
• The court cited a 2014 Supreme Court judgment to say any disturbance from the “basic environment which includes all forms of life, including animals life, which are necessary for human life, fall within the meaning of Article 21 of the Constitution”.

TELL ME MORE:
• Court further said, Create an animal welfare committee in every district of the state. All citizens of Uttarakhand shall be “persons in loco parentis” (in the place of a parent). This gives them the responsibility to protect animals and ensure their welfare.

FORMALIN

WHAT:
• Fish samples in Chennai test positive for formalin. This is the first time samples of fish in Tamil Nadu have tested positive for formalin.
• Formalin is a toxic, colourless solution that is derived by dissolving formaldehyde gas in water.

WHY:
• It is a cancer-inducing chemical used to preserve fish is used as a disinfectant. It is used in the manufacture of pesticides, fertilisers, glue, paper and paint, among other products.
• Formalin causes irritation in the eyes, throat, skin and stomach. In the long run continued exposure causes harm to the kidneys, liver and can even cause cancers.

TELL ME MORE:
Formaldehyde is a highly reactive, flammable gas, which means it can become a fire hazard when exposed to flame or heat.

Formaldehyde solutions can be flammable when there are high concentrations of formaldehyde or methanol.

INDIA HAS 5TH LARGEST AREA UNDER GM CROPS

WHAT:
- As per International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA)'s latest ‘Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/ GM Crops in 2017’ report, India has the world’s fifth largest cultivated area under genetically modified (GM) crops.
- Unlike other big growers, India’s entire GM crop area is under a single crop — cotton — incorporating genes from the Bacillus thuringiensis or Bt soil bacterium coding for resistance against heliothis bollworm insect pests.

WHY:
- To increase productivity of crops and resistance against pests

TELL ME MORE:
- The country with the highest area under transgenic crops, at 75 mh, is the United States. It includes soyabean, maize (corn), cotton, alfalfa, canola, sugar-beet, potato, apples, squash and papaya.
- The report shows farmers across the world to have planted 189.8 mh under transgenic crops last year. This is as against 1.7 mh in 1996, the year when they were grown commercially for the first time. Total planted area grew particularly during the first decade of this century, while slowing down in the last five years.
- The report has estimated the highest share in the world’s total 189.8 mh GM crop area for 2017 to be of soyabean (94.1 mh), followed by maize (59.7 mh), cotton (24.1 mh), canola (10.2 mh), alfalfa (1.2 mh) and sugar-beet (0.50 mh).

GOLDEN JACKAL

WHAT:
- Destruction of mangrove cover in the Bandar Reserve Forest (Andhra Pradesh) is forcing the golden jackal (Canis aureus) out of its habitat, triggering a conflict with the local communities.

WHY:

TELL ME MORE:
• The Golden Jackal is a wolf-like canid that is native to Southeast Europe, Southwest Asia, South Asia, and regions of Southeast Asia.
• The conservation status of the animal is the ‘least concern’ and it preys on wild crab and fish.

GANGA VRIKSHAROPAN ABHIYAN

WHAT:
• The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) recently organised the ‘Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan’ in five main Ganga basin states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

WHY:
• The campaign was initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange Programme.
• It was aimed at bringing greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.

TELL ME MORE:
• As part of the campaign, schools, colleges and departments were requested to “Adopt a Plant” for turning this campaign into a people’s movement.
• The afforestation is part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) which is significant as it aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.

“SPACE FORCE” BY US

WHAT:
• U.S. President Donald Trump is planning to create a “space force” or a sixth branch of the American armed forces.

WHY:
• The purpose is to deny the Russians and the Chinese advantages in space. The main intention is to see that the U.S. establishes and maintains dominance in space.
TELL ME MORE:

AGNI-V

WHAT:
• India’s longest-range ballistic missile, Agni-V, will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal very soon. It is a strategic asset which will act as a deterrent.
• It is a surface-to-surface missile which can carry nuclear warhead weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of over 5,000 km and is the longest missile in India’s arsenal capable of reaching most parts of China.

WHY:

TELL ME MORE:

• The missile features many new indigenously-developed technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), and the most modern and accurate Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.
• At present, India has in its armoury the Agni series — Agni-1 with 700 km range, Agni-2 with 2,000 km range, Agni-3 and Agni-4 with 2,500 km to more than 3,500 km range.

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TEJAS

WHAT:
• Tejas is a single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter.
• It is the smallest and lightest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in the Indian Air Force.
• It has been designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)

PARKER SOLAR PROBE

WHAT:
• NASA puts finishing touches to 430,000mph Parker Solar Probe that will launch next month to help predict devastating solar storms.

WHY:
NASA’s historic Parker Solar Probe mission will revolutionize our understanding of the sun, where changing conditions can propagate out into the solar system, affecting Earth and other worlds. Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun’s atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions — and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.

**ISRO Conducts Pad Abort Test**

**WHAT:**
- ISRO recently conducted the first ‘pad abort’ test critical for a future human space mission. The Pad Abort Test demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad.
- It is an emergency escape measure to quickly pull the astronaut cabin along with crew out to a safe distance from launch vehicle during a launch abort.

**Kepler Space Telescope**

**WHAT:**
- Launched in 2009, the Kepler mission is specifically designed to survey our region of the Milky Way galaxy to discover hundreds of Earth-size and smaller planets in or near the habitable zone and determine the fraction of the hundreds of billions of stars in our galaxy that might have such planets.
- As of March 2018, Kepler had found 2,342 confirmed planets; add potential planets, and its find of exoworlds stands at 4,587.

**WHY:**
- Scientists at NASA are preparing to download the latest bit of data stored in its planet-hunting Kepler space telescope as the spacecraft is now running “very low” on fuel. NASA has placed the spacecraft in a no-fuel-use safe mode to save the remaining fuel so that data extraction can be completed.

**Rama (Reconstituting Asteroids Into Mechanical Automata)**
WHAT:
- NASA has announced it would give funds to Made In Space’s project- RAMA (Reconstituting Asteroids into Mechanical Automata), for finding ways to turn asteroids into giant, autonomous spacecrafts, which could fly to outposts in space.

GRACE-FO MISSION

WHAT:
- About three weeks after their launch, the twin climate-monitoring satellites- GRACE-FO satellites (short for Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On)- that NASA deployed in Earth’s orbit have switched on their powerful lasers for the first time, showing that their systems are shipshape.
- The Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-on (GRACE-FO) mission is a partnership between NASA and the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ).

WHY:
- GRACE-FO is a successor to the original GRACE mission, which began orbiting Earth on March 17, 2002. The GRACE missions measure variations in gravity over Earth’s surface, producing a new map of the gravity field every 30 days.

TELL ME MORE:
- GRACE-FO will carry on the extremely successful work of its predecessor while testing a new technology designed to dramatically improve the already remarkable precision of its measurement system.
- GRACE-FO will continue the work of tracking Earth’s water movement to monitor changes in underground water storage, the amount of water in large lakes and rivers, soil moisture, ice sheets and glaciers, and sea level caused by the addition of water to the ocean. These discoveries provide a unique view of Earth’s climate and have far-reaching benefits to society and the world’s population.

VIKAS ENGINE

WHAT:
- ISRO has successfully conducted ground test of its high thrust version of Vikas Engine.
- Vikas Engine is the workhorse liquid rocket engine powering the second stage of India’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), second stage and the four strap on
stages of Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and the twin engine core liquid stage (L110) of GSLV Mk-III.

**BANKING CODES AND STANDARDS BOARD OF INDIA (BCSBI)**

**WHAT:**
- The Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI) is an independent banking industry watchdog that protects consumers of banking services in India.

**WHY:**
- The board oversees compliance with the “Code of Bank’s Commitment to Customers”.

**TELL ME MORE:**
- It is an independent and autonomous body, registered as a separate society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on 18 February 2006.
- The Reserve Bank of India extended financial support to the Board, meeting its expenses for the first five years.
- BCSBI has in collaboration with the Indian Banks’ Association (IBA), evolved two codes – Code of Bank’s Commitment to Customers and the Code of Bank’s Commitment to Micro and Small Enterprises – which set minimum standards of banking practices for member banks to follow when they are dealing with individual customers and micro and small enterprises.

**PAYMENTS COUNCIL OF INDIA**

**WHAT:**
- The Payments Council of India was formed under the aegis of IAMAI (Internet and Mobile Association of India) in the year 2013 catering to the needs of the digital payment industry.
- The Council was formed inter-alia for the purposes of representing the various regulated non-banking payment industry players, to address and help resolve various industry level issues and barriers which require discussion and action.
- The council works with all its members to promote payments industry growth and to support our national goal of ‘Cash to Less Cash Society’ and ‘Growth of Financial Inclusion’ which is also the Vision Shared by the RBI and Government of India.
WHY:

- Payments Council of India (PCI), an apex body representing companies in payments and settlement system, has a new Chairman in Vishwas Patel.
- PCI works closely with the regulators i.e. Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Finance Ministry and any similar government, departments, bodies or Institution to make ‘India a less cash society’.

TELL ME MORE:

- The Internet and Mobile Association of India [IAMAI] is a young and vibrant association with ambitions of representing the entire gamut of digital businesses in India.
- It was established in 2004 by the leading online publishers, but in the last 10 years has come to effectively address the challenges facing the digital and online industry including mobile content and services, online publishing, mobile advertising, online advertising, ecommerce and mobile & digital payments among others.
- It is the only professional industry body representing the online and mobile VAS industry in India.
- The association is registered under the Societies Act.

RECAPITALIZATION OF RRBS

WHAT:

- Cabinet approves extension of Scheme of Recapitalization of Regional Rural Banks upto 2019-20.
- This will enable the RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9%. A strong capital structure and minimum required level of CRAR will ensure financial stability of RRBs which will enable them to play a greater role in financial inclusion and meeting the credit requirements of rural areas.

TELL ME MORE:

- Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) were set up as government-sponsored, regional based rural lending institutions under the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976. RRBs were configured as hybrid micro banking institutions, combining the local orientation and small scale lending culture of the cooperatives and the business culture of commercial banks.
- Shareholding pattern of RRBs among the three sponsoring entities is 50:35:15 among central government, sponsoring bank and state government.
The Amendment act lets them to mobilize additional capital by keeping a combined government holding of at least 51%. SG can also sell of its holding as per the new amendment.

- The Act raises the amount of authorised capital to Rs 2,000 crore and states that it cannot be reduced below Rs One crore.
- The Act raises the tenure of directors to 3 years from existing 2 years.

**CURRENCY DERIVATIVES**

**WHAT:**

- The Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX), the country’s largest commodity bourse in terms of market share, is planning to enter the currency derivatives segment.

- Currency derivatives are exchange-based futures and options contracts that allow one to hedge against currency movements.

- Simply put, one can use a currency future contract to exchange one currency for another at a future date at a price decided on the day of the purchase of the contract.

**TELL ME MORE:**

- In India, one can use such derivative contracts to hedge against currencies like dollar, euro, U.K. pound and yen. Corporates, especially those with a significant exposure to imports or exports, use these contracts to hedge against their exposure to a certain currency.

- While all such currency contracts are cash-settled in rupees, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), early this year, gave a go-ahead to start cross currency contracts as well on euro-dollar, pound-dollar and dollar-yen.

**ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB)**

**WHAT:**

- ADB is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in Philippines. It aims to facilitate economic development of countries in Asia. It also aims for an Asia and Pacific free from poverty.

- Currently, it has 67 members – of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
WHY:
- Centre and ADB signed $84 million loan for water supply in Bihar. The ADB loan is part of the $200 million multi-tranche financing facility for the Bihar Urban Development Investment Programme, and it will facilitate improvement and expansion of water supply in Bhagalpur and Gaya towns in the state.

TELL ME MORE:
- ADB raises funds through bond issues on the world’s capital markets.
- ADB also relies on its members’ contributions, retained earnings from its lending operations, and the repayment of loans.
- Japan holds the largest proportions of shares at 15.67%. The United States holds 15.56%, China holds 6.47%, India holds 6.36%, and Australia holds 5.81%.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS RANKING OF STATES

WHAT:
- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry has released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business.
- The top rankers are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana. Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.
- Delhi is placed at 23rd among 34 states and Union territories. Its rank also worsened from 18th in 2016.
- Karnataka has occupied the eighth spot, against 13th in 2016.
- The rankings are based on the performance of states in implementing the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP).

WHY:
- DIPP, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the World Bank conducted an annual reform exercise for all States and UTs under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP). The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.

TELL ME MORE:
- The reform plan includes 372 recommendations for reforms on regulatory processes, policies, practices and procedures spread across 12 reform areas including labour regulation enablers; contract enforcement; registering property;
inspection reform enablers; single window system; land availability and allotment; construction permit enablers etc.

• BRAP 2017 includes two new sectors i.e. Healthcare and Hospitality.

EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT

WHAT:

• India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD’s regions.

• India takes a shareholding in the EBRD but will not be a recipient of EBRD financing. But it may benefit indirectly through EBRD projects or if Indian companies invest alongside the bank.

About EBRD:

• The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution that supports projects in over 30 countries, from eastern Europe to central Asia and the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Investing primarily in private sector clients whose needs cannot be fully met by the market, the EBRD promotes entrepreneurship and fosters transition towards open and democratic market economies.

• The mandate of the EBRD stipulates that it must only work in countries that are committed to democratic principles. Respect for the environment is part of the strong corporate governance attached to all EBRD investments.

WHY:

• EBRD’s core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation. The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.

• This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other. Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential. It would also enable Indian nationals to get the employment opportunity in the Bank.

TELL ME MORE:

• The EBRD’s board of governors, which represents all existing shareholders, voted unanimously in favour of the country’s application in March 2018.
• Membership of EBRD would enhance India’s international profile and promote its economic interests. It will also give access to EBRD’s Countries of Operation and sector knowledge.
• India’s investment opportunities would get a boost. It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
• This would contribute to an improved investment climate in the country. The membership of EBRD would enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.

FAILURE TO EDUCATE GIRLS COULD COST WORLD $30 TRILLION A YEAR

WHAT:
• World Bank has said that Failing to let girls finish their education could cost the world as much as $30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity annually.

TELL ME MORE:
• About 132 million girls worldwide aged 6 to 17 do not attend school, while fewer than two-thirds of those in low-income nations finish primary school, and only a third finish lower secondary school.
• Women who have completed secondary education are more likely to work and earn on average nearly twice as much as those with no schooling.
• If every girl in the world finished 12 years of quality education, lifetime earnings for women could increase by $15 trillion to $30 trillion every year.

FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS BILL

WHAT:
• The Lok Sabha has passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.

WHY:
• The Lok Sabha has passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
TELL ME MORE:

**Highlights of the Bill:**

- The Bill *aims to curb the practice of evading the criminal prosecution* by the economic offenders who flee from the country to stay out of the jurisdiction of Indian courts.
- The Bill will give *the right to the government to confiscate the property* of such economic offenders in India and abroad. The Bill will also be applicable on the proxy-owned properties of the economic offenders.
- The Bill *defines the economic offenders* as those against whom a legal warrant has been issued, but they refuse to adhere to the summons of the legal authorities.
- The law *balances itself with a provision that allows the accused to file an appeal* in the High Court to state their case.
- The Bill *keeps the banks and other financial institutions at the Centre* and seeks to help them recover the amount. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 100 crores.
- The Bill *makes provisions for a Court* (‘Special Court’ under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002) to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.
- This would also help the banks and other financial institutions to *achieve higher recovery from financial defaults* committed by such fugitive economic offenders, improving the financial health of such institutions.
- It is expected that the special forum to be created for expeditious confiscation of the proceeds of crime, in India or abroad, would coerce the fugitive to return to India to submit to the jurisdiction of Courts in India to face the law in respect of scheduled offences.

**CENSUS OF INDIA**

**WHAT:**

- According to an amended rule notified by the Registrar-General of India (RGI), the data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored *electronically*, the first time since the decennial exercise was conducted in 1951 in Independent India.

**WHY:**

- Digital records will not have to be destroyed

**TELL ME MORE:**

- The decennial Census of India has been conducted 15 times, As of 2011. While it has been conducted every 10 years, beginning in 1872, the first complete census was taken in the year 1881.
- Post 1949, it has been conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
• All the census since 1951 are conducted under 1948 Census of India Act.

SYSTEMATIC VOTERS EDUCATION AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION (SVEEP)

WHAT:
• SVEEP is a programme of multi interventions through different modes and media designed to educate citizens, electors and voters about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation in the electoral processes.
• SVEEP is designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.

WHY:
• To increase participation of citizens in electoral process of states and centre.

TELL ME MORE:
• Election Commission of India has launched a dedicated portal for the ECI’s ‘Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation’ (SVEEP).
• Now it includes enhanced interaction with the citizens through social media, online contests and voters’ festivals; awareness about new initiatives of linking EPIC with AADHAAR and National Voters’ Service Portal and a regularised yearly plan of activities.
• In addition to target groups of women, youth, urban voters and the marginalized sections, the inclusion of groups like service voters, NRIs, persons with disabilities, prospective voters/ students is of primary focus.

KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES COMMISSION (KVIC)

WHAT:
• The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has launched its, in-house developed, single-umbrella e-marketing system named Khadi Institution Management and Information System (KIMIS). The system can be accessed from anywhere in the country for the sale and purchase of Khadi and Village Industries products.

WHY:
The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning. These are:
• The Social Objective – Providing employment in rural areas.
• The Economic Objective – Providing salable articles.
• The Wider Objective – Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.

TELL ME MORE:
• It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to – “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.”
• The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.

SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR STATES

WHAT:
• The demand for the special category status for Andhra Pradesh has been a constant issue ever since the inception of Telangana in 2014.

WHY:
• When the state was divided, Andhra not only lost a capital but also an important industry hub, which was in and around Hyderabad. The contribution of agriculture to state GDP is higher for Andhra than its neighbouring states.
• In fact, today it is arguably the highest in South. This is also a reflection of a lower level of industrialization and along with it a lower per capita income and again, the lowest in South.

TELL ME MORE:
• While the Constitution does not have any provision for categorisation of any state as a Special Category Status (SCS) State, but considering the fact that some areas in India are historically disadvantaged as compared to others, the Centre has assisted states with funds in the past allocated by the former Planning Commission body called the National Development Council (NDC).
• There is no provision of SCS in the Constitution; the Central government extends financial assistance to states that are at a comparative disadvantage against others. The concept of SCS emerged in 1969 when the Gadgil formula (that determined Central assistance to states) was approved.
• **The Centre says the Fourteenth Finance Commission effectively removed the concept of Special Category States after its recommendations were accepted in 2015, The “special status” is now restricted only to the north-eastern and three hilly states by the 14th Finance Commission.**
• The Centre pays 90 per cent of the funds required in a centrally-sponsored scheme to special category status category states as against 60 per cent in case of normal category states, while the remaining funds are provided by the state governments.
LEGALIZE GAMBLING

WHAT:
- The Law Commission of India has submitted a report to the government recommending “cashless” gambling in sports as a means to increase revenue and deal a blow to unlawful gambling.

WHY:
- Since it is impossible to stop illegal gambling, the only viable option left is to “regulate” gambling in sports.

TELL ME MORE:
- It will increase revenue and deal a blow to unlawful gambling. The money generated can be used for public welfare activities.
- The revenue from gambling should be taxable under laws like Income Tax Act, the Goods and Services Tax Act.
- Transactions between gamblers and operators should be linked to their Aadhaar and PAN cards so that the government could keep an eye on them.

‘SAMBAL’ SCHEME

WHAT:
- It is a power bill waiver scheme and subsidised power scheme for labourers and poor families launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government.
- Under the scheme, the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families would be provided electricity at a cost of 200 rupees per month. The objective of this scheme to make sure that all the households have power facility in the state.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA AS ‘MASTER OF ROSTER’

WHAT:
The Chief Justice of India (CJI) is the “master of the roster,” the Supreme Court has reaffirmed, declining to accept former law minister Shanti Bhushan’s suggestion that the CJI consult his collegium colleagues—the top four judges after him in seniority—in allocating cases to various benches.

TELL ME MORE:

- CJI is the master of roster in allocating cases to different benches and his power cannot be delegated to collegium comprising of CJI and four senior most judges. Although the constitution is silent on the CJI’s role as the master of the roster, his power is based on a healthy practice and “convention aimed at maintaining discipline and decorum.” He is described as “first among equals.”
- SC highlighted that the CJI owes a moral responsibility to his colleagues and the public at large while flexing his powers as ‘Master of Roster’ to allocate cases. “Absolute discretion” cannot be confined in just one man, the CJI.

GLOBAL HOUSING CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE

WHAT:

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is set to launch the Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge as part of the technology sub-mission of PMAY-U.

WHY:

- The challenge aims to provide more dynamism to the scheme.
- It will invite ideas from across the globe for alternative technologies that go beyond the brick-and-mortar building model used widely in Indian construction.
- The four parameters in the global challenge would be time, cost, quality, and sustainability. The technology will have to be better than the existing ones on all these four fronts.

TELL ME MORE:

- It will be tested in geographically different urban areas across the country with varying terrains such as say hilly, plain, or earthquake-prone.
- The winning technologies would be used to build mass houses, in a tie-up with the states, for the economically weaker sections and low-income groups under the affordable housing project vertical of PMAY-U.
The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA), in Mission mode envisions provision of Housing for All by 2022.

Under the scheme, the government is providing an interest subsidy of 6.5% on housing loans which can be availed by beneficiaries for 15 years from start of loan date.

TELECOM COMMISSION APPROVES NET NEUTRALITY

WHAT:
- Telecom Commission (a group within India’s Department of Telecom) has approved the recommendations made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on net neutrality.

WHY:
- The move aims to ensure that all web traffic is treated fairly, and that internet service providers won’t block, throttle, or favor any content or services (with a few reasonable exceptions).

TELL ME MORE:
- As per the net neutrality rules in India, mobile operators, internet providers and social-media and internet companies cannot engage in, or seek, preferential treatment as there will now be prohibition on any kind of interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting differential speeds or treatment to any content.
- Any efforts to create zero-rated platforms have now been blocked. Zero-rated platforms, which had earlier been tried (by companies such as Airtel and Facebook) but barred, offer only a certain category of services and websites as free, thus creating paid layers and stifling competition and innovation.
- Under net neutrality, online access is unrestricted and non-discriminatory. The only exceptions are new and emerging services such as autonomous driving, tele-medicine or remote-diagnostic services, which may require prioritised internet lanes and faster-than-normal speeds. A committee will look into the possible exceptions for “critical services” which will also be defined keeping in view the basic tenets of net neutrality.

SECTION 497 OF THE IPC

WHAT:
Opposing a plea which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, the Centre recently told the Supreme Court that adultery must remain a punishable offence to protect the sanctity of marriage.

Section 497 of the 158-year-old IPC says, “Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punishable as an abettor.”

WHY:
A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court which called for the Section 497 of the IPC to be scrapped, contending it does not treat men and women equally. It contended that Section 497 was “prima facie unconstitutional on the grounds that it discriminates against men and violates Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution”.

The plea also said the provision also indirectly discriminated against women by holding an erroneous presumption that they are the property of men.

TELL ME MORE:
Many countries have decriminalised adultery. IPC is the creation of England when they ruled over India for nearly 200 years and it is they who inserted Section 497 as a penal offence. What is more surprising is that England itself has decriminalised adultery and does not treat it as a criminal offence.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED TRIBES (NCST)- POLAVARAM PROJECT

WHAT:
Chairperson NCST Presents Special Report on “Indira Sagar Polavaram Project” Affected Tribal People to President of India.

The report and recommendations are under Article 338A(5)(e) of the Constitution on the measures to be taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes who are affected on account of Polavaram Irrigation Project, Andhra Pradesh.
• Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project which has been accorded national project status by the central government.

WHY:

• This dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
• The project is likely to displace over 1.88 lakh people across 222 villages and so far, 1,730 persons in six villages have been rehabilitated by the government.

TELL ME MORE:

• NCST was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003. By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely-(i) the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and (ii) the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

COMMON SERVICES CENTERS (CSCS)

WHAT:

• CSC SPV, a Special Purpose Vehicle under the Ministry of Electronics & IT, has entered into agreement with HDFC Bank to enable its three lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) managing the Common Services centres operate as Banking Correspondents of HDFC Bank.
• Common Services Centers (CSCs) are a strategic cornerstone of the Digital India programme. They are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages in India, thereby contributing to a digitally and financially inclusive society.

WHY:

• Under the agreement, VLEs of CSC will work as Banking Correspondent of HDFC Bank and support the Government initiative to promote financial inclusion and make banking services more accessible in rural areas.

MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICES (MSPS)

WHAT:

• In theory, an MSP is the minimum price set by the Government at which farmers can expect to sell their produce for the season. When market prices fall below
the announced MSPs, procurement agencies step in to procure the crop and ‘support’ the prices.

WHY:
- Giving a major boost for the farmers’ income, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all kharif crops for 2018-19 Season.

TELL ME MORE:
- The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs announces MSP for various crops at the beginning of each sowing season based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). The CACP takes into account demand and supply, the cost of production and price trends in the market among other things when fixing MSPs.

GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN

WHAT:
- Prime Minister has announced that on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti, a “Gram Swaraj Abhiyan” would be organised starting from 14th April to 05th May, 2018.
- The campaign, undertaken under the name of “Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas”, is to promote social harmony, spread awareness about pro-poor initiatives of government, reach out to poor households to enroll them as also to obtain their feedback on various welfare programmes.

WHY:

TELL ME MORE:
- Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan: In continuation of “Gram Swaraj Abhiyan”, started from 14th April on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti, Govt. of India has extended it in 117 Aspirational Districts identified by the NITI Aayog.

MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SANITATION CONVENTION

WHAT:
- In a bid to eliminate the need for manual scavenging, the Centre has launched a challenge asking innovators, NGOs, research institutions, companies and cities to propose technology and business solutions to clean urban sewers and septic tanks without human entry. The challenge will be part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention to be held on October 18 this year.
WHY:

- The objectives are to identify technological and business process innovations, endorse viable business models suitable for cities of different sizes and geographies, and pilot test shortlisted technologies and solutions in select project cities and bridge the gap between innovators or manufacturers and beneficiaries such as urban local bodies and citizens.

TELL ME MORE:

- It will be launched at the 150th anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be a first-of-its-kind International Sanitation Convention.
- Ministers from over 70 countries will be invited and taken on a ‘Gandhi Trail’ in Gujarat.
- The government will use the occasion to “showcase its performance” and “success story” in the Swachh Bharat programme in the past four years, which was launched on October 2, 2014, and have a face-to-face dialogue with the world leaders to share their experiences on sanitation programmes.

NIPAH VIRUS

WHAT:

- According to WHO, the Nipah virus infection is a newly emerging zoonosis, that is, a disease transmitted from animals to humans. The virus belongs to a new genus termed Henipavirus (subfamily Paramyxovirinae).
- The natural host of the virus are fruit bats belonging to the family Pteropodidae. In 2004, humans were affected after eating the date palm contaminated by infected fruit bats. Pigs can also act as intermediate hosts.
- It was first identified in 1998 at Kampung Sungai Nipah village, Malaysia. The virus is named after this village.
- The symptoms of Nipah are similar to that of influenza: fever, muscle pain, and respiratory problems. Inflammation of the brain can also cause disorientation.
- According to WHO, ribavarin can reduce the symptoms of nausea, vomiting, and convulsions associated with the disease.
- Currently, there are no specific vaccines for both humans and animals.
- Kozhikode and Malappuram districts have been declared free of Nipah virus by the Kerala government. No fresh cases have been reported after June 1 in these districts.

NATIONAL HEALTH STACK
WHAT:

- NITI Aayog has proposed **creation of National Health Stack (NHS)**, a centralized health record for all citizens of the country, in order to streamline the health information and facilitate effective management of the same.

WHY:

- India today is witnessing significant trends in health: increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases for instance, as well as marked demographic shifts. Climbing out-of-pocket costs is becoming difficult for most households.

TELL ME MORE:

- The proposed NHS is an approach to address the challenge and seeks to employ latest technology including Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning Artificial Intelligence, a state of the art Policy Mark-up Language and create a unified health identity of citizens – as they navigate across services across levels of care, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and also across Public and Private.

EAT RIGHT MOVEMENT

WHAT:

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has unveiled ‘The Eat Right Movement’ with a view to get industry on board for implementation of draft food labelling regulation.

- The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.

- It is built on two broad pillars of ‘Eat Healthy’ and ‘Eat Safe’.

WHY:

- It also aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.

TELL ME MORE:

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006** which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.

- It was created for laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption.

- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India** is the **Administrative Ministry** for the implementation of FSSAI.
ASIA PACIFIC TRADE AGREEMENT

WHAT:

- The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), previously named the Bangkok Agreement, was signed in 1975 as an initiative of ESCAP.
- The six member countries are Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, Korea and Sri Lanka.
- Being the oldest preferential trade agreement among developing countries in Asia-Pacific, APTA aims to promote economic development through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provides for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation.
- APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India.

MATTALA AIRPORT

WHAT:

- India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country’s loss-making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.
- It is dubbed as the “world’s emptiest airport” due to a lack of flights.
- The airport infrastructure was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans. The airport was officially opened in March 2013.
- The only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.

UNSC RESOLUTION 2427

WHAT:

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427. The resolution has won unanimous approval of the 15 members of the council.
- The resolution is aimed at further crystalizing the protection of children in armed conflicts, including by combating their recruitment by non-State armed groups and treating formerly recruited children primarily as victims.
- It strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abductions.
GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX

WHAT:
- Global Innovation Index 2018 has placed India at the 57th position among 130 countries. GII is jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.

WHY:
- This year, India has moved up 3 places as compared to 60th rank in GII 2017 and emerged as top-ranked economy in Central and South Asia.

TELL ME MORE:
- The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII, and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe.
- This year’s edition, is dedicated to the theme of Energizing the World with Innovation. It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and identifies possible breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.
- It also looks at how breakthrough innovation occurs at the grassroots level and describes how small-scale renewable systems are on the rise.
- Switzerland is at the top. Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year.

HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AGENCY (HEFA)

WHAT:
- The cabinet has approved the proposal for expanding the scope of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by enhancing its capital base to Rs. 10,000 crore and tasking it to mobilise Rs. 1,00,000 crore for Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022.

WHY:
- This would enable addressing the needs of all educational institutions with differing financial capacity in an inclusive manner.

TELL ME MORE:
- This would enable HEFA to leverage additional resources from the market to supplement equity, to be deployed to fund the requirements of institutions.
Under RISE, all centrally-funded institutes (CFIs), including central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and IISERs, can borrow from a Rs 1,00,000 crore corpus over the next four years to expand and build new infrastructure. The initiative aims to step up investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions, including health institutions.

The Union Cabinet had approved HEFA in September 2016 as a Special Purpose Vehicle with a public sector bank (Canara Bank). It would be jointly funded by the promoter/bank and the MHRD with an authorised capital of ₹2,000 crore. The government equity would be ₹1,000 crore.

The agency will also mobilise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from public sector units (PSUs) and corporates.

**INSTITUTIONS OF EMINENCE**

**WHAT:**
- Government declares 6 educational ‘Institutions of Eminence’; 3 Institutions from Public Sector and 3 from Private Sector shortlisted.
- **The institutions selected are:**
  - **Public Sector:** (i) Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka; (ii) Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra; and (iii) Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.
  - **Private Sector:** (i) Jio Institute (Reliance Foundation), Pune under Green Field Category; (ii) Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani, Rajasthan; and (iii) Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka.

**WHY:**
- Each ‘Public Institution’ selected as ‘Institution of Eminence’ will get financial assistance up to Rs. 1000 Crore over a period of five years.
- These Institutions shall be provided with greater autonomy to admit foreign students up to 30% of admitted students; to recruit foreign faculty up to 25% of faculty strength; to offer online courses up to 20% of its programmes.
- They will also be allowed to enter into academic collaboration with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions without permission of UGC; free to fix and charge fees from foreign students without restriction; complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus, among others.
- At the same time, they will get more opportunity to scale up their operations with more skills and quality improvement so that they become World Class Institutions in the field of education.

**TELL ME MORE:**
- **N Gopalaswami committee** was constituted to select 20 institutes of higher education in India that will be developed into “world-class” institutes.
SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME

WHAT:
- Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced ‘Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat’ an initiative to promote reading culture among students. The initiative has been launched under ‘Samagra Shiksha’.
- ‘Samagra Shiksha’ is an overarching programme for school education extending from Primary till class 12. The programme was introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19 with the aim to treat school education holistically without segmentation of primary and secondary education.
- This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

WHY:
- It envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

TELL ME MORE:

The major interventions, across all levels of school education, under the scheme are:
- Universal Access including Infrastructure Development and Retention.
- Gender and Equity, Inclusive Education.
- Financial support for Teacher Salary.
- Digital initiatives.
- Entitlements under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 including uniforms, textbooks etc.
- Pre-school, Vocational and Sports and Physical Education.
- Strengthening of Teacher Education and Training.
- Monitoring and Programme Management.

Q. Statue of Ramanuja is to be built in India to celebrate philosophical studies by him. Consider the following statements about the Statue:

1. It is proposed to be built in Hyderabad
2. It will be world’s second tallest statue of seated figure
3. Also called as “statue of liberty and equality”
4. Statue of Great Buddha of Japan is presently the tallest statue of seated figure
Options- find out the correct ones:

[a] 1, 2 and 3 are correct
[b] 1, 2, 3 and 4 are correct
[c] 1 and 3 are correct
[d] 1 and 2 are correct
[e] 2 and 4 are correct

Q. Consider the following statements about UNESCO World Heritage Sites and find out the incorrect one/s:
1. A world heritage site is a natural or man-made or a structure that is of international importance
2. 18th April is celebrated as world heritage day
3. UNESCO stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Options:
[a] 1 and 2 are incorrect
[b] only 1 is incorrect
[c] only 2 is incorrect
[d] all are correct

Q. Kalidas samman is annually presented by which state government?

[a] Madhya Pradesh
[b] Maharashtra
[c] Gujarat
[d] Uttar Pradesh
[e] Bihar

Q. Agartala Airport has been renamed as?

[a] Bhim Rao Ambedkar Airport
[b] Shaheed Bhagat Singh airport
[c] Shaheed Badluram airport
[d] Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport

Q. The following communities have been notified as minorities by the central government, except?
[a] Muslims
[b] Jews
[c] Parsis
[d] Jains
[e] sikhs

Q. TOPS scheme is related with?
Q. The newest phase in earth’s history has been named after which rock?

* [a] Meghalaya rock
[b] Northgrippian rock
[c] Greenlandian rock
[d] Dimapur rock
[e] Brahmaputra rock

Q. RIMES is related with?
* [a] Disaster Management
[b] Regional connectivity
[c] Free trade area
[d] Coastal Infrastructure

Q. High court of which state has declared animal kingdom to be a natural entity?
[a] Himachal Pradesh
[b] Sikkim
[c] Uttarakhand
[d] Jammu and Kashmir
[e] Meghalaya

Q. The sixth arm of armed forces or “space force” is being created by which country?
[a] China
[b] Russia
[c] France
[d] Germany
[e] USA
[f] India