MONTHLY GK DIGEST: AUGUST 2018

RAJASTHAN FIRST STATE TO IMPLEMENT BIOFUEL POLICY

Government wants to reduce the country's oil import dependence.

- **Rajasthan became first state in the country to implement National Policy on Biofuels unveiled by Union Government in May 2018**.
- Its implementation was approved by the high-power Biofuel Authority.

DETAILS:

- **Under this policy, State Government will lay emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds and establish Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in fields of alternative fuels and energy resources**.
- **Biodiesel plant of capacity of eight tonnes per day already has been installed in the State with financial assistance of Indian Railways**.
- State government will give emphasis to promote marketing of biofuels and generate awareness about them.
- **State Rural Livelihood Development Council will also encourage women's self help groups (SHGs) to explore the scope for additional income through supply of biodiesel**.

ABOUT NATIONAL POLICY ON BIOFUELS- 2018:

- **The policy categorises of biofuels into first generation (1G), second generation (2G) and third generation (3G) to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category**.
- **It seeks to help farmers dispose of their surplus stock in an economic manner and reduce the country's oil import dependence**.

- **It has expanded the scope of raw materials for ethanol production** by allowing use of sugarcane juice, sugar containing materials like sweet sorghum, sugar beet, starch containing materials like corn, cassava, damaged food grains like broken rice, wheat, rotten potatoes which are unfit for human consumption, for ethanol production.
- **It also encourages setting up of supply chain mechanisms for biodiesel production from non-edible oilseeds, used cooking oil, short gestation crops**.

CORE INDUSTRIES GROWTH QUICKENS TO 6.7% IN JUNE 2018

- **As per the data released by Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, index of eight core industries expanded to 7-month high of 6.7% in June 2018**.
- **This was due to better performance by cement, refinery and coal sectors of the index**.
- The previous high was witnessed in November 2017 at 6.9%.
- The growth rate in May 2018 was 4.3%.

DETAILS:

- **The combined index of eight core industries stands at 129.8 in June 2018 and was 6.7% higher as compared to the index of June 2017**.
- **Its cumulative growth during April to June 2018-19 was 5.2%**.

THIS GROWTH IN THE CORE INDUSTRY IS CONSIDERED BY TWO FACTORS:

- The government's investment in the infrastructure projects is going up, driving industries such as steel.
- Petroleum products are mainly exported and the drive to increase exports will be pushing this up.

WHAT ARE CORE INDUSTRIES?

- Core industries are the main or key industries of the economy.
- In most countries, these particular industries are the backbone of all other industries.
- In India, there are eight core sectors comprising of **coal, crude oil, natural gas, petroleum refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement** and **electricity**.
- The eight infrastructure sectors, constitute 40.27% of the total index of industrial production (IIP).

REVISED WEIGHTAGE IN CORE SECTORS:

- Petroleum Refinery production (**28.04%**), Electricity generation (**19.85%**), Steel production (**17.92%**), Coal production (**10.33%**), Crude Oil production (**8.98%**), Natural Gas production (**6.88%**), Cement production (**5.37%**), Fertilizers production (**2.63%**).

COMMON SERVICE CENTERS TO HELP IN IMPLEMENTATION OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT

- **Common Service Center (CSC) and National Health Accounts (NHA) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme** through 3 lakh Common Service Centers (CSCs) across the country.
- Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) aims cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to Rs. 5 lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

HOW CSC WILL HELP?

- **Beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat can visit nearby CSCs across India to get the benefit of this scheme**.
- **CSCs will help the beneficiary to identify his name in the Health Ministry database and his entitlement for the scheme**.
- **It will also help the beneficiary to scan and upload his KYC documents for verification of his identity and claim his entitlement**.
- **It will also provide the beneficiary, facility to print his Ayushman Scheme card which will be his base source claim**.
- **This card can be used at hospitals to claim the benefits under Ayushman Bharat Abhiyan**.
- **CSCs will also provide requisite information about the scheme and promote it among citizens so that maximum number of beneficiaries can avail the benefit**.

ABOUT COMMON SERVICE CENTRES (CSC):

- **CSC is an initiative of Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)**.
- **It is a strategic cornerstone of the Digital India programme**.
- **It is a pan-India network** catering to regional, geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, thus enabling Government's mandate of a socially, financially and digitally inclusive society.
- **There are as many as 2.91 lakh CSCs operating in the country today**.
- **They are mostly ICT enabled front end service delivery points at village level for delivery of government and private services**.
- **These CSCs serve as access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, financial, healthcare, education and agriculture services, apart from being the host of B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country**.
- They also serve as change agents by promoting rural entrepreneurship and building rural capacities and livelihoods.

GAOFEN 11: CHINA LAUNCHES HIGH-RESOLUTION EARTH OBSERVATION SATELLITE

- **China successfully launched Gaofen-11, an optical remote sensing satellite, as part of the country's high-resolution Earth observation project**.

- It was launched on board of Long March 4B rocket from Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in northern Shanxi Province.
- It was overall the 282nd flight mission by Long March carrier rocket.

ABOUT THE GAOFEN-11 SATELLITE:

- **Gaofen-11 is a sub-meter resolution optical satellite**.
- **It was developed by China Academy of Space Technology (CAST)**.
- **It is the sixth in Gaofen series launched this year**, following triplet of Gaofen-1 satellites and larger Gaofen-5 and Gaofen-6, all placed in Sun-synchronous orbits.
- **It will become part of China High-resolution Earth Observation System (CHEOS)** initiated in 2010 to provide all-weather, all-day coverage by 2020 with optical and synthetic aperture radar satellites, and could also include airborne and near-space systems such as stratospheric balloons.
- **Gaofen-11 satellite will be used for land survey, urban planning, road network design, agriculture, and disaster relief**.
- **Its data will also be used for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- China had unveiled BRI in 2013 with an aim to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.

ABOUT THE GAOFEN PROJECT:

- **Gaofen means "high resolution" in Chinese**.
- **It is an ambitious space project of China that aims to launch seven high-definition observation satellites before 2020**.
- **Gaofen-1 was the first satellite of the project series which was launched in April 2013**.
- **Presently, Gaofen-1 and Gaofen-2 satellites, part of Gaofen project series, are orbiting around the earth at low orbits around 600-700km**.
- Since the launch of Gaofen project, China has gained an increasingly clearer view of the planet.

NBRC RESEARCHERS DECIPHER HOW ZIKA VIRUS CAUSES MICROCEPHALY

- **Scientists from National Brain Research Centre (NBRC) have successfully identified the molecular and cellular mechanisms by which Zika virus causes microcephaly**.
- Babies born with microcephaly have significantly smaller head size compared with normal babies.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

- **The researchers found the envelop protein (E protein) of Zika virus**, which is responsible for entry of virus into the brain stem cells and responsible for arresting proliferation of human foetal neural stem cells and also killing cells that were becoming neuron-like.
- **The combined effect reduces the pool of foetal brain cells leading to smaller size of the brain**.
- **The study shows that neutralising E protein of Zika virus can help prevent or reduce its harmful effects in developing foetus**.

- **The E protein can be seen as a likely therapeutic target**.
- **The E protein in Zika virus is mutated and very different from the envelop protein of other flavi viruses such as dengue, yellow fever, west nilevirus, and Japanese encephalitis**.
- **It was found to be more potent in arresting the proliferation of brain stem cells**.
- The other three envelop proteins were acting in less significant manner.

ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS:

- **Zika virus is a vector borne disease transmitted primarily by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, which also transmits dengue**.
- **It can also spread through blood transfusion and sexual contact**.
- **It is capable of causing serious birth defects i.e. neurological disorders and foetal deformation known as Microcephaly in which infants are born with abnormally smaller heads**.
- Besides, a possible link between the virus and Guillain-Barré syndrome (a condition in which the body's immune system attacks part of the nervous system) is also suspected.
- **There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available to treat Zika**.
- **The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites and clearing stagnant water where mosquitoes breed**.

CABINET APPROVES EXTENSION OF CONCESSIONAL FINANCING SCHEME

Government wants to continue facilitating India's strategic interests abroad

- **Union Cabinet has approved the first extension of Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS) for another five years from 2018 to 2023 to support Indian Entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad**.
- The scheme also has been liberalized, allowing any Indian company, irrespective of ownership eligible to benefit from it.

DETAILS:

- **Under CFS, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) selects specific projects keeping in view the strategic interest of India and sends the same to Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)**.
- The strategic importance of a project to deserve financing is decided on case to case basis, by Committee chaired by Secretary, DEA and with members from Department of Expenditure and Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, MEA, Department of Industrial Promotion and Policy (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Deputy National Security Adviser (Dy NSA) is also a member of this Committee**.
- Once a project is approved by the Committee, **DEA issues a formal letter to Export-Import (EXIM) Bank conveying approval for financing of the project**.
- **The Scheme is presently being operated through EXIM Bank, which raises resources from the market to provide concessional finance**.
- **Union Government provides counter guarantee and interest equalization support of 2% to EXIM Bank to offer concessional finance to any foreign Government or its owned or controlled entity, if**

any Indian entity, succeeds in getting contract for execution of the project.

- **EXIM Bank can extend credit at rate not exceeding LIBOR (avg. of six months) + 100 bps**.
- **The repayment of loan is guaranteed by the foreign government**.

WHAT WAS THE SITUATION PRIOR TO CFS?

- **Prior to the introduction of CFS, Indian entities were not able to bid for large projects abroad since the cost of financing was very high for them and bidders from other countries such as China, Japan, Europe and US were able to get credit at superior terms (i.e. lower interest rate and longer tenures giving advantage to bidders from those countries)**.
- **Union Government is executing CFS since 2015-16 to support Indian entities bidding for strategically important infrastructure projects abroad**.
- **CFS has enabled India to generate substantial backward linkage induced jobs, demand for material and machinery in India and also created a lot of goodwill for India**.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES LOGO, TAGLINE FOR GI

- **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Ministry of Commerce and Industry has unveiled the tricolour logo for geographical indication (GI) certified products**.
- The logo has a tagline **"Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India"** printed below it.

DETAILS:

- In the open contest, **winning logo was designed by Adri Chatterjee and winning tagline was coined by Akancha Tripathi**.
- **The purpose of logo and tagline for GI selected is to increase awareness about intellectual property rights (IPRs)** and also the importance of GI products in the country.
- From now on, GI-registered goods will sport the logo and tagline to make them more attractive.

ABOUT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) TAG:

- **GI tag is a name or a sign used on certain products which correspond to specific geographical location or origin**.
- **It is used for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods** having special quality and established reputation.
- The goods and products having the tag are recognised for their origin, quality and reputation and **gives it the required edge in global market**.
- It also ensures that none can use their name, **giving them exclusivity**.
- **The registration of GI is valid for 10 years** after which it needs to be renewed.
- **Violation of GI tags is a punishable offence under law**.
- The purpose of GI tag enables stakeholders to authenticate their production while earning a premium and derive an improved livelihood.

- **GI is covered as an element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property**.
- **At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.
- In India, **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999** governs it.
- **This Act is administered by Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks**, who is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications and is based in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- So far, **total of 320 products** have been conferred GI status in India.
- **Darjeeling Tea, Tirupathi Laddu, Kangra Paintings, Nagpur Orange and Kashmir Pashmina are among registered GIs in India**.
- **Karnataka tops with 38 GI products, followed by Maharashtra which has 32 GI products and Tamil Nadu comes third with 25 GI products**.

LOK SABHA PASSES BILL FOR SPEEDY DISPOSAL OF COMMERCIAL DISPUTES

- **Lok Sabha has passed Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2018**.
- It replaces the ordinance promulgated by President in May 2018 and amends Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015.
- The Act enables the creation of commercial divisions in High Courts and commercial courts at district level to adjudicate commercial disputes such as disputes related to contracts for provision of goods and services and construction contracts.
- **The amendment is aimed at improving ease of doing business in India**.

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE BILL:

REDUCTION IN PECUNIARY LIMITS:

- **Under the parent Act, commercial courts and commercial divisions in High courts can decide commercial disputes with value of at least Rs. 1 crore**.
- **The Bill reduces this limit to Rs. 3 lakh**.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CERTAIN COMMERCIAL COURTS:

- **The parent Act, empowers the state governments to constitute commercial courts at district judge level, after consulting the concerned High Court**.
- **It had barred such commercial courts to be constituted in cases where High Court has original jurisdiction to hear commercial cases**.
- **The Bill removes this bar and allows states to constitute commercial courts where High Courts have original jurisdiction**.

COMMERCIAL APPELLATE COURTS:

- **The Bills allows state governments to notify commercial appellate courts at the district judge level in areas where High Courts do not have ordinary original civil jurisdiction**.
- **These Appellate Courts will hear appeals against the order of commercial court below the level of district judge**.

MEDIATION:

- **It introduces pre-institution mediation process in cases where no urgent, interim relief is contemplated**.
- **This aims to provide for the opportunity to parties to resolve commercial disputes outside ambit of courts through authorities**.
- This will also help in reinforcing investor's confidence in the resolution of commercial disputes.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES SEVA BHOJ YOJNA

Government shows its philanthropic side!

- **Union Ministry of Culture launched Seva Bhoj Yojna, a new scheme to provide financial assistance on purchase of specific food items by Charitable Religious Institutions (CRIs) for free distribution among people**.
- Under this scheme, the Centre's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and the Interstate GST charged on raw food materials purchased by the religious institutions will be refunded.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SEVA BHOJ YOJANA:

- The scheme aims to reimburse the Central Government's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) to lessen the financial burden of religious and charitable institutions providing food, prasad, langar (Community Kitchen), Bhandara- free of cost without any discrimination to public and devotee.

BENEFICIARIES:

- Religious and charitable institutions such as temples, gurudwara, mosque, church, dharmik ashram, dargah, matth, monasteries etc. having existence for at least five years and serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month.
- Grant will be given to such institutions if they are covered under Section 10 (23BBA) of Income Tax (IT) Act or are institutions registered as Society under Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) or as Public Trust under any law for time being in force of statuary religious bodies or institutions registered under Section 12AA of IT Act.

SELECTION:

- **All eligible religious and charitable institutions first must be registered with the Darpan portal of**

NITI Aayog and get a Unique ID generated by it.

- **Thereafter, they shall enroll themselves in CSMS Portal on the Ministry of Culture's website in the prescribed format**.
- The applications will be examined by the committee constituted for this purpose.
- **On basis of recommendation of the committee, competent authority in Ministry of Culture will register these institutions for reimbursing claim of CGST and Central Government's share of IGST paid on mentioned specific items**.

CABINET APPROVES POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR EXPLOITATION OF UNCONVENTIONAL HYDROCARBONS

- **Union Cabinet has approved a policy framework to permit exploration and exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbons such as Shale oil/gas, Coal Bed Methane (CBM) etc**.
- It will be carried out under the existing Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs), CBM contracts and Nomination fields to encourage existing contractors in licensed or leased area to unlock full potential of unconventional hydrocarbons in existing acreages.

WHY IS THIS POLICY IMPORTANT?

- **With this policy, there will be a complete shift from One hydrocarbon Resource Type to Uniform Licensing Policy which is presently applicable in Discovered Small Field (DSF) Policy and Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP)**.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS POLICY FRAMEWORK?

- **It will enable the realization of prospective hydrocarbon reserves in existing contract areas which otherwise would have remain unexplored and unexploited**.
- **It will give impetus to new investment in exploration and production (E&P) activities and chances of finding new hydrocarbon discoveries and increasing domestic production**.
- **It will also spur exploration and exploitation of additional hydrocarbon resources giving impetus to new investment, economic activities, additional employment generation and thus benefitting various sections of society**.
- **This will also lead to induction of new, innovative and cutting-edge technology and forging new technological collaboration** to exploit unconventional hydrocarbons.

WHERE DO WE STAND CURRENTLY?

- **Under existing contractual regime of PSCs, existing contractors are not allowed to explore and exploit CBM or other unconventional hydrocarbons in already allotted licensed or leased area**.
- **Similarly, CBM contractors are not allowed to exploit any other hydrocarbon except CBM**.
- Acreages held at present by various contractors in PSCs and CBM blocks and National Oil Companies (NOCs) in nomination regime constitute a significant part of India's sedimentary basin.

FICCI LAUNCHES WOW MOBILE APP TO CREATE AWARENESS ON PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE

- **FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), the women's wing of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has launched WOW (Wellness of Women) mobile application aimed at creating awareness on preventive healthcare for women across the country**.

ABOUT THE WOW APP:

- **WOW app is backed by Chennai-based Apollo Hospitals Group that offers access to renowned doctors and provides health tips**.
- **It provides easy to use platform that allows users to talk to doctors through video conferencing or connect with them via voice or email**.
- **It also allows users to upload clinical information such as reports, images and scans so that experts can provide opinion within stipulated time**.
- **The app gives emphasis on generating awareness and preventive measures along with providing international care treatment**.

ABOUT FEDERATION OF INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (FICCI):

- **FICCI is the largest and oldest apex business organization in India**.
- **It is a non-governmental and non-profit organization**.
- **It was established in 1927 and is headquartered in New Delhi**.
- Its mandate is to **enhance efficiency and global competitiveness of Indian industry**.
- It also seeks to **expand business opportunities both in domestic and foreign markets** through range of specialized services and global linkages.

SUPERSONIC INTERCEPTOR MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED

Another milestone for DRDO

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful test of the supersonic endo-atmospheric interceptor missile** developed under the Ballistic Missile Interceptor Advanced Air Defence (AAD) System **from Abdul Kalam Island (earlier known as Wheeler Island) Odisha**.

DETAILS OF THE TEST:

- **The interceptor missile was launched against multiple simulated targets of 1,500 km class ballistic missile**.
- **The mission objectives of the test were successfully met**.
- One of its target was selected on real time and the weapon system radars tracked the target and

locked the missile on to it and intercepted it in mid-air on sea surface with high degree of accuracy.

- The complete test including engagement and interception was tracked by a number of electro-optical tracking systems, radars and telemetry stations.
- This test validated some improved features incorporated in the interceptor missile while its major health parameters including its 'kill' effect already have been validated in earlier tests.

ABOUT THE INTERCEPTOR MISSILE:

- **The endo-atmospheric interceptor missile is yet to get a formal name**.
- It has been developed as part of indegenous efforts to have multi-layer ballistic missile defence system, capable of destroying incoming hostile ballistic missiles.
- **It is 7.5-metre long and is capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 15 to 25 km**.
- It is a single stage solid rocket propelled guided missile.
- It is equipped with a navigation system, a hi-tech computer and an electro-mechanical activator.
- It has its own mobile launcher, secure data link for interception, independent tracking and homing capabilities and sophisticated radars.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- DRDO has spearheaded India's double-layered interceptor ballistic missile defence (BMD) programme.
- **It consists of two interceptor missiles, Advanced Area Defence (AAD) missile for endo-atmosphere or lower altitudes and Prithvi Defence Vehicle for exo-atmospheric ranges**.
- **DRDO expects the deployment of this indegenous BMD shield by 2022**.
- **It will make India the fourth country in the world after US, Russia and Israel to successfully build an effective anti-ballistic missile system**.

MOVE HACK: NITI AAYOG LAUNCHES GLOBAL MOBILITY HACKATHON TO CROWDSOURCE FUTURE MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

- **NITI Aayog has launched the global mobility hackathon "Move Hack" to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India**.
- It is envisaged as one of largest hackathons globally.
- It is the first platform in the world that has enmeshed public transport, private transport, road safety, multimodal connectivity and new age transport technologies such as zero emission vehicles and intra city aerial transport spearheaded by the Government.

ABOUT MOVE HACK:

- MoveHack aims to bring about innovative, dynamic and scalable solutions to the problems pertaining to mobility.
- **It is organized in partnership with the Government of Singapore and is powered by Hacker Earth**.
- **PwC is the knowledge partner and NASSCOM is the strategic partner**.

- The hackathon is focused on 10 themes and structured over three legs: **Online leg, followed by Singapore leg, and the finals in New Delhi**.
- It has a two-pronged campaign approach.
- They are: "Just Code It" aimed at solutions through innovations in technology, product, software and data analysis, and "Just Solve It" aimed at innovative business ideas or sustainable solutions to transform mobility infrastructure through technology.
- **Move Hack is open to individuals from all nationalities**.
- It is expected to unravel pioneering and ingenious solutions to pertinent mobility related challenges and pave the way for developing integrated, interconnected and inventive global community.

ABOUT THE HACKATHON COMPETITION:

- **The top 30 teams from online submissions will travel to Singapore in September 2018** and will be mentored by a curated group of top experts advising the teams on a host of parameters including design improvement, business viability, technical solution and customer targeting and marketing.
- **Top 20 teams from Singapore leg will participate in the Final Round to be held in New Delhi later in September 2018**.
- **The winners will be announced during the Move Summit 2018 organized by NITI Aayog on 7 and 8 September 2018 in New Delhi**.
- **The awards of hackathon include recognizing top 10 winners with total prize of more than Rs. 2 crores**.
- **The evaluations will be done by a jury comprising of subject matter experts, venture capitalists, business leaders and successful entrepreneurs**.

LOK SABHA PASSES CONSTITUTION (ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-THIRD AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017

- **Lok Sabha has unanimously passed Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017 by two-third majority**.
- The constitutional amendment bill seeks to grant National Commission on Backward Classes (NCBC) constitutional status at par with National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCSTs).

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE BILL:

ROLE OF NCSC:

- The Bill removes power of NCSC to examine matters related to backward classes. Currently, under Constitution NCSC has power to look into complaints and welfare measures with regard to Scheduled Castes (SCs), backward classes (OBCs) and Anglo-Indians.

CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS TO NCBC:

- The Bill seeks to make NCBC a Constitutional body by inserting new article 338B in constitution composition, mandate, functions and various officers of NCBC. Article 338B will give NCBC authority to examine complaints and welfare measures regarding socially and educationally backward classes.

BACKWARD CLASSES:

- The Bill inserts article 342-A to empower the President to specify socially and educationally backward classes in various states and union territories.
- He can do this in consultation with Governor of the concerned state.
- However, the law enacted by Parliament will be required if list of backward classes is to be amended.

COMPOSITION AND SERVICE CONDITIONS:

- The Bill mentions that NCBC will comprise of five members appointed by the President.
- Their tenure and conditions of service will also be decided by the President through rules.

FUNCTIONS:

The Bill defines the following as duties of NCBC:
(i) investigate and monitor safeguards provided to backward classes under Constitution and see that other laws are being implemented.
(ii) inquire into specific complaints regarding violation of rights of backward classes.
(iii) advise and make recommendations on socio-economic development of such classes.

- Union and State governments will consult NCBC on all major policy matters affecting socially and educationally backward classes.
- NCBC will be required to present annual reports to the President on working of safeguards for backward classes.
- These reports will be tabled in Parliament and state legislative assemblies of the concerned states.

POWERS OF A CIVIL COURT:

- The Bill gives NCBC powers of civil court while investigating or inquiring into any complaints.
- These powers will include summoning people and examining them on oath, production of any document or public record and receiving evidence.

PINGALI VENKAYYA: 141ST BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF DESIGNER OF INDIAN NATIONAL FLAG OBSERVED

- **141st birth anniversary of freedom fighter and designer (architect) of the Indian National Flag, Pingali Venkayya was observed on August 2, 2018**.

ABOUT PINGALI VENKAYYA:

- **He was born on August 2, 1876 in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh and died in 1963**.
- He was a firm believer in Gandhian principles and an ardent nationalist.
- **He was also a linguist, geologist and a writer**.
- **At a young age, he served as a soldier in British Indian Army in South Africa during Anglo Boer war in Africa**.
- During his stint with the British Army, he had met Mahatama Gandhi in Africa.
- He was 19 when the meeting took place and formed an association with Gandhiji which would last for more than 50 years.
- After his return from Africa, he had most of his time researching about farming and cultivating cotton.
- **He even went on to study Sanskrit, Urdu and Japanese in an Anglo Vedic School in Lahore**.
- **Such credentials had given him interesting titles like 'Japan Venkayya', 'Patti (cotton) Venkayya' and 'Jhanda Venkayya'**.

HIS JOURNEY OF FLAG DESIGNING:

- **Venkayya had published a book in 1916 offering thirty designs of what could make the Indian flag**.
- Throughout all Congress sessions between 1918 and 1921, he relentlessly put forward the idea of having a flag of our own in every session of the Congress.
- **Back then, he was working as a lecturer in Andhra National College in Machilipatnam**.
- He met Gandhiji once again in Vijayawada and showed him his publication with various designs of the flag.
- Acknowledging the need for a national flag, Gandhiji then asked Venkayya to design a fresh one at the national congress meeting in 1921.
- Initially, he came up with saffron and green colours, but it later evolved with a spinning wheel at the centre (representing a wheel of dharma and law) and a third colour that was- white.
- **This modified flag design was approved by Gandhiji and later officially adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931**.

OUR PRESENT FLAG:

- **India's National Flag (tricolor or तिरंगा) is based on the Swaraj flag of the Indian National Congress designed by Pingali Venkayya**.
- **It was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on the 22 July 1947**, a few days before India's independence from the British.
- The national flag of India is a horizontal rectangular tricolour of saffron, white and green, with Ashoka Chakra (24-spoke wheel) in navy blue at its centre.
- Usage of national flag is governed by the Flag Code of India and other laws relating to the national emblems.
- The flag code also governs the protocol of flying the flag and its use in conjunction with other national and non-national flags.

INDIA ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF ASIA-PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT

- **India is elected as President of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) for a period of two years**.
- India got elected against Iran during voting which took place at the 44th annual gathering of AIBD held in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- Moreover, the Director General of All India Radio (AIR) F. Sheheryar was also re-elected as chair of executive board of AIBD while Sri Lanka was elected as vice-chair.
- Broadcasters from 26 countries in the region including India are full members of the organization.

ABOUT THE ASIA-PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT (AIBD):

- **AIDB is a regional inter-governmental organisation serving countries of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in the field of electronic media development**.
- **It was established in 1977 under the auspices of UNESCO**.
- **It is hosted by the Government of Malaysia and its secretariat is located in Kuala Lumpur**.
- **AIBD is mandated to achieve vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in Asia-Pacific region through policy and resource development**.
- **Currently it has broadcasters from 26 full member countries**, represented by 34 organisations and 67 Affiliate Members (organisations) and over 50 partners in Asia, Pacific, Europe, Africa, Arab States and North America.

TELANGANA, TECH MAHINDRA INK MOU FOR INDIA'S FIRST BLOCKCHAIN DISTRICT

Telangana's initiative in this emerging technology

- **Telangana State Information Technology, Electronics and Communication Department (ITE&C) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tech Mahindra to launch India's first Blockchain district**.
- The MoU was signed at the International Blockchain Congress 2018 held in Hyderabad.

ABOUT THE BLOCKCHAIN DISTRICT:

- It will be a centre of excellence, incubator and process development centre for emerging technology with innovative infrastructure and facilities to foster growth of Indian blockchain start-ups and companies.
- **Tech Mahindra as its founding member will provide platform and technology assistance to all incubators in it**.
- It will also empower accelerators to develop and solve market problems across its global customer ecosystem.

- **Telangana ITE&C Department will provide regulatory and policy support to enable and promote Blockchain growth both in India and globally**.

BENEFITS OF THE BLOCKCHAIN DISTRICT:

- Blockchain district will be a global talent hub which can help to unlock value of blockchain technology in democratising data and solving big scale world problems.
- It is also a huge step in reskilling and right skilling workforce of the future.
- It will provide an opportunity for blockchain ecosystem in India to collaborate and work towards building a blockchain district in Telangana and transforming India as the blockchain capital of the world.

WHAT IS BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY?

- **Blockchain is a decentralized incorruptible digital ledger for storing data across peer-to-peer network**.
- **It decentralizes information without it being copied**.
- **Information is held on blockchain through a shared database which can be accessed on real-time basis**.
- **This database is not stored on physical servers but on cloud, which makes it easy to store unlimited data**.

ADVANTAGES:

- **Blockchain technology is not controlled by any single entity and has no single point of failure**.
- **It is transparent and incorruptible**.
- **It is a kind of self-auditing ecosystem of digital value and blockchain network and automatically checks every transaction that happens in it**.

APPLICATIONS:

- **The most popular application of this technology so far has been the cryptocurrency**.
- But it is not limited to, financial transactions and can be also used in smart contracts, supply chain management logistics, sharing economy, crowdfunding, governance, file storage and date management and Internet of Things (IoT).

LOK SABHA PASSES NATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITY BILL, 2018

- **Lok Sabha has passed the National Sports University Bill, 2018 by voice vote to set up country's first National Sports University in Imphal (west), Manipur that will provide sports education, research and coaching**.
- The Bill replaces National Sports University Ordinance, 2018 promulgated by President in May 2018

to protect interests of students who already have been enrolled in the National Sports University.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITY BILL, 2018:

* **The Bill establishes a National Sports University in Manipur**.
* It is mandated to promote sports education in areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management, and sports coaching.
* **It will function as a national training centre for select sports disciplines**.
* **The Bill empowers the University to grant degrees, diplomas and certificates**.
* It also allows the Government to establish campuses and study centres in other parts of the country.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE UNIVERSITY?

* Research, development and dissemination of knowledge in physical education and sports sciences.
* Strengthening physical education and sports training programmes.
* Generating knowledge capabilities, skills and competence at various levels.
* Training talented athletes to help them evolve into international level athletes.

IMPORTANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY:

* **The specialised university for sports will be first of its kind in the country and it will adopt best international practices**.
* **Manipur government already has allocated land for the proposed university**.
* **The proposal to set up a National Sports University in Manipur was initially announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
* **It was approved in 2014-15 budget with Rs. 100 crore allocation**.
* This university is expected to bridge the gap that exists in the sports environment of the country in various areas such as sports science, sports technology and high performance training.

PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA: GOVERNMENT ACHIEVES 5 CRORE FREE LPG CONNECTIONS TARGET

Government registers an astounding achievement

* **Union Government has announced that it has reached the target of providing 5 crore free LPG connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) almost eight months ahead of schedule (i.e. in 27 months instead of 35 months)**.

FACTS TO LOOK AT:

- Uttar Pradesh (87 lakh), West Bengal (67 lakh), Bihar (61 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (45 lakh), Rajasthan (37 lakh) and Odisha (30 lakh) are six states that have accounted for nearly 65% of connections provided under PMUY and 47% of overall beneficiaries are from weaker sections of society i.e., SC/STs.
- **World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised PMUY as one of the decisive intervention by the Government to address indoor air pollution which accounts for nearly 10 lakh deaths in year in the country**.

ABOUT THE PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA (PMUY):

- **Union Government launched PMUY in May, 2016** with a tagline of **Swachh Indhan, Behtar Jeevan**.
- **It aims at providing clean-cooking fuel to poor households, who are otherwise vulnerable to various health hazards associated with indoor air pollution and bringing in qualitative changes in living standards**.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- **PMUY is implemented by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas through its Oil Marketing Companies** (OMCs) i.e., IOC, BPCL and HPCL through their network of distributors across the country.
- **PMUY is under implementation in all the States/UTs**.
- Through it, cash assistance is given to beneficiaries to get a deposit-free new connection.
- **It is the first welfare scheme implemented by Ministry of Petroleum**.

BENEFICIARIES OF PMUY:

- They are identified through Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) List-2011 and in such cases where names are not covered under SECC list, beneficiaries are identified from seven categories which includes SC/ST households, beneficiaries of Antyodaya Anna Yojana, PMAY (Gramin), Forest Dwellers, Most Backward Classes, Resident of Islands/River Islands and Tea Garden & Ex-tea Garden Tribes.

TARGET:

- Initially, Government had set target to provide deposit free LPG connections under PMUY to 5 crore BPL households by 31 March 2019.
- **Considering its huge success, government had revised the target to 8 crore with budgetary allocation of Rs. 12,800 crore**.

HIMACHAL PRADESH LAUNCHES SHAUR NAHIN MOBILE APPLICATION

A campaign to curb noise pollution.

- **Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched 'Horn not Ok' awareness campaign and 'Shaur Nahin' (no noise) mobile application in the state capital- Shimla**.
- <u>The campaign aims to spread awareness of unnecessary blowing horn as it creates unnecessary noise pollution and is harmful to health</u>.
- **The first phase of the campaign has been launched in Shimla and Manali**.

ABOUT THE SHAUR NAHIN MOBILE APP:

- **The mobile application is an initiative of the Department of Environment Science and Technology in association with National Informatics Centre (NIC), Himachal Pradesh**.
- **The app will enable the general public to report cases of noise pollution**.
- **It has settings for two types of users: General Public and Officers, both of whom will be authenticated with a one-time password (OTP)**.
- **Complaints received through this app will be immediately made available to the concerned Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, Sub-Divisional Magistrate and Sub-Divisional Police Officer** who can later respond with the action taken and report on the application itself.

FACEBOOK LAUNCHES DIGITAL LITERACY LIBRARY

A progressive initiative by Facebook.

- **Social networking giant Facebook has launched "Digital Literacy Library" to help young people build skills they need to safely enjoy online technology**.
- The lessons can be found on Facebook's Safety Center as well as on Berkman Klein's Digital Literacy Resource Platform.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL LITERACY LIBRARY:

- The library is a resource for educators looking to address digital literacy and help these young people build the skills they need to safely enjoy digital technology.
- It is a collection of lessons to help young people think critically and share thoughtfully online.
- **There are 18 interactive lessons and videos** that have been developed in partnership with the Youth and Media team at Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University for educators of youth aged 11 to 18.
- **These lessons are in English language and Facebook is planning to launch these in additional 45 languages soon**.
- **These lessons are divided into themes such as privacy and reputation, identity exploration, security, safety and well-being and can be downloaded for free**.
- They also represent voices of young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds,

ethnicities, geographies, and educational levels.

KADAKNATH CHICKEN MEAT FROM JHABUA DISTRICT OF MADHYA PRADESH GETS GI TAG

- **Kadaknath chicken meat from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh has received Geographical Indication (GI) tag** from Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India.
- GI tag denotes that the product comes from a particular geographical location.
- Kadaknath chicken was awarded the GI tag in the "Meat Product, Poultry & Poultry Meat" category.
- **The application for GI was made by Gramin Vikas Trust of Krishak Bharati Cooperative (KRIBHCO)** on behalf of tribals of Jhabua district who breed the variety.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS GI TAG:

- **GI tag will ensure that no one else can use name Kadaknath Chicken while selling any other black chicken**.
- **It will also enhance its commercial value** that will translate into higher prices for producers mainly from the tribal districts of Jhabua.

ABOUT KADAKNATH CHICKEN:

- **Kadaknath or Kali Masi (flowl with black flash) is a unique breed of chicken that is completely black in colour**.
- **It is completely black with black plumage having greenish iridescence, black legs, beak, tongue, comb and wattles**.
- Apart from its meat, its bones and most organs are also black.
- **Its black colour stems from the deposition of melanin pigment**.
- This breed of chicken is popular for its adaptability and flavourful good-tasting black meat, which is believed to have **medicinal properties**.
- It is a native of the tribal districts of Jhabua, Alirajpur and parts of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh.
- It is produced mainly in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states of India.
- **Kadaknath chicken contains 25-27% of protein in comparison with other breeds of chickens that contain 18% protein**.
- **It is also known for its high iron content**.
- **It has fat and cholesterol content lower compared with other chicken breeds**.
- **Due to this special characteristics, Kadaknath chicken's chicks and eggs are sold at a much higher rate than other varieties of chicken**.
- This chicken breed is very popular among local tribal people mainly due to its adaptability to the local environment, disease resistance, meat quality, texture and flavour.

MOSQUITO TERMINATOR ON WHEELS: SPECIAL TRAIN FLAGGED OFF TO PREVENT BREEDING OF MOSQUITOES IN NEW DELHI

- Delhi division of Northern Railway and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) jointly launched Mosquito Terminator on Wheels, a special mosquito terminator train to prevent mosquito breeding along railway tracks in New Delhi.
- The special train aims to control and mitigate menace of mosquito breeding in the burrow pits along railway tracks in New Delhi.

ABOUT THE MOSQUITO TERMINATOR ON WHEELS:

- For this train, SDMC has provided high power sprayer and insecticide on truck mounted power sprayer.
- It has been loaded on special kind of wagon, which will spray insecticides during train movement to sanitise areas upto distance of 50-60 metres along rail tracks on Ring Railway.
- It will cover distance of 150km in each cycle over by moving at speed of 20 kmph.
- The train will pass through Hazrat Nizamuddin, Sewa Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Lodhi Colony, Brar Square, Delhi Safdarjung, Inderpuri, Patel Nagar, Delhi Kishanganj, Dayabasti, Sadar Bazar and New Delhi and will cover other areas of NCR region.
- There will be two rounds of spraying each week to cover peak mosquito breeding season totalling to 10 rounds/trips in 5 weeks.
- Indian Railways is also collaborating with three corporations in NCR Delhi to take requisite measures to prevent breeding of mosquitoes in railway colonies and railway land.

CHINESE RESEARCHERS CREATE WORLD'S FIRST SINGLE CHROMOSOME YEAST

- **Researchers from China's Centre for Excellence in Molecular Plant Sciences have claimed to have created the world's first single-chromosome yeast while not affecting the majority of its functions**.
- The experiment was conducted on a Brewer's yeast having 16 chromosomes and which shares its one-third genome ancestry with humans.
- Researchers were able to fit nearly all genetic material of Brewer's yeast into just one chromosome without affecting majority of its functions.

DETAILS ABOUT THE RESEARCH:

- Researchers had used CRISPR-Cas9 genome-editing technology to create a single-chromosome yeast strain.
- Using CRISPR-Cas9, researchers removed DNA at telomeres (ends of chromosomes that protect them from degrading) and also snipped out centromeres, sequences in middle that are important to DNA replication.
- **Firstly in this process, researchers had fused two chromosomes and then joined the product to another chromosome and repeated the process in successive rounds until there was only**

one chromosome left.

- The research had revealed that the number of chromosomes of eukaryote has no correlation with the amount of genetic information they possess.
- **It also showed that all genetic information can be concentrated in just one chromosome**.
- It provides a new approach to studying the functions of telomeres by simplifying complex genome system.
- **This research may help in furthering research related to aging and diseases in humans**.
- In future, it may also pave way for new man-made species.

GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS PROPOSAL OF SETTING UP A SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION HUB

- **Centre has notified the Supreme Court that it has withdrawn proposal for setting up 'Social Media Communication Hub'**.
- This comes after the apex court had issued notice to the centre earlier and had termed Government's proposal to monitor online data using this hub akin to 'creating a surveillance state'.

ABOUT THE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS HUB:

- **It was a proposed platform to allow government to keep an eye on all social media platforms** — Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn etc to gauge and analyse public sentiment towards various government policies and announcements, and track influencers.
- **Its main objective was to get a sense of public mood, with capability to track any individual's public posts across these online platforms**.
- **It 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.
- For this, Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited (BECIL), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under Ministry for Information & Broadcasting had twice issued Request For Proposal (RFP) to supply, installation, testing and commissioning (SITC) of software tool for the hub.
- RFI had specified that this platform should be able to easily manage conversational logs with each individual through various social media channels and facilitate in creating 360 degree view of people who are creating buzz across various topics.

WHAT LEAD THE GOVERNMENT TO WITHDRAW THIS PROPOSAL?

- **The apex court had issued notice to the Centre on a plea by Trinamool Congress (TMC) legislator Mahua Moitra**.
- The plea had mentioned that SMCH is expected to listen to conversations on all major digital

channels and also to be able to monitor email.

- Such intrusive action by Government without the authority of law, **infringes the fundamental right to freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution and such action of the government also violates the right to privacy under Article 21**.
- **Hearing the plea, the SC bench had observed that the government wants to tap citizens' WhatsApp messages**.
- **It will be like creating a surveillance state**.

AJAY DATA: FIRST INDIAN TO GET ELECTED AS ICANN CCNSO COUNCIL MEMBER

- **The nominating committee of Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has selected Ajay Data as the new council member of Country Code Supporting Organisation (ccNSO)**.
- **With this, he becomes the first Indian to get selected as a member of ccNSO**, which is a policy development body of ICANN for ccTLD (country code top-level domains) issues and represents all country code top level domain operators from around the world.
- **He has been selected for a two-year term** and will take up the position during ICANN 63 Meet in Spain in October 2018.
- He will be representing India at the global level and will also be the custodian of Asia, Australia and Pacific Islands as a member of ccNSO.

WHO IS AJAY DATA?

- **He is the founder & CEO of Data XGen Plus and a global leader in email linguistic services**.
- He is the creator of world's first email address mobile app and email solution for IDN (Internationalized Domain Names) Domains.
- **He was awarded the Graham Bell Award for this innovation**.
- He has also been credited for giving access to World for Internationalized Email Address in 19 languages which is available through DataMail app.

ABOUT ICANN (INTERNET CORPORATION FOR ASSIGNED NAMES AND NUMBERS):

- **ICANN is a private (non-government) non-profit corporation with responsibility of supervising domain names on internet**.
- **It plays a major monopolistic role in IP address space allocation, protocol parameter assignment, domain name system management and root server system management functions**.
- **It was founded in 1998 and is headquartered in Los Angeles, California, United States**.

ICANN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- Coordination of global Internet systems of unique identifiers.

- Ensuring a stable and secure operation of internet.
- Coordination of the Internet Protocol address spaces.
- Assignment of address blocks to regional Internet registries, for maintaining registries of Internet protocol identifiers, and for management of top-level domain name space (DNS root zone) which includes operation of root name servers.
- DNS policy development for internationalization of the DNS system.
- Introduction of new generic top-level domains (TLDs).

ISRO POSTPONES LAUNCH OF CHANDRAYAAN-2 MISSION

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has postponed Chandrayaan-2, India's second mission to Moon to January 2019**.
- This will be the second time the mission has been postponed.
- The ambitious mission was earlier planned to be launched in April 2018 and was later fixed for October 2019.
- With this delay, India may lose fourth position in the world for soft-landing on the Moon to Israel as it too is planning to launch a Moon mission in December 2018.

ABOUT THE CHANDRAYAAN 2 MISSION:

- **Chandrayaan-2 is India's most challenging and India's second mission to Moon**.
- It is an advanced version of the previous Chandrayaan-1 mission (launched in 2008) which only involved orbiting around Moon, **Chandrayaan-2 is a much complicated mission as it involves an orbiter, lander and rover**.
- **The mission components have been completely developed indigenously by ISRO** and consists of Orbiter, Lander and Rover configuration.
- In this mission, **ISRO will for the first time attempt to land a rover on Moon's south-pole**.
- The mission involves soft-landing on the lunar surface and the rover will walk and analyze the content on the Moon's surface.
- Chandrayaan 2 will be launched on board of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III (GSLV-F10).
- **It will be ISRO's first inter-planetary mission to land a rover on any celestial body**.
- The spacecraft (orbiter) weighs around 3,290 kg and it will orbit around Moon and perform objectives of remote sensing the Moon.
- **Once GSLV-F10 put the spacecraft in 170 km x 20,000 km elliptical orbit, the orbiter will be manoeuvred towards the 100-km lunar orbit by firing thrusters and then the lander housing the rover will separate from the orbiter**.
- **The six wheeled rover will move on an unexplored lunar surface and collect soil or rock samples for on-site chemical analysis** to gather scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere and signatures of hydroxyl and water-ice.
- **The data will be relayed to Earth through the orbiter**.
- **The rover will move around the landing site in semi-autonomous mode** as decided by the

ground commands.
- The soft-landing on the surface of the Moon will be the most complex part of Chandrayaan 2 mission.
- **Only US, Russia and China have been able to soft-land a spacecraft on the lunar surface**.

PRESIDENT GIVES ASSENT TO FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS BILL, 2018

- **President Ram Nath Kovind has given assent (under Article 111) to Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 passed by Parliament**.
- With this assent, this Bill becomes law that will deter fugitive economic offenders to evade legal process in India and flee the country.
- The law aims to serve as an effective, expeditious and constitutional way to stop these offenders from running away.

ABOUT THE FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDERS ACT, 2018:

- **The new law defines fugitive economic offender (FEO) as any individual against whom warrants for arrest is issued for his involvement in select economic offences involving amount of at least Rs 100 crore or more and has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution**.
- **It allows a designated special court to declare a person as a fugitive economic offender and to confiscate his property, including benami ones**.
- **It vests all rights and title in confiscated property from date of the confiscation order in central government and it will be free from all encumbrances**.
- **Enforcement Directorate (under Ministry of Finance) will be the investigative agency under the Act**.

ABOUT THE NEGOTIABLE INSTRUMENTS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2018:

- **President also gave assent to Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Act, 2018**.
- It is aimed at allowing a court to try offences related to cheque bounce expeditiously and direct the drawee to pay a minimum of 20% of cheque amount as interim compensation.

ABOUT THE STATE BANKS (REPEAL AND AMENDMENT) ACT, 2018:

- President also gave assent to State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Act to repeal two other laws: **State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959 and State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956**.
- It further amend the State Bank of India Act of 1955.

GOVERNMENT APPROVES 122 NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS UNDER IMPRINT SCHEME

- **Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has approved 122 new research**

project proposals worth Rs 112 crore for funding under its **IMPRINT-II (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology) scheme**.

- These projects were approved at IMPRINT-II Apex Committee meeting chaired by HRD Minister Prakash Javddekar in New Delhi.

DETAILS:

- **The 122 approved new research projects aim to advance research in energy, healthcare, security and defence domains in the high education institutions**.
- Of the selected 122 new projects, 81 are sponsored by industry.
- The selected proposals include 35 (ICT), 18 (Advanced Materials), 17 (Healthcare Technology), 12 (Energy Security), 11 (Security & Defence), 9 (Sustainable Habitat), 7 Water Resource & River Systems, 5 (Environment & Climate), 4 (Manufacturing) and 4 (Nano Technology).

ABOUT THE IMPRINT SCHEME:

- **IMPRINT is a first of its kind MHRD supported scheme to address major science and engineering challenges and boost original scientific and technological research in 10 technology identified domains in the country**.
- **It was launched in November 2015 with an aim to develop new engineering education policy and create a road map to pursue engineering challenges**.
- These 10 domains are Health Care, Computer Science and ICT, Advance Materials, Water Resources and River systems, Sustainable Urban Design, Defence, Nano-technology Hardware, Environmental Science and Climate Change and Energy Security.
- IMPRINT provides overarching vision that guides research into areas that are predominantly socially relevant. Initially under IMPRINT-I, IITs and IISC, were asked to identify major areas where India is facing engineering and technology challenges.
- Now its scope has also been expanded to private institutions along with IITs and IISc under IMPRINT-II and jointly funded and steered by MHRD and Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- **The implementation of 142 projects under IMPRINT-I are already underway**.
- These projects have received support from several ministries, councils and departments in addition to MHRD.

RISECREEK: IIT-MADRAS DEVELOP FIRST INDIGENOUS MICROPROCESSORS UNDER PROJECT SHAKTI

IIT-M achieves a technological milestone

- **Computer scientists from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras have developed the first of family of six industry-standard microprocessors under Project Shakti**.

- **The initial batch of 300 chips have been named RISECREEK and have been fabricated at Intel's facility at Oregon, US for free to run Linux operating system**.
- Project Shakti was started in 2014 as IIT-M initiative and part of it is funded by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

ABOUT RISECREEK MICROPROCESSORS:

- **Their design is an open source and can be adapted by others**.
- **They optimise power use and compete with international units such as Cortex A5 from Advanced RISC Machines (ARM)**.
- **They have better performance in terms of DMIPS per megahertz rating than A5 and score of 1.68 against competition's 1.57**
- **These viable industry-grade microprocessors can operate at a frequency of 350 MHz, thus meets demands of defence and strategic equipment of the country such as NAVIC (Indian Regional Navigation Satellite) and Internet of Things (IoT) electronics**.
- **These processors can also be tapped for future efforts in semiconductors**.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES BIDDER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND BHOOMI RASHI – PFMS LINKAGE PORTALS

- **Union Ministry of Road Transport & Highway (MoRTH) launched two IT initiatives:** Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) and Bhoomi Rashi & PFMS linkage aimed at expediting pre construction processes relating to bidding and land acquisition respectively.

ABOUT THE BIDDER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (BIMS):

- **BIMS portal aims at streamlining process of pre-qualification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for National Highway works with enhanced transparency and objectivity**.
- **It works as a data base of information about bidders**, covering basic details, civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc.
- **It allows assessment of pre-qualification of bidders** from data already stored in the portal to carry out technical evaluation at a much faster rate.
- **It will be used by all project implementation agencies of MoRTH** for maintenance of technical information of civil works of contractors, concessionaires and for online technical evaluation of civil works bids.
- **BIMS portal will be operated in conjunction with Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP) portal** for invitation of bids for civil works for EPC mode.
- **It will help to significantly reduce the procurement time for projects** through an objective and transparent online evaluation system thereby leading to accelerated project implementation.

ABOUT THE BHOOMI RASHI PORTAL:

- **Bhoomi Rashi portal has been developed by MoRTH and National Informatics Centre (NIC)**.
- It comprises of the entire revenue data of the country, right down to 6.4 lakh villages.
- **It makes the entire process flow from submission of draft notification by State Government to its approval by Minister of State (MoS) for RT&H and publication in e-Gazettes online**.
- The portal has been created for expediting the process of publication of notifications for land acquisition.
- **It will be utilized for issuing notification**.
- **It will play an instrumental role in reducing time taken for approval and publication of notifications pertaining to land acquisition**.

PFMS LINKAGE WITH BHOOMI RASHI:

- **The Bhoomi Rashi portal has been integrated with Public Financial Management System (PFMS) to facilitate payment related to compensation for land acquisition to all beneficiaries directly through Bhoomi Rashi system**.
- **It will make payment of Compensation by MoRTH to beneficiaries in real time and without any parking of funds**.
- **PFMS is a web-based online software application developed and implemented by Office of Controller General of Accounts (CGA) to facilitate sound public financial management system for Central Government**.
- It provides various stakeholders with real time, reliable and meaningful management information system and an effective decision support system, as part of the Digital India initiative of Central Government.

PARLIAMENT PASSES CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

- **Parliament has passed Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018 prescribing death penalty to those convicted of raping girls below the age of 12 years and making law against such sexual offences more stringent**.
- The Bill replaces the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance promulgated on April 2018.

WHAT ARE THE KEY PROVISIONS OF THE BILL?

- **The Bill amends Indian Penal Code (IPC), Criminal Procedure Code, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Indian Evidence Act**.
- It provides for stringent punishment of jail term of minimum 20 years or life imprisonment or death for rape of girl less than 12 years.
- It provides punishment with imprisonment for rest of life or death sentence in case of gang rape of girl below 12 years.
- It increases minimum punishment from 10 years to 20 years for crime of rape of girl under 16 years, which can be extended to imprisonment for rest of life.
- It also increases minimum punishment for rape of women from rigorous imprisonment of 7

years to 10 years, which can be extended to life imprisonment.

- **It provides for speedy investigation and trial of cases involving above offences, which must be completed in two months**.
- **It proposes 6 months' time limit for disposal of appeals in rape cases**.
- **It provides dedicated manpower for investigation of rape cases in a time bound manner**.
- **It provides no provision for anticipatory bail for a person accused of rape or gang rape of girl under 16 years**.
- **It has also been provided that the court has to give a notice of 15 days to the Public Prosecutor and representative of victim before deciding bail applications in case of rape of a girl under 16 years of age**.
- **It has provision for maintaining a national database and profile of sexual offenders by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**.
- **This data will be regularly shared with States/UTs** for monitoring, tracking and investigation including verification of antecedents by police.
- **Four states have already brought in the law after passing it through their respective assemblies for capital punishment to those who rape girls below 12 years. The states are Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Arunachal Pradesh**.

PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL TO PROVIDE CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS TO NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

- **Parliament has passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017 that seeks to provide constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**.
- Now, the bill will be sent to President for his assent (as per 368 of Constitution).
- Parliament has also passed a separate bill to repeal National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 as it will become irrelevant once Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill comes into force.

WHAT ARE THE KEY FEATURES OF THE BILL?

- **The Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill provides for granting of constitutional status to NCBC on par with National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCSTs)**.
- **It empowers the President to specify socially and educationally backward classes in various states and union territories in consultation with the Governor of the concerned state**.
- **The bill provides duties of NCBC to investigate and monitor safeguards provided to socially and educationally backward classes under Constitution and other laws being implemented and probe specific complaints regarding violation of rights**.
- **It also provides NCBC with powers of civil court while probing any complaint against notified socially and educationally backward classes**.

A LOOK AT THE BACKGROUND:

- **The Constitutional Amendment Bill was first passed with over two-third majority, with all 406 members present voting in favour**.
- It had passed the bill by superseding amendments suggested earlier by Rajya Sabha by incorporating alternate amendments as well as some more changes.
- **The bill passed by Lok Sabha was again passed by Rajya Sabha in same format with absolute majority and over two-third majority of members present and voting (All 156 members present in the house voted in favour of the bill)**.

LOK SABHA PASSES SCHEDULED CASTES AND THE SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) AMENDMENT BILL, 2018

- **Lok Sabha has unanimously passed the** Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 **to reverse the effects of the Supreme Court order concerning certain safeguards against arrests under SC/ST law**.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

DETAILS:

- **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 protects marginalised communities against discrimination and atrocities**.
- It prohibits commission of offences against members of SCs/STs and establishes special courts for trial of such offences and rehabilitation of victims.
- **In 2018, Supreme Court had expressed concern over misuse of Act and ruled against automatic arrest of booking of accused under this law**.
- **It had also introduced the provision of anticipatory bail**.
- **It had stated that for persons accused of committing offence under the Act, approval of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) will be required before an arrest is made**.
- **Further, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) may conduct preliminary enquiry to find out whether there is prima facie case under Act**.

ABOUT THE FEATURES OF THE BILL:

- **The Bill states that investigating officer will not require approval of any authority for arrest of accused**.
- **Further, it provides that preliminary enquiry will not be required for registration of First Information Report (FIR) against person accused under Act**.
- **The Act states that persons accused of committing offence under Act cannot apply for anticipatory bail**.
- **It also clarifies that this provision will apply despite any judgments or orders of any court that provide otherwise, thus overturning SC judgment given in April 2018**.

ABOUT THE SCHEDULED CASTES AND TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT, 1989:

- **It is popularly known as Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act or simply Atrocities Act**.
- **Its prime objective is to deliver justice to marginalised through proactive efforts, giving them life of dignity, self-esteem and life without fear, violence or suppression from dominant castes**.
- **The Act lists 22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviours inflicting criminal offences and breaking self-respect and esteem of SC/ST community**.
- This includes denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of legal process.
- **The Act also provides protection to SC/ST community from social disabilities** such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food, injury, sexual exploitation etc, atrocities affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.
- **The Section 14 of the Act For speedy trial provides for Court of Session to be Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district**.

XINGKONG-2: CHINA SUCCESSFULLY TESTS FIRST HYPERSONIC AIRCRAFT

- **China has successfully tested its first cutting-edge hypersonic "Waverider" flight vehicle (aircraft) Xingkong-2 (Starry Sky-2)**.
- Waverider is a flight vehicle that flies in the atmosphere and uses shockwaves generated by its own hypersonic flight with air to glide at high speed.
- Currently, United States and Russia have been carrying out similar experiments.

ABOUT THE TEST:

- **The Xingkong-2 hypersonic waverider flight vehicle was released in air from a rocket after about 10 minutes**.
- **After its launch, it flew independently, made large-angle turning maneuvers and landed in the targeted area as planned**.
- **During the test, it had reached 30 kms in altitude at Mach 5.5 - 6 speed**.
- The test successfully proved various parameters of the flight vehicle, thus marking a successful launch of Xingkong-2 and the first flight of the Chinese Waverider.

ABOUT XINGKONG-2 (STARRY SKY-2):

- **The hypersonic Waverider flight vehicle was designed by state-run China Academy of Aerospace Aerodynamics (CAAA) in collaboration with China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation**.
- **It can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads**.
- **It has a capability to penetrate any current generation anti-missile defence systems due to its**

- **high speed and unpredictable trajectory**.
- As compared to it, the current generation of anti-missile defence systems are mainly designed to intercept cruise and ballistic missiles which are either slower or easier to predict, making them possible to intercept.
- **In addition to its military use, the hypersonic Waverider flight vehicle may also see civil use in the future**.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **The test showed that China is advancing shoulder-to-shoulder with US and Russia in developing hypersonic Waverider flight vehicle**.
- **China is expected to test this Waverider more frequently in future before being handed over for final deployment to the People's Liberation Army (PLA)**.

RESTRICTED AREA PERMIT EASED FOR FOREIGNERS VISITING 29 ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

- **The Union Home Ministry has excluded 29 inhabited islands in Andaman and Nicobar from Restricted Area Permit (RAP) regime** under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963 till December 2022.
- This decision aims to increase footfalls and promote tourism.
- **Government is also planning to open 11 other uninhabited islands to foreigners**.

DETAILS:

- The lifting of RAP will allow foreigners to visit these islands without prior permission from the government.
- **However, citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in these countries will continue to require RAP to visit the Union Territory**.
- **Moreover, for visiting Mayabunder and Diglipur islands, citizens of Myanmar will also continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with prior approval of the Home Ministry**.
- Besides, separate approvals of competent authority will be required for visiting reserved forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal reserves.

ABOUT THE RESTRICTED AREA PERMIT (RAP) REGIME:

- **RAP regime has been notified under Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963**.
- Under it, foreign nationals are not normally allowed to visit protected or restricted area unless Government is satisfied that there are extra-ordinary reasons to justify their visit.
- Every foreigner, except a citizen of Bhutan, who desires to enter and stay in protected or restricted area, is required to obtain special permit from the competent authority having power to issue such permits to foreigner, seeking it.

- **Citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan and foreign nationals of Pakistani origin are exception and are not allowed to enter such areas**.

EARTH AT RISK OF BECOMING IRREVERSIBLE HOTHOUSE: STUDY

We must act before its too late!

- **According to a recent study, the Earth is at the risk of entering an irreversible hothouse condition**- where the global temperatures will rise by four to five degrees even if targets under 2015 Paris climate deal are met.
- Hothouse Earth climate will in long-term stabilise at global average of 4-5 degrees Celsius higher than pre-industrial temperatures with sea level 10-60 metres higher than today.

DETAILS FROM THE STUDY:

- **Currently, the global average temperatures are just over 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial and rising at 0.17 degree Celsius per decade**.
- Keeping global warming to within 1.5-2 degrees Celsius as agreed in 2015 Paris climate agreement by around 200 countries may be more difficult than previously assessed.
- **Human-induced global warming of two degrees Celsius may trigger other Earth system processes often called feedbacks that can drive further warming even if greenhouse gases emissions are stopped**.
- Avoiding this scenario will require redirection of human actions from exploitation to stewardship of the Earth system.
- **The study considered ten natural feedback processes, some of which are tipping elements that lead to abrupt change if critical threshold is crossed**.
- These feedbacks can turn from being friend that stores carbon to foe that emits it uncontrollably in the warmer world.
- **These feedbacks include permafrost thaw, weakening land and ocean carbon sinks, loss of methane hydrates from ocean floor, increasing bacterial respiration in oceans, Boreal forest dieback, Amazon rainforest dieback, reduction of northern hemisphere snow cover, loss of Arctic summer sea ice and reduction of Antarctic sea ice and polar ice sheets**.
- These feedback's tipping elements can potentially act like row of dominoes.
- Once one is pushed over, it pushes the Earth towards another.

GOVERNMENT RAISES IMPORT DUTY ON 328 TEXTILE PRODUCTS TO CURB IMPORTS

A step to safeguard the interests of Domestic Manufacturers

- **Government has doubled import duties on 328 textile products to 20% from the existing rate of 10% under Section 159 of the Customs Act, 1962**.
- Earlier in July 2018, Government had doubled import duty on over 50 textile products- including

jackets, suits and carpets to 20%.

HOW WILL IT BENEFIT DOMESTIC MANUFACTURERS?

- **The increase in duties will give edge to domestic manufacturers as imported products are currently cheaper**.
- **It will curb soaring imports from China and focus more on local value addition in the labour-intensive sector**.
- **This move will also help to promote 'Make in India' as imports of these goods had surged drastically in last one year especially post GST**.
- **It will bring an increase in the manufacturing activities in various segments of the entire value chain of the textile sector**, which will help to create jobs in the sector, which employs about 10.5 crore people.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

- **The move comes amid mounting concerns that trade war between the world's biggest economies United States and China will further aggravate dumping of cheaper products from China to Indian markets**.
- As such, India's textile imports jumped by 16% to a record $7 billion in last fiscal, with China accounting for over 40% of purchases.
- **Moreover, 28% hike in cotton prices by Government recently to ensure at least 50% premium to farmers over costs is expected to raise basic raw material costs for domestic manufacturers and could hurt our export competitiveness across value chains in the textile and garment sector**.

PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA: GOVERNMENT, NABARD AND NWDA INK REVISED MOA FOR 99 PROJECTS

- **Union Government, NABARD and National Water Development Agency (NWDA) have signed a revised** Memorandum of Agreement **(MoA) for funding of central share of 99 prioritized irrigation projects under** Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana **(PMKSY)** through **Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF)**.

DETAILS:

- The revised MoA will enable Ministry of Water Resources to release Central Assistance to prioritized projects under PMKSY as per requirements from time to time.
- For this, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance has **modified certain existing mechanism of funding of these 99 projects under LTIF**, with reference to source of funds, liability towards servicing of coupon on bonds, repayment pattern of loan and rate of interest on loan, etc.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA (PMKSY):

- **PMKSY was launched in July 2015 with an overarching vision to ensure access to some means of protective irrigation for all agricultural farms in the country and to produce "per drop more crop", thus bringing much desired rural prosperity**.
- It was formulated by amalgamating earlier schemes viz. AIBP, Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) and On Farm Water Management (OFWM) component of National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).
- It is implemented by Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development.
- **It has an outlay of Rs 50000 crore with implementation period of over five-year till April 2020**.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF PMKSY?

- Achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level.
- Expand cultivable area under assured irrigation (har khet ko pani).
- Enhance adoption of precision-irrigation and other water saving technologies (More crop per drop).
- Improve on-farm water use efficiency to reduce wastage of water.
- Enhance recharge of aquifers.
- Introduce sustainable water conservation practices.

TOKYO 2020: FIRST OLYMPICS TO DEPLOY FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY TO INCREASE SECURITY

- **Tokyo 2020 will be the first Olympics to use facial recognition technology to increase security around all venues**.
- For this, games organisers have partnered with **Japanese telecommunications and information technology giant NEC** to develop the first system of this kind to be implemented at an Olympics games.

ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY:

- **The facial recognition technology will use IC chips within identification cards to automatically verify the identity of those entering over 40 sporting venues**.
- The system will not be aimed at spectators but instead will concentrate on strengthening security and decreasing waiting times for athletes.
- This system will help to prevent fraudulent entry by people borrowing, stealing or faking an ID card.
- **The technology takes only 0.3 seconds to match up face with pre-registered photo, making it the world's fastest facial recognition system**.
- **More than 40 facilities, including main stadium, International Broadcast Centre, Olympic village and so on, will have this system**.

- **More than 300,000 athletes and Games staff will have to submit photographs to the database before the Olympics start in July 2020**.

NEED FOR THIS TYPE OF SECURITY:

- **Higher security is needed for people involved in Olympics as they enter important areas**.
- **Tokyo's Olympic venues do not always have enough space for security check or even space to wait for security check**.
- When events are happening, many people are expected to come and that is why this facial recognition is introduced.
- **NEC already has tested this technology during the Rio 2016 Olympics and have already implemented it in various locations, including airports**.
- **During the demonstration, the technology had correctly identified a string of people, including those in wheelchairs and of varying heights**.

AIIA INKS MOU IIT DELHI TO BOOST RESEARCH IN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Government moves in the direction of exploring the age old wisdom of Ayurveda.

- **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), a premier institute of Ayurveda under the AYUSH Ministry has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Delhi to boost research in traditional medicine and streamline hospital care facilities in the country**.

ABOUT THE MOU:

- **The MoU was signed at the two-day conference of heads of AYUSH National Institutes organised by All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) aimed at upgrading the national institutes of traditional medicine at par with the IITs and IIMs**.
- **Under it, the faculties of IIT Delhi and AIIA will work together in projects to look at ways to integrate technology with Ayurveda**.
- Under this partnership, projects developed will be given scientific validation to ancient medical science and integrate it with technology.

ABOUT THE ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF AYURVEDA (AIIA):

- **AIIA is the apex institute for Ayurveda in the country under Ministry of AYUSH**.
- It is located in New Delhi.
- **It aims at bringing synergy between the traditional wisdom of Ayurveda and modern tools and technology**.
- **It offers postgraduate and doctoral courses in various disciplines of Ayurveda** and focuses on fundamental research of Ayurveda, drug development, quality control, standardization, safety evaluation and scientific validation of Ayurvedic medicine.
- **It also has a 200 bed referral hospital for facilitating clinical research**.

INDIAN RAILWAYS BEGINS LARGEST RECRUITMENT EXERCISE OF THE WORLD

- **The Ministry of Railways is undertaking what can be called as world's largest recruitment exercise, for filling up critical safety and operational posts**.

ABOUT THE PRESENT RECRUITMENT DRIVE:

- **Presently two recruitment notifications- one for Assistant Loco Pilots (ALPs) and the other for Level-I(erstwhile group D) posts, for filling up about 1.2 lakh vacancies are under process**.
- **Total Posts of Assistant Loco Pilots (ALPs) and Technicians are around 60,000**.
- About 47.55 lakhs candidates have applied for these Posts.
- **Vacancies for Level-I posts (erstwhile group D) are 63,000 and around 1.9 crore candidates have applied for these posts**.
- **Total of approx. 2.4 Crores applicants applied, making it the largest recruitment exercise**.

ABOUT THE COMPUTER BASED TEST (CBT):

- Computer Based Test (CBT) for the posts of ALP & Technician recruitment has begun successfully on 9th August 2018.
- **This examination is being conducted in 166 cities at 439 exam centers across India**.
- The cities are spread from Srinagar in J&K to all North Eastern States and many other towns in the country including Port Blair.
- **The examinations will be conducted in 3 shifts per day for 10 days, spread up to 31st August, 2018**.
- **Question papers are being provided to the candidates in 15 languages**.
- This is a big step in the interest of candidates belonging to different vernacular backgrounds.
- During the Recruitment process every effort has been made to provide nearby centres to the candidates, while keeping in view the constraint of availability of suitable centres, equipped with necessary infrastructure and security provisions.
- **Around 83% candidates have been provided centres within 500 kilometers**.
- **Special care has been taken to ensure that almost all women candidates and Persons with Disability are provided centres within 200 kilometers**.
- **Even for those candidates who could not be accommodated within 500 kilometer, Indian Railways has taken extra efforts and arranged exam special trains from places like Deoria, Chhapra, Patna, Darbhanga, Muzaffurpur, Ara to destinations such as Secunderabad, Bhopal, Indore, NCR etc**.
- So far 10 pairs of such special trains have been mobilized and more trains will be planned in future.

NOTE:

- RRBs follow the practice of direct and instantaneous communication with candidates through regular updates on web-sites and individual SMSs and emails.
- Candidates are appealed to refer to these official communications only and not be misguided by false propaganda and rumors being circulated on social media, many of which are aimed at misleading the genuine candidates and adversely affecting their preparation for examination.

MOPAD: SBI LAUNCHES UNIFIED PAYMENT TERMINAL

SBI makes accepting digital payments easier.

- India's largest bank- **State Bank of India (SBI) has launched its Multi Option Payment Acceptance Device (MOPAD) for digital payments convenience of merchants and consumers**.
- *It aims at providing digital convenience to customers and ease of doing business for merchants at the same time*.
- SBI will roll-out this new initiative on all SBI PoS terminals in a phased manner.

ABOUT MULTI OPTION PAYMENT ACCEPTANCE DEVICE (MOPAD):

- **MOPAD aims at providing convenience to merchants by eliminating multiple machines that they keep in order to facilitate transaction from different sources**.
- **It will allow customers to make payments through cards, Bharat QR, UPI and SBI Buddy (e-wallet) on a single Point-of-Sale (PoS) terminal**.
- **It will help merchants to integrate different kinds of transaction through one PoS machine**, which will help in eliminating their operational inconveniences and streamline the cash flow.
- **Customers will receive a charge-slip as proof of payment after processing any type of transactions through MOPAD**.
- **This multipurpose initiative will also enhance the digital ecosystem and help the bank in driving the economy towards a less-cash society**.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES NIRYAT MITRA MOBILE APP

- **Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched Niryat Mitra mobile application for exporters and importers of the country**.
- **The app is developed by the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO)**, the largest exporters organisation of the country.
- It is available both on Android and IOS platforms.

ABOUT THE NIRYAT MITRA APP:

- **The app provides a wide range of information required to undertake international trade** right from policy provisions for export and import, applicable GST rate, available export incentives, tariff, preferential tariff, market access requirements- SPS and TBT measures.
- It provides all the information at the tariff line.

- **The app works internally to map Indian Trade Clarification (ITC) Harmonized Item Description and Coding System (HS) code of other countries with that of India**.
- **It also provides all the required data without users bothering about HS code of any country**. Presently, the app has data of 87 countries.
- **It also provides notifications of export promotion programmes organised by FIEO** to provide opportunity to industry to participate in them.

ABOUT THE FEDERATION OF INDIAN EXPORT ORGANISATIONS (FIEO):

- **It is the apex and largest trade promotion organisation in India**.
- It was jointly established in 1965 by Ministry of Commerce and private trade and industry.
- **It is responsible for representing and assisting Indian entrepreneurs and exporters in foreign markets**.
- **It is headquartered in New Delhi**.

GOVERNMENT SETS UP GOM HEADED BY SURESH PRABHU TO DECIDE ON RCEP TALKS

- **Union Government has constituted a four-member Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu to decide on 16-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations**.
- It was constituted to advise the Prime Minister on whether to continue with or withdraw from RCEP negotiations.

ABOUT THE GROUP OF MINISTERS (GOM):

- **The GoM also includes Interim Finance and Power Minister Piyush Goyal, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Puri**.
- It has been mandated to find a way forward from the current deadlock over issues of joining RCEP or not.
- **It will also help fine tune India's strategy for the upcoming RCEP ministerial meet in August 2018 in Singapore**.
- Besides, it will also help to finalize India's position before the RCEP Summit that is scheduled to be held in November 2018.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (RCEP):

- **RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) or comprehensive regional economic integration agreement between the 10-ASEAN countries** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) **and its six FTA partners** (Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Japan and Korea).

- Its negotiations were formally launched at the 2012 ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- **Till 2017, 16 RCEP member states accounted for population of 3.4 billion people with total GDP (in terms of PPP) of $49.5 trillion, approximately 38% of the world's GDP** (combined GDPs of China and India makes up more than half that amount) and 29% of world trade.
- So far, the objective of RCEP negotiations is to achieve modern, comprehensive, high-quality, and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement among ASEAN Member States and its FTA partners.
- The coverage areas of RCEP negotiations included trade in goods and services, investment, intellectual property, economic and technical cooperation, competition, dispute settlement, e-commerce, Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs) etc.

WHAT IS INDIA'S CONCERN?

- **There has been a rising pressure on India to allow more market access to RCEP member countries including China and conclude negotiations by end of 2018.**
- **Several RCEP countries want India to open up its market for 92% of traded goods, while they are still reluctant to allow Indian skilled professionals greater access to their markets.**
- **India has maintained its position that it is ready to offer access for up to 85% of items**, with deviations for countries such as Australia, New Zealand and China, with whom it does not have FTA.
- India also has a trade deficit with 10 RCEP countries including China, South Korea and Australia, among others.

CCEA APPROVES CONTINUATION OF POST MATRIC SCHOLARSHIP FOR OBC STUDENTS FOR STUDYING IN INDIA SCHEME

- **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the continuation and revision of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Post Matric Scholarship for Other Backward Classes Students for studying in India (PMS-OBC) till 2020.**
- PMS-OBC is a flagship scheme of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, in operation since 1998-99.
- **It is a fully centrally sponsored scheme that aims to provide financial assistance to OBC students studying at post-matriculation or post-secondary stage to enable them to complete their education.**

ABOUT THE REVISED PMS-OBC:

- The revision in PMS-OBC scheme aims to ensure effective implementation and better monitoring of the schemes.
- **It will cover larger numbers of eligible and deserving poor OBC students who will be able to pursue higher studies.**
- It will also ensure effective implementation, achieve de-duplication and enhanced monitoring.

- Under the revised PMS-OBC, annual parental income ceiling has been increased from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 1.5 lakh.
- Now onwards, 30% of funds will be earmarked for girl students and 5% for students with disabilities.
- Disbursement of scholarships will be now through Aadhaar seeded bank accounts.
- Central assistance for scheme will be released according to National Allocation since its funds are limited.
- Henceforth, the concept of Committed Liability will not apply to States/UTs for releases.

DELHI HIGH COURT DECRIMINALISES BEGGING IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

- Delhi High Court has declared 25 sections of Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 which have been extended to Delhi, as "unconstitutional".
- With this, it has struck down legal provision of criminalising begging in the national capital.
- The court's order came on PILs which had sought decriminalisation of begging in capital and beggar by challenging provisions of the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act.
- The PILs had argued that poverty can never be a crime and if a person is destitute and begs for living, such person cannot be treated as criminal.

ABOUT THE DELHI HIGH COURT RULING:

- The court observed that people beg on streets not because they wish to, but because they need to.
- Begging is their last resort to subsistence as they have no other means to survive.
- It also held that begging is a symptom of disease, of the fact that a person has fallen through the socially created net.
- Government has a mandate to provide social security for everyone, to ensure that all citizens have basic facilities and presence of beggars is evidence that the state has not managed to provide these to all its citizens.
- Criminalising begging violates most fundamental rights of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.
- People in this stratum do not have access to basic necessities such as food, shelter and health, and in addition, criminalising them denies them the basic fundamental right to communicate and seek to deal with their plight.
- State can bring in alternative legislation to curb rackets of forced begging, after undertaking an empirical examination on the sociological and economic aspects of the matter.

ABOUT THE BOMBAY PREVENTION OF BEGGING ACT, 1959:

- The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act prescribes a penalty of more than 3 years of jail in case of first conviction for begging and the person can be ordered to be detained for 10 years in the subsequent conviction.

- At present, there is no central law on begging and destitution but most states have adopted the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959.
- This law functions as a derivative figure for all state anti-begging laws.
- **20 States and two Union Territories have either enacted their own legislations or adopted legislations enacted by other States.**

CABINET APPROVES RAISING OF FOUR ADDITIONAL BATTALIONS OF NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE

Centre strengthens the NDRF !

- **Union Cabinet has given approval for raising of four additional battalions of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to strengthen India's disaster response set up.**
- These battalions will be placed in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Delhi's National Capital Region, based on their disaster vulnerability profile.

MORE ABOUT THESE BATTALIONS:

- **The objective of raising four additional battalions is to reduce response time keeping in view vast geographic area of the country.**
- **These four battalions will initially be raised as two battalions in Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and one battalion each in Assam Rifles (ARs) and Border Security Force (BSF).**
- **Later these four battalions will be converted into NDRF battalions.**

ABOUT THE NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE (NDRF):

- **NDRF is India's elite disaster mitigation combat force, established in 2006 under The Disaster Management Act, 2005.**
- **It is headquartered in New Delhi.**
- **It functions under Union Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- **It works under National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** which lays down policies, plans and guidelines for disaster management.
- **The mandate of the specialized force is to undertake special disaster response, relief, rescue operations and combat roles independently in the case of an event of any disaster (natural or man-made), accident or emergency.**
- **It also assists local authorities in launching a quick rescue and response operation to save life and property.**
- **At present there are 12 battalions in NDRF** which are deployed strategically across the country to provide immediate response.

CABINET APPROVES RELEASE OF PULSES TO STATES WITH DISCOUNTED RATES

- **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved release of pulses to States/UTs at a discounted rate to be utilized for various Welfare Schemes from stock of pulses procured under Price Support Schemes (PSS)**.
- The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

DETAILS OF THIS SCHEME:

- **Under this approved Scheme, States/UT Governments will be offered to lift 34.88 lakh MT of pulses at a discounted rate over the prevailing wholesale market price of sourcing state on First come first serve basis**.
- **This will be a one-time dispensation for 1 year period or complete disposal of 34.88 lakh MT of pulses stock whichever is earlier**.
- Government will spend Rs. 5,237 crore for implementation of this Scheme.
- **The decision will enable the States/UTs to use pulses in various Welfare Schemes like Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Programmes (ICDP)** etc. besides making available to warehouses, which may be required in the coming Kharif season for storage of commodities procured under PPS.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **Pulses production was witnessed at an all time high during the last 2 years in the country**.
- Due to bumper production, Central Government also has made record procurement of pulses (45.43 lakh MT) during Kharif 2017 and Rabi 2018 marketing season under the Price Support Scheme.
- **This coupled with an increase in Minimum Support Price (MSP) will require additional procurement under Price Support Scheme**.

NRIS CANNOT FILE RTI APPLICATIONS: GOVERNMENT

- **Government has informed Lok Sabha that Non-Resident Indians (NRI) cannot file Right to Information (RTI) applications to seek governance-related information from Central government department**.
- It mentioned that only citizens of India have the right to seek information under the provisions of RTI Act, 2005 and NRIs are not eligible to file RTI applications.

ABOUT THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT 2005:

- **This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 12 October 2005**.
- **It mandates timely response to citizen's requests for government information** by various public authorities under Central Government as well as the State Governments.
- **The law imposes penalty for wilful default by government officials**.
- **Citizens can ask for anything that government can disclose to Parliament**.

- **Objectives of RTI are to empower citizens** (as right to information is the fundamental right of the citizens under Article 19), **promote transparency and accountability in working of Government, check corruption and make our democracy work for the people in the real sense**.
- **Public authorities defined under this law are required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days of the request**.
- **The law also mandates every public authority to computerise their records** for wide dissemination and proactively certain categories of information so that citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

- **Information that can prejudicially impact internal security, relations with foreign countries, intellectual property rights, breach of parliamentary privilege and impedes investigations cannot be shared with public under RTI.**
- **Cabinet papers are exempted from RTI until decision has been implemented**.
- **However, discussions within Cabinet are never disclosed under RTI**.

PARLIAMENT PASSES HOMEOPATHY CENTRAL COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

- **Parliament has passed Homoeopathy Central Council (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to replace Ordinance promulgated by President in May 2018**.
- It amends the Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973 which sets up a Central Council of Homoeopathy and regulates homoeopathic education and practice.

WHAT ARE THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE BILL?

SUPERSESSION OF CENTRAL COUNCIL:

- **The Bill amends the 1973 Act to provide for supersession of Central Council with effect from May 18, 2018**.
- **The Council will be reconstituted within 1 year from the date of its supersession**.
- **In the interim period, Board of Governors constituted by central government will exercise powers of Central Council**.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS:

- **It will consist of up to seven members including persons of eminence in field of homoeopathy education, eminent administrators appointed by Union Government**.
- **The Central Government will select one of these members as Chairperson of the Board**.
- **With regard to policy decisions, directions of the central government will be final**.

PERMISSION FOR EXISTING HOMOEOPATHY COLLEGES:

- **The Bill states that if any homoeopathy medical college has been established or if any established homoeopathy medical college has opened new courses or increased its admission capacity before the ordinance was promulgated, then it will have to seek permission from Union Government within 1 year**.
- **If any homoeopathy medical college fails to seek such permission, then the medical qualification granted by it to the student will not be recognised under this law**.

PARLIAMENT PASSES INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE (SECOND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

Bill passed in the interest of Home Buyers.

- **Parliament has passed Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2018 to bring relief to home buyers and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.
- The Bill replaces the ordinance promulgated in this regard and amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE BILL:

- **The Bill recognises home buyers as financial creditors in the real estate project and giving them due representation in the Committee of Creditors (CoC), thus providing significant relief to home buyers**.
- **It will allow home buyers to invoke Section 7 of IBC, 2016 against errant developers**.
- **This will allow financial creditors to file application seeking insolvency resolution process**.
- **As financial creditors, home buyers will be able to participate in decision-making process when developers are declared bankrupt under IBC, 2016**.
- **The bill also proposes to reduce minimum voting threshold for Committee of Creditors (CoC) to 66%, from 75% for key decisions**.
- **Besides, the Bill also benefits Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector from IBC**.
- **It allows the promoter of MSME to bid for their own enterprise undergoing the insolvency resolution process as long as they are not wilful defaulters**.

MORE DETAILS:

- **The IBC, 2016 provides a time-bound process to resolution of insolvency among companies and individuals**.
- **Insolvency is a situation where an individual or a company is unable to repay their outstanding debt**.
- **Government in November 2017 had set up the Insolvency Law Committee to review IBC and identify issues in its implementation and suggest changes**.
- The Committee had made several recommendations such as exempting MSMEs from certain

provisions of IBC, treating allottees under real estate project as financial creditors, reducing voting thresholds of committee of creditors (CoC), among others.

- **Subsequently, the President had promulgated Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 in June 2018 after approval of the Central Government**.

LOK SABHA PASSES REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2017 TO ALLOW PROXY VOTING TO OVERSEAS INDIANS

- **Lok Sabha has passed Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 2017 by voice vote to extend the facility of 'proxy voting' to overseas Indians, on the lines of service voters**.
- The Bill seeks to amend Representation of People Act (RPA), 1950 and Representation of People Act (RPA), 1951 to allow for proxy voting and make certain provisions of these Acts gender-neutral.

ABOUT THE RPA:

- **RPA, 1950 provides for allocation of seats and delimitation of constituencies for elections (state assembly and Lok Sabha elections), qualifications of voters, and preparation of electoral rolls**.
- **It permits registration of persons in electoral rolls who are ordinarily resident in the constituency**.
- **These persons include persons holding service qualification (**such as members of armed forces, members of armed police force of state, serving outside state or central government employees posted outside India and persons holding certain offices in India) **declared by President in consultation with Election Commission**.
- **Under it wives of such persons are also deemed to be ordinarily residing in India**.
- **RPA, 1951 provides for conduct of elections and offences and disputes related to elections**.
- **It permits an overseas voter to vote only in person**.
- **In this case overseas voter is a citizen of India who is absent from his place of ordinary residence in India**.
- **Currently, only service personnel are permitted to vote through proxy**.

ABOUT THE BILL:

- **The Bill replaces the term 'wife' with 'spouse' in both Acts**.
- **It replaces wife with spouse of a person holding service qualification to vote**.
- **It amends RPA, 1951 to permit overseas voter to cast their vote in person or by proxy in constituency where elections are being conducted**.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- **According to rough estimates, there are about 1 crore Indians settled abroad, of which 60 lakh may be within eligible voting age**.

- **By granting them proxy voting rights, overseas Indians will be able to exercise the franchise during elections and also need not to spend foreign currency to come to India during elections**.
- **Moreover, this decision will also enable overseas Indians to considerably sway in election results, especially in states such as Punjab, Kerala and Gujarat where a number of expats hail from**.

R S SHARMA RE-APPOINTED TRAI CHAIRPERSON TILL 2020

- **The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the reappointment of Ram Sewak Sharma as the chairperson of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) for further period beyond August 2018 upto September 2020**, i.e. date on which he attains age of 65 years.
- He was in July 2015 named as the TRAI chief for a three-year period.

WHO IS RAM SEWAK SHARMA?

- **Sharma is 1982 batch (retired) IAS officer of Jharkhand cadre**.
- **Prior to his appointment as TRAI chairman, he had worked in various government departments particularly dealing with IT-enabled programmes**.
- **He has also worked as the Director General and Mission Director of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) or Aadhaar**.

ABOUT THE TELECOM REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF INDIA (TRAI):

- **TRAI is an independent regulator of telecommunications business in India**.
- **It was established in 1997 through Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997**.
- **TRAI also fixes or revises the tariffs for telecom services in India**.
- Its mission is to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in India to enable country to have leading role in emerging global information society.
- It also provides fair and transparent environment that promotes level playing field and facilitates fair competition in the market.
- **It also regularly issues orders and directions on various subjects such as tariffs, quality of service, interconnections, Direct To Home (DTH) services and mobile number portability**.

WORLD BIOFUEL DAY: AUGUST 10

Let's switch to a cleaner fuel for tomorrow

- **World Biofuel Day (The International Biodiesel Day) is observed every year on August 10 to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels i.e. Green Fuels or Bio-fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels**.
- Bio-fuel is a renewable, bio-degradable, sustainable and environment friendly fuel.
- It can be seen as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DAY?

- **On this day in 1893, Sir Rudalph Diesel (inventor of the diesel engine) for the first time successfully ran a mechanical engine with 'Peanut Oil'.**
- His research experiment had predicted that vegetable oil is going to replace the fossil fuels in the next century to fuel different mechanical engines.

HOW THIS DAY IS OBSERVED IN INDIA?

- **In India, World Biofuel Day is being observed by the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.**
- **This year it had organized World Biofuel Day programme at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.**
- It had conducted separate interactive sessions on ethanol, bio-diesel, bio-CNG and 2nd Generation biofuels.

ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE BIOFUELS:

- Considering the **benefits of biofuels in reducing import dependency on crude oil**, a clean environment fuel and generating additional income to farmers and employment generation in rural areas, Government has undertaken a number of initiatives such as biofuels programme and increasing blending of biofuels etc.
- **The biofuels programme is in synergy with Government's other initiatives for Make in India, Swachh Bharat and doubling farmers' income by 2022.**
- **Government's major interventions in this sector includes administrative price mechanism for ethanol, simplifying procurement procedures of OMCs, amending provisions of Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 and enabling lignocellulosic route for ethanol procurement.**
- **Oil PSUs are also planning to set up 12 Second Generation (2G) Bio-refineries** to augment ethanol supply and address environmental issues arising out of burning of agricultural biomass especially in North India.
- **Government also has approved a National Policy on Biofuels-2018 in June 2018.**
- **It aims at reaching 20% ethanol-blending and 5% biodiesel-blending by year 2030.**
- It also has expanded the scope of feedstock for ethanol production and has provided for **incentives for production of advanced biofuels**.
- Government also has increased the price of C-heavy molasses-based ethanol **to boost the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)**.
- **It also has fixed price of B-heavy molasses-based ethanol and sugarcane juice-based ethanol for the first time at Rs. 47.40**
- **It also has reduced GST on ethanol for blending in fuel from 18% to 5%.**
- Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas is making all efforts to increase ethanol supply for petrol and has taken several steps in this direction.

AXIS BANK FIRST TO INTRODUCE IRIS AUTHENTICATION FOR AADHAAR-BASED TRANSACTIONS

From your eyes only!

- **Axis Bank became the first bank in the country to introduce Iris Scan Authentication feature for Aadhaar-based transactions through its micro ATM tablets**.
- These micro ATM tablets are Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) certified and UIDAI compliant registered devices with completely integrated iris sensors.

SO, HOW DOES IT WORK?

- **Customers need to select the desired service (funds transfer, cash withdrawal) and feed-in their Aadhaar numbers in the micro ATM**.
- **Next, they have to choose IRIS as desired mode of authentication**.
- **Verification will be done by scanning eyes of customers through tablet's iris sensor camera in 3-5 seconds**.
- **The transaction will be completed after biometric details are verified from UIDAI database**.
- **Axis Bank is presently running a pilot program of iris-based Aadhaar authentication for its customers at eight branches in rural segment largely covering areas of Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh**.
- **It is also exploring its application for varied services such as loan processing, insurance, eKYC account opening and others, most likely extending to the semi-urban and urban regions as well**.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TECHNOLOGY?

- **Iris scan technology is completely contactless and provides up to 98.2% authentication success rate and offers edge over other prevalent biometric modes**.
- **It will help to boost the bank's financial inclusion efforts by making Aadhaar authentication process hassle-free and offering easier access to digital banking for consumers especially in the rural parts of the country**.
- Micro ATMs completely eliminate the requirement of debit cards, passwords, PINs, and user IDs, and empower consumers to avail banking services using only their Aadhaar numbers and biometrics (iris scan or fingerprint scan).

IFFCO FORAYS INTO FOOD PROCESSING, FORMS JV WITH SPANISH FIRM

- **Fertiliser major IFFCO has entered into a joint venture with Congelados De Navarra to set up a food processing plant at Ludhiana in Punjab with an investment of Rs 325 crore**.
- With this joint venture, co-operative IFFCO for the first time will foray into the food processing sector.
- **Congelados De Navarra company based in Spain is a pioneer in quick frozen (IQF) technology**.

- **It is into processing of vegetables, fruits, herbs and ready-made pre-cooked dishes**.

ABOUT THE JV:

- **In the JV, IFFCO will have 30% stake while Congelados De Navarra will have the remaining 70% stake**.
- **The company will invest about Rs 325 crore to set up a greenfield food processing unit**.
- **The proposed plant will source produce like potatoes, peas and cauliflower from farmers and then process them for sale in the domestic and exports market**.
- **IFFCO's foray into food processing business will be of benefit of farmers**.
- **It will also contribute in the government's goal to double farmers income by 2022**.
- **This new food processing facility will also generate 400 direct and 5,000 indirect local jobs in Punjab**.

ABOUT THE INDIAN FARMERS FERTILISER COOPERATIVE LIMITED (IFFCO):

- **IFFCO is a 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**.
- **It was founded in 1967 with just 57 cooperatives and at present it has an amalgamation of over 36,000 Indian Cooperatives** with diversified business interests ranging from General Insurance to Rural Telecom apart from its core business of manufacturing and selling fertilisers.
- **It is headquartered in New Delhi**.

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IIP): INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT RECORDS 5-MONTH HIGH GROWTH OF 7% IN JUNE 2018

Industrial output in top gear!

- **According to the data released by Central Statistics Office (CSO), factory output measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) was at 7% in June 2018, which is a five-month high**.
- This was on account of higher output in mining, manufacturing and power generation segments.
- Moreover, CSO also revised IIP upwards for May 2018 at 3.9% from previous estimate of 3.2% earlier.

DETAILS:

- **The cumulative IIP growth for the period of April-June 2018 was 5.2% over corresponding period of the previous year**.
- **The manufacturing sector in June 2018 grew by 6.9%, as against decline of 0.7% in the same month an year-ago**.

- **Power generation segment grew by 8.5% in June against 2.1% growth an year ago**.
- **The mining sector output recorded 6.6% growth in June against 0.1% in June 2017**.

ABOUT THE INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IIP):

- **IIP is a composite indicator that measures short-term changes in volume of production of basket of industrial products during given period with respect to chosen base period**.
- **It is compiled and published monthly by Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.

BASE YEAR:

- **The CSO had revised the base year of the IIP from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in May 2017** to capture structural changes in economy and improve the quality and representativeness of indices.
- **The revised IIP (2011-12) reflects changes in the industrial sector and also aligns it with the base year of other macroeconomic indicators like Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.

SECTOR WISE ITEMS AND WEIGHTAGES:

- **IIP covers 407 item groups. Sector wise, the items included falls into 3 categories viz. Manufacturing (405 items), Mining (1 items) & Electricity (1 item)**.
- The weights of the three sectors are 77.63%, 14.37%, 7.9% respectively.
- **The revised combined weightage of eight core Industries in the IIP is 40.27%**.

IMF FORECASTS 7.3% GDP GROWTH FOR INDIA IN 2018-19 AND 7.5% IN 2019-20

India's economic future looking bright.

- **The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its report has projected India's GDP growth 7.3% in the 2018-19 fiscal and 7.5% in 2019-2020 on strengthening of investment and robust private consumption**.
- India's near-term macroeconomic outlook is broadly favourable.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE IMF REPORT:

HEADLINE INFLATION:

- **It is projected to rise to 5.2% in fiscal year 2018/19, as demand conditions tighten, along with recent depreciation of rupee and higher oil prices, housing rent allowances and agricultural minimum support prices**.
- But it has averaged 3.6% in fiscal year 2017/18 which is a 17-year low, reflecting low food prices

on return to normal monsoon rainfall, agriculture sector reforms, subdued domestic demand and currency appreciation.

CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT (CAD):

- **It is projected to widen further to 2.6% of GDP on rising oil prices and strong demand for imports.**
- **CAD will be offset by slight increase in remittances**.

FINANCIAL SECTOR REFORMS:

- They have been undertaken to address twin balance sheet problems, as well as to revive bank credit and enhance efficiency of credit provision by accelerating cleanup of bank and corporate balance sheets.
- **India's stability-oriented macro-economic policies and progress on structural reforms are continuing to bear fruit**.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Continued fiscal consolidation is needed for India to lower elevated public debt levels, supported by simplifying and streamlining GST structure**.
- Further, while important steps have been taken to improve recognition of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and recapitalise Public Sector Banks (PSBs), still more needs to be done.
- **Persistently-high household inflation expectations and large general government fiscal deficits and debt are still key macroeconomic challenges**.

PSB REFORMS:

- **Large fraud in PSBs highlights financial sector weaknesses and underscores need for government to take further steps to improve PSB's governance and operations, including by considering more aggressive disinvestment**.

ECONOMIC RISKS:

- **Domestic economic risks are tilted to downside and external side risks include further increase in international oil prices, tighter global financial conditions, retreat from cross-border integration including spillover risks from global trade conflict and rising regional geopolitical tensions**.
- **Domestic risks pertain to tax revenue shortfalls related to continued GST implementation issues and delays in addressing twin balance sheet problems and other structural reforms**.

CABINET EXTENDS TENURE OF COMMISSION CONSTITUTED TO EXAMINE ISSUE OF OBC SUB-CATEGORISATION

- **Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the term of Commission to examine the issue of Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the Central List till November 2018**.
- **This is the third extension granted to the commission** for submission of its politically crucial report on creating quotas within quotas.

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY:

- **The five member Commission was constituted under article 340 of the Constitution in October, 2017 with approval of the President**.
- **It is headed by former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Justice (Retd) G. Rohini**.
- Its report was to be submitted within three months (i.e. by January 2018).
- But since then, **it has sought and was granted extensions twice citing voluminous nature of its task**.
- **The commission has been formed under Article 340 of the Constitution which was also used to establish landmark Mandal Commission** (set up in 1979) more than two decades ago which recommended 27% reservation for socially and educationally backward classes in higher education and government jobs.
- **Over the years, benefits of this reservation was cornered mostly by dominant OBC groups**.
- **The sub-categorisation commission's report is expected to recommend earmarking sub-quotas for the extremely backward classes within the OBCs**.
- **Even National Commission for Backward Classes in 2015 had noted that unequals cannot be treated equally and recommended that OBCs be categorised into extremely backward classes, more backward classes and backward classes**.
- **At present, 11 states have sub-categorised OBCs for their state services**.

MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION:

- **The Sub-categorisation commission was tasked to examine extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among castes included in the broad category of OBC in central government jobs and educational institutions especially with reference to OBCs included in Central list**.
- **It was also tasked to take up the exercise of identifying respective castes, sub-castes, communities synonyms in Central List of OBCs and classify them into their respective sub-categories**.
- **It is mandated to work out a mechanism, norms, criteria and parameters, in scientific approach, for sub-categorization within such OBCs**.

PROJECTS FOR DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR LAUNCHED IN ALIGARH, UP

- **The projects for defence industrial corridor in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh were launched recently by Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath**.
- It was launched as part of the Union Government's efforts to develop specialised zones dedicated

to defence production in the state.

ABOUT THE DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR IN U.P:

- **As part of the defence corridor in UP, six nodal points, Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow, Kanpur, Chitrakoot and Jhansi have been identified.**
- **There will be exhibition of products by armed forces, defence public sector undertakings (PSUs) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) which are planned to be indigenised over the next five years.**

DEFENCE MANUFACTURING IN INDIA:

- **Defence Manufacturing was identified as one of the 25 key sectors as part of Make in India initiative.**
- **In 2018-19 Union Budget, Government had announced setting up of two corridors – one in Tamil Nadu and other in UP- exclusively for defence manufacturing.**
- **The main purpose of setting of these two corridors is for inclusion of Indigenous Design, Development and Manufacture (IDDM) category and giving it top priority in capital acquisition, introduction of make procedure and simplification of licensing process and modification of offset policy.**

INDIAN HOUSING PROJECT IN PLANTATION AREAS: INDIA HANDS OVER 1ST LOT OF HOUSES BUILT IN SRI LANKA

- **India has handed over 404 houses built for Indian-origin people in Sri Lanka's tea plantation areas at the Dunsinane Estate in Nuwara Eliya city.**
- This is the first lot of houses built under Indian Housing Project in Plantation Areas in Sri Lanka.

ABOUT THE INDIAN HOUSING PROJECT IN PLANTATION AREAS:

- **Under this project, close to 47,000 houses so far have been completed out of total 60,000.**
- **With grant of over US $350 million, it is India's largest assistance project in any country.**
- **Houses built under it are provided to Indian-origin people, mostly Tamils in Sri Lanka's tea plantation areas.**
- **India is also considering to sign agreement for construction of additional 10,000 houses at a cost of 12 billion Sri Lankan Rupees under this project.**

ABOUT INDIAN-ORIGIN TAMILS IN SRI LANKA:

- **Indian-origin Tamils, mostly employed in tea and rubber plantations in Sri Lanka, lack proper housing.**
- **They are mostly residing in central hill areas of the island country.**

- **They were brought from India by British rulers during 19th century to work in coffee plantations in Sri Lanka**.
- **More than a million are still associated with tea and rubber plantations**.
- Though they have been given the Sri Lankan citizenship, **housing is one of the major issue for these workers employed as daily wagers**.
- **Earlier, Sri Lankan Government led by President Maithripala Sirisena had formulated a national plan of action for the plantation workers and planned for construction of 55,000 houses till 2020**.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY OBSERVED ON AUGUST 12 WITH THEME SAFE SPACES FOR YOUTH

- **International Youth Day is observed every year across the world on 12 August to draw attention to give set of cultural and legal issues surrounding the youth**.
- Observance of this day seeks to highlight the role of young women and men as essential partners in change and opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges and problems facing the world's youth.
- The theme for this year is **'Safe Spaces for Youth'**.
- **It aims to highlight the need of safe spaces where youth can come together, engage in activities related to their diverse needs and interests, participate in decision making processes and freely express themselves**.
- **The theme supports 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11**, emphasizes the need for provision of space towards inclusive and sustainable urbanization.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY (IYD):

- **It was instituted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by passing resolution 54/120 in December 1999**.
- **It was first observed on 12 August, 2000**.
- The day was instituted by UNHA on the recommendation made by the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon (Portugal) from 8 to 12 August 1998.

ABOUT THE YOUNG POPULATION IN THE WORLD:

- **There are currently 1.8 billion young people between ages of 10 and 24 in the world**.
- This is the largest youth population ever and **world is getting younger every day**.
- As per census 2011, **there are 364.66 million youngsters in the 10-24 age group in India**.
- **They constitute over 30% of the total population**.
- **This makes India one of the youngest nations of the world**.
- **But 1 in 10 of the world's children live in conflict zones and 24 million of them are out of school**.

- **Political instability, limited space for political and civic participation, labour market challenges have led to increasing isolation of youth in societies**.

MICHELLE BACHELET: FORMER CHILEAN PRESIDENT APPOINTED UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet (66) was appointed as the next United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**.
- **She was nominated by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres** and her appointment was approved by the UN General Assembly.
- **She will have a four year term** and shall replace Jordanian diplomat Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein (served a single term, beginning in 2014).
- **Bachelet most recently had served as the President (first woman) of Chile (from 2014 to 2018 and 2006 to 2010)**.
- She was the first Executive Director of UN-Women between 2010 and 2013.
- **She has also served as the Minister of Defence and Minister of Health in Chile**.

ROLE OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS HIGH COMMISSIONER:

- **He/she is mandated to promote and protect the universal exercise and full realization of human rights, across the world, as established in UN Charter**.
- **He/she is also the principal official who speaks out for human rights across the whole UN system, strengthening human rights mechanisms, enhancing equality, fighting discrimination in all its forms, strengthening accountability and rule of law, widening democratic space and protecting the most vulnerable from all forms of human rights abuse**.
- **The Office was created in 1993**.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **Bachelet will be overall the seventh High Commissioner since its creation**.

OPERATION MADAD AND OPERATION SAHYOG LAUNCHED TO RESCUE PEOPLE IN FLOOD-HIT KERALA

Indian Navy and Indian Army to the rescue.

- **Indian Navy has launched Operation Madad, a major rescue and relief operation in flood-hit Kerala.**
- **Indian Army also has launched Operation Sahyog to rescue people in flood-hit Kerala**.
- Both operations will support rescue and relief efforts of civil administration and National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF).

ABOUT OPERATION MADAD:

- **The operation was launched to assist the state administration and undertake disaster relief operations due to unprecedented flooding in many parts of Kerala following incessant rainfall and release of excess water from Idukki and other dams**.
- Under it, <u>Naval helicopters were also deployed for ferrying divers, power tools, axes and relief material to flooded areas to augment ongoing relief operations</u>.
- **Moreover, 50-men contingent was also positioned at the Naval Armament Depot (NAD) Aluva fully equipped for assistance in any kind of eventuality**.
- **In addition, Naval Hospital, INHS Sanjivani also rendered medical assistance as required**.
- **Naval personnel from INS Venduruthy also have set up a community kitchen**.

ABOUT OPERATION SAHYOG:

- **Indian Army has deployed its men and machinery into disaster relief and rescue operations at Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Idukki after incessant rain and landslides hit various northern districts of the state**.
- **Karnataka and Kerala Sub area Headquartered at Bangalore was controlling the "Operation Sahyog" in Kerala**.
- **It has deployed a total of eight columns of army personnel in various parts of Kerala in which two columns were exclusively kept for the worst-hit Idukki district**.
- **In addition, 80 army personnel from Madras Regiment were deployed for the ongoing rescue and relief operation for tourists at Pallivasal in Idukki**.
- **The army constructed temporary bridges for the evacuations of the stranded people from the isolated villages**.

DIGITAL NORTH EAST VISION 2022 RELEASED IN GUWAHATI

- **The Digital North East Vision 2022 was released in Guwahati, Assam by Union Minister for Electronics & Information Technology Ravi Shankar Prasad**.
- <u>It was released in presence of Chief Ministers and IT Ministers of North East States and senior officials of Central Government Ministries including DoT and DoNER etc</u>.
- First electronics manufacturing cluster in northeastern region was also inaugurated in Guwahati, Assam.

ABOUT THE DIGITAL NORTH EAST VISION 2022:

- **The vision document emphasizes on leveraging digital technologies to transform lives of people of north east and enhance ease of living**.
- **It identifies eight digital thrust areas namely**:
  - Digital Infrastructure
  - Digital services
  - Promotion of Electronics Manufacturing

- Digital empowerment
- Promotion of IT and ITes including BPOs
- Digital Payments
- Innovation & Startups
- Cyber security
- **It has developed state-wise roadmaps for implementing digital initiatives in North East States**.
- Through these, it aims to empower the people of the North Eastern region.
- **Under Digital North East, Union government will invest nearly Rs. 10,000 crore in the region over next 4 years to implement more than 400 projects**.
- **Digital North East is envisioned as an integral part of Digital India programme**.
- It will help in leveraging power of Information Technology to leapfrog the overall development of the North East region and realize its full potential.

FATEH MOBIN: IRAN UNVEILS NEXT GENERATION SHORT-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE

- **Iran has unveiled Fateh Mobin (Bright Conqueror)- next generation short-range ballistic missile capable of striking targets on land and sea**.
- The missile has successfully passed its tests.
- It was unveiled as part of Iran's thrust to further boost its defence capabilities at a time of rising tensions with United States.

ABOUT THE FATEH MOBIN MISSILE:

- **Fateh-110 missile is 100% domestically made in Iran**.
- **It is agile and has stealth, tactical and precision-guided capabilities**.
- Its range was not specified, but experts believe that it will be between 300-500 kilometers, more than previous versions Fateh Mobin missiles (having range of around 200 to 300 kilometres).
- **This missile was test-fired by Iran during the naval exercises in the strategically important Strait of Hormoz in August 2018**.
- This makes it the first test-fire of Iranian ballistic missile in over year and the first test of Fateh missile series since March 2017.

IT MUST BE NOTED:

- **Iran's missile programme is a major bone of contention with world powers, particularly United States**.
- But Iran see it as vital for its defensive posture in the troubled West Asian region.
- **US President Donald Trump had pulled out of the 2015 Iran- P5+1 nuclear deal** (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) between Iran and five world powers in May 2018 and had called for a new agreement that restricts Iran's missile capabilities and regional interventions.

INDIA'S FIRST GENETIC BANK FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INAUGURATED IN HYDERABAD

- **National Wildlife Genetic Resource Bank was inaugurated at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology's (CCMB) Laboratory of Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES) facility in Hyderabad, Telanagana**.
- It is India's first genetic resource bank where genetic material will be stored for posterity which will further the cause of conservation of endangered and protected animals.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE GENETIC RESOURCE BANK:

- **It is equipped with sophisticated equipments to preserve the genetic resources that could be utilised to virtually resurrect an animal species in case it goes extinct**.
- **It will cryopreserve living cell lines, gametes and embryos of endangered wild animal species in India**.
- **For cryogenic preservation, researchers at CCMB-LaCONES will use liquid Nitrogen that is cooled down to as low as minus 195 degrees Celsius**.
- It will aid wild life conservation efforts by taking up artificial reproduction, conducting studies in evolution biology and wildlife medicine.
- Thus, it will also help in protecting India's biodiversity and environment.
- **So far this bank has collected and preserved genetic resources of 23 species of Indian wild animals**.

SOME MORE DETAILS:

- **To develop this facility, CCMB researchers had conducted detailed study of Frozen Zoo, San Diego Zoo, US, which is considered as world's largest and most diverse genetic bank of living cell cultures, oocytes, sperms and embryos of extinct and endangered species**.
- **CCMB-LaCONES is only laboratory in India that has developed methods for collection and cryopreservation of semen and oocytes from wild animanls and successfully reproducing blackbuck, spotted deer and pigeons**.
- **LaCONES has developed a universal DNA based marker for identification of wild animals from parts and remains**.
- **It also has DNA banking of more than 250 species of mammals, birds and reptiles**.

JUSTICE MANJULA CHELLUR TAKES OATH AS CHAIRPERSON OF APPELLATE TRIBUNAL FOR ELECTRICITY

- **Justice Manjula Chellur took oath as Chairperson of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (ATE), Ministry of Power**.
- **Prior to this appointment, she was the Chief Justice of Bombay High Court**.
- She has been appointed for a period of 3 years or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

ABOUT JUSTICE MANJULA CHELLUR:

- **Smt. Justice Manjula Chellur was born on 5th December, 1955 in Karnataka**.
- **She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Allum Sunmangalamma Women's College, Bellary**.
- **Later, she had earned her law degree from Renukacharya Law College, Bangalore**.
- **In 1977, Supreme Court of India had sponsored her on Gender & Law fellowship to England's University of Warwick**.
- **She was the first woman Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court**.
- **She also served as Chief Justice of Kerala High Court and first female judge of Karnataka High Court**.
- **She was the second woman to be appointed as Chief Justice of Bombay High Court in 2016 and retired in December, 2017**.

ABOUT THE APPELLATE TRIBUNAL FOR ELECTRICITY (ATE):

- **It has been established by Union Ministry of Power in April 2004 by virtue of Section 110 of The Electricity Act, 2003**.
- **It has jurisdiction throughout India** and has been set up to hear appeals or original petitions against orders of Adjudicating officer or The Central Regulatory Commission or State Regulatory Commission or Joint Commission constituted under Electricity Act.
- It is conferred with original jurisdiction to hear petitions under Section 121 of the Act and issue directions to any appropriate commission for performance of its statutory functions.
- **It consists of Chairperson and three other Members**.
- **Every Bench constituted by Chairperson consists of at least one Judicial Member and one Technical Member**.
- **The tribunal ordinarily sits at Delhi**.

DAC APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF SIX NEXT GENERATION OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS

A decision that will further enhance maritime security

- **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman approved procurement of six indigenously designed and manufactured Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPVs) for the Indian Navy**.
- DAC is Defence Ministry's highest decision-making body on capital procurement of Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force).

ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION OFFSHORE PATROL VESSELS (NGOPVS):

- **NGOPVs will be built in indigenous shipyards** at an approximate cost of Rs. 4941 crore.
- **They will be fitted with state-of-the-art sensor suite with increased endurance**.
- **These platforms will strengthen maritime security by undertaking a multitude of operational roles both in blue water and littorals**.

- Seaward defence
- protection of offshore assets
- Search & seizure operations and maritime interdiction operations
- Mine warfare
- Surveillance missions
- Anti-piracy missions
- Counter infiltration operations
- Anti-poaching and trafficking operations
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)
- Search and rescue missions

ASHISH KUMAR BHUTANI APPOINTED CEO OF PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA

- **Government has appointed senior bureaucrat Ashish Kumar Bhutani as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**.
- He has been appointed to the post till May 2020.
- He is an IAS officer (1992 batch) of Assam-Meghalaya cadre.

ABOUT THE PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY):

- **It is a farmers' welfare scheme launched in 2016 to ensure faster insurance services or reliefs to farmers**.
- **It was formulated in line with One Nation–One Scheme theme by replacing earlier two schemes National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS)** by incorporating their best features and removing their inherent drawbacks (shortcomings).
- **It aims to reduce the premium burden on farmers and ensure early settlement of crop assurance claim for the full insured sum**.

OBJECTIVES:

- **Provide insurance coverage and financial support to farmers in events of natural calamities, pests & diseases**.
- **Stabilise income of farmers to ensure their continuance in farming**.
- **Ensure flow of credit to the agriculture sector**.
- **Encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices**.

BENEFICIARIES:

- **All farmers growing notified crops in notified area during the season who have insurable interest**

in crop are eligible under this scheme.

- **It also provides insurance benefits to Landless labourers.**
- **It is compulsory for loanee farmers availing crop loans for notified crops in notified areas and voluntary for non-loanee farmers.**

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- **Under this scheme, farmers need to pay a uniform premium of only 2% for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.**
- **In case of annual commercial and horticultural crops, farmers have to pay a premium of only 5%.**
- **The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and balance premium will be paid by Government.**
- **Moreover, there is no upper limit on Government subsidy, so farmers will get claim against full sum insured without any reduction.**
- **It covers yield losses due to non-preventable risks**, such as natural fire and lightning, storm, stailstorm, cyclone, typhoon, tempest, hurricane, tornado.
- **It also covers risks due to flood, inundation and landslide, drought, dry spells, pests and diseases.**
- **It also covers post-harvest losses.**
- Under this scheme, it mandates for use of technology such as smart phones, drones etc to capture and upload data of crop cutting to reduce delays in claim payment to farmers.
- **Remote sensing will be also used to reduce number of crop cutting experiments.**
- **The scheme is implemented on an Area Approach basis.**
- **In this case, defined area (i.e. unit area of insurance) is village or above and it can be a geo-mapped and geo-fenced region having homogenous risk profile for notified crop.**

PUNE TOPS IN EASE OF LIVING INDEX RELEASED BY HOUSING MINISTRY

- **Pune (Maharashtra) ranked first among 116 cities (with population of 1 million plus) in Ease of Living Index released by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).**
- Besides, two more Maharashtra cities- Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai- figure in the second and third spots.
- **The index exercise was launched in January 2018 by MoHUA with help of the consortium of IPSOS Research Pvt Ltd, Athena Infonomics, and Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).**

FURTHER DETAILS:

- **Top 10 cities (rank order) are: Pune, Navi Mumbai, Greater Mumbai, Tirupati, Chandigarh, Thane, Raipur, Indore, Vijaywada and Bhopal.**
- **Among other major cities, Chennai ranked 14th rank, Ahmedabad 23rd, Hyderabad 27th, Varanasi 33rd, Bengaluru 58th and Delhi 65th.**
- **Rampur in Uttar Pradesh was ranked worst on the scale & also Kohima and Patna on bottom two and three ranks while Kolkata was excluded from index, as West Bengal Government had refused**

to participate in the rankings, just as it has done with all other urban schemes.

ABOUT THE EASE OF LIVING INDEX:

- **The index conceived in June 2017 aims to help cities assess their liveability vis-a-vis global and national benchmarks and encourage cities to move towards an 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management**.
- **It covers 111 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities and cities with population of 1 million plus**.
- **It captures quality of life based on data collected from urban local bodies on four parameters, which were further broken down into 15 categories**.
- The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).
- **Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each, physical factors have weightage of 45 points and economic factors 5 points totalling to 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated**.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INDEX:

- **The index aims to help cities attain liveable city status, get them more investments and improve tourism**.
- **It also seeks to serve as knowledge base for taking policy decisions and for planning**.
- **It also marks shift to data driven approach to urbanisation and promote competitive spirit among cities**.

DELHI POLICE INDUCTS INDIA'S FIRST ALL-WOMAN SWAT TEAM FOR ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS

- **Delhi Police has inducted India's first all-woman Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team for anti-terrorist operations**.
- The all-woman SWAT team is the brainchild of Delhi Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik.
- It was formally inducted by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

ABOUT THE ALL-WOMAN SWAT TEAM:

- **The all-woman SWAT team was inducted after rigorous training of around 15 months from specialists all across India and abroad**.
- **It comprises of 36 women commandos from northeastern states** (13 members from Assam, 5 from Arunachal Pradesh, 5 from Sikkim, 5 from Manipur, 4 from Meghalaya, 2 from Nagaland and 1 from Mizoram and Tripura each).

- **They have undergone training to handle urban situations as well as jungle operations**.
- **They are also well-versed in Israeli Krav Maga, an unarmed combat style**.
- **Their expertise includes unarmed combat, ambush and counter-ambush and urban operations like building interventions, vehicle intervention and VVIP security**.
- **They are skilled at using weaponry like MP5 submachine guns and Glock-21 pistols**.
- **They will be deployed at strategic locations in Central and South Delhi as well as Red Fort and India Gate during Independence Day and Republic day celebrations**.

JODHPUR, MARWAR RANKED CLEANLIEST RAIL STATIONS IN THIRD PARTY SURVEY REPORT ON STATION CLEANLINESS

- Union Railway Ministry released Third Party Survey Report on Station Cleanliness which ranked 407 railway stations including 75 A1 category stations, 332 A category stations on the basis of cleanliness performance.
- **Jodhpur (Rajasthan) was ranked first in the survey of A1 category stations, Marwar (Rajasthan) first in A category stations and North Western Railway first among all Zonal Railways**.

ABOUT THE SURVEY:

- **This was third such audit cum cleanliness survey conducted by Indian Railways** to increase level of cleanliness under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan by identifying unclean spots, improve cleanliness standards and propel healthy competition among railway stations.
- **It was conducted by Quality Council of India (QCI) with help of their partners**.
- The parameters adopted for conducting survey were Evaluation of Process of cleanliness in main entry area, parking, main platform, waiting room (33.33%), direct observation by QCI assessors of cleanliness in these areas (33.33%) and passenger feedback (33.33%).
- **The cleanliness rankings of stations is reward for stations that have performed well and gives impetus for further improvement for stations that have not made into top rankings**.

RANKING OF STATIONS:

TOP 10 A1 CATEGORY STATIONS (OUT OF 75):

- Jodhpur (1st), Jaipur (2nd), Tirupati (3rd), Vijayawada (4th), Anand Vihar Terminal (5th), Secunderabad Junction (6th), Bandra (7th), Hyderabad (8th), Bhubaneshwar (9th) and Vishakhapatnam (10th).

TOP 10 A CATEGORY STATIONS (OUT OF 332):

- Marwar (1st), Phulera (2nd), Warangal (3rd), Udaipur (4th), Jaialmer (5th), Nizamabad (6th), Barmer (7th), Machiryal (8th), Mysore (9th) and Bhilwara (10th).

TOP 10 ZONAL RAILWAYS RANKINGS:

- North Western Railway (1st), South Central Railway (2nd), East Coast Railway (3rd), South East Central Railway (4th), Western Railway (5th), Southern Western Railway (6th), Southern Railway (7th), Central Railway (8th), West Central Railway (9th) and Northeast Frontiers Railway (10th).

GOVERNMENT APPROVES PROPOSAL FOR SETTING UP OF WATER AERODROMES IN THE COUNTRY

- **Union Civil Aviation Ministry has given in-principle approval to set up water aerodromes in the country**.
- To start with it has identified five states: Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Assam for development of water aerodromes.
- **In the first phase of the project, Chilka Lake (Odisha), Sabarmati River Front and Sardar Sarovar Dam (Gujarat) have been identified for the development of such facilities**.

DETAILS TO KNOW ABOUT WATER AERODROMES:

- **Aerodrome is a location from which aircraft flight operations take place, regardless of whether they involve air cargo, passengers**.
- **The development of aerodromes projects in India will pave way for operation of amphibian planes (both in land and water) to enhance air connectivity**.
- **These water aerodromes will be set up near tourist locations and places of religious importance**.
- Since there is no historical data, the project will be done on a pilot basis, initially.
- **The entity looking to set up water aerodrome has to take approvals from authorities**, including ministries of defence, home, environment and forests, and shipping.
- DGCA already has issued regulations prescribing procedure and requirement for licensing of water aerodromes.
- **The water aerodrome cannot be used for scheduled air transport services without licence**.
- **The issued licence will be valid for two years**.
- **Initially, provisional licence will be issued for a period of six months**, during which implementation of water aerodrome operation will be monitored and regular licence will be accorded afterwards.

WHAT ARE SEA PLANES?

- **Sea-planes are small fixed-wing aircrafts designed for taking off and landing on water and do not require capital-intensive infrastructure for operations**.
- They are considered ideal for high-end travel to destinations that are far by road and are not equipped with airports.
- **They require either 1-km long airstrip or water body, which is one km long and at least 10 feet deep**.

2018 ALBANY MEDICAL CENTER PRIZE AWARDED TO JAMES ALLISON, CARL JUNE AND STEVEN ROSENBERG

- **Three US scientists James Allison, Carl June and Steven Rosenberg were declared winners of 2018 Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research**.
- **They were awarded in recognition of their research in immunology** and translation of their ideas into effective therapies that have led to innovative treatments for cancer, HIV and other diseases.
- They will share this $500,000 medical prize.
- They will receive the award at the ceremony to be held in September 2018 in Albany, New York.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MEDICAL CENTER PRIZE IN MEDICINE AND BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH:

- **It is United States' second highest value prize in medicine and biomedical research, awarded by the Albany Medical Center**.
- **It was established in 2000 by late Morris "Marty" Silverman to honor to any physician or scientists or group whose work have led to significant advances in fields of health care and scientific research** with demonstrated translational benefits applied to improved patient care.
- **It is awarded annually and carries monetary award of $500,000**.

POSTAL HIGHWAY PROJECT: INDIA GRANTS RS 470 MILLION TO NEPAL

- **India has released additional Rs. 470 million (Nepali) for Phase I of Postal Highway Project being constructed in Southern Plains of Nepal**.
- The amount released will help to maintain fund liquidity for ongoing **construction of 14 road packages under the Postal Highway Project**.

ABOUT INDIA'S FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO NEPAL:

- **India is providing financial assistance to Nepal since 1950** for infrastructure development as part of its multi-sectoral India-Nepal Economic Co-operation Programme.
- **With release of recent additional funds, India so far has released Rs 2.35 billion to Nepal out of total grant assistance of Rs. 8.00 billion committed to implement 14 packages under Packages 2-6 of Phase I of Postal Highway Project**.
- **The Package 1 of the Project comprising two road sections Dhangadhi-Bhajaniya-Satti road and Lamki-Tikapur-Khakraula have already been completed with help of India's grant assistance worth Rs 1.02 billion**.
- **The two roads were opened for service in January 2017**.

ABOUT THE POSTAL HIGHWAY:

- **It is also called Hulaki Rajmarg which runs across Terai region of Nepal, from Bhadrapur in east to**

- **Dodhara in west, cutting across entire width of the country**.
- **It is the oldest highway in Nepal constructed by Juddha Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana and Padma Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana to aid transportation and facilitate postal services throughout the Himalayan nation**.

FSSAI LAUNCHES RUCO INITIATIVE TO COLLECT, CONVERT USED COOKING OIL INTO BIOFUEL

- **The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched RUCO (Repurpose Used Cooking Oil) initiative to enable collection and conversion of of used cooking oil to biodiesel**.
- Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil.

DETAILS ABOUT THE INITIATIVE:

- **The initiative was launched nearly a month after FSSAI notified standards for used cooking oil**.
- According to FSSAI regulations, **maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25%**, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.
- Beside this, **FSSAI is also working in partnership with Biodiesel Association of India (BAI)** and food industry to ensure effective compliance of used cooking oil regulations.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **According to FSSAI, India has a potential to recover 220 crore litres of used cooking oil for production of biodiesel by 2022 through co-ordinated action**.
- Currently, biodiesel produced from used cooking oil is very small, but robust ecosystem for conversion and collection is rapidly growing in India and soon it will reach sizable scale.
- **FSSAI is also looking at introducing regulations to ensure that companies using large quantities of cooking oil hand it over to registered collecting agencies to convert it into biofuel**.

ABOUT THE FOOD SAFETY AND STANDARDS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (FSSAI):

- **FSSAI is a nodal statutory agency responsible for protecting and promoting public health in India through regulation and supervision of food safety**.
- **It was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and operates under aegis of Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.

SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME'S FIRST PROJECT, NORTH EAST CIRCUIT: IMPHAL AND KHONGJOM LAUNCHED

- **The first project under Swadesh Darshan Scheme 'North East Circuit: Imphal and Khongjom' was inaugurated in Manipur**.

- **The project covers two sites i.e. Kangla Fort and Khongjom in Manipur**.
- Under this project, Union Tourism Ministry has carried out works such as restoration and improvement of outer and inner moat of old Govindajee Temple and rejuvenation of sacred ponds, reconstruction of old rampart, among others.

INTERESTING FACTS TO KNOW:

- **Kangla Fort is one of the most important historic and archaeological site of Manipur located in the heart of the capital city Imphal**.
- **It had served as the tradition seat of past Meetei rulers of Manipur till 1891**.
- **The old Govindajee Temple is the largest Hindu, Vaishnav temple in Imphal city in Manipur**.
- **It is located next to Kangla Fort, palace of the former rulers of the then Manipur Kingdom**.
- Its outer and inner moat and other relics are perfect reflections of the rich art and architectural heritage of Manipur.

ABOUT THE SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME:

- **The scheme was launched by Union Tourism Ministry with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country**.
- **These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner**.
- **It is a 100% centrally funded scheme for the project components undertaken for public funding**.
- **It also has a provision for leveraging voluntary funding under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector**.
- The funding of projects under this scheme vary from state to state.
- **It is finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by Programme Management Consultant (PMC)** which is a national level consultant for implementing the scheme.

24TH WORLD CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY HELD IN BEIJING, CHINA

- **The 24th World Congress of Philosophy (WCP) was held in Beijing, China from August 13 to 17, 2018**.
- It was organized by the International Federation of Philosophical Societies, and Peking University.
- Its theme was **"Learning To Be Human"**.
- This was first time that the quinquennial (once in five year) event was held in China.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE EVENT?

- **The 24th WCP event saw more than 1,000 activities such as plenary sessions, symposia, lectures and roundtables**.
- **More than 6,000 philosophers and academicians from 121 countries and regions had attended the event**.
- **They had shared diverse philosophical thoughts and took part in dialogues focusing on major**

issues confronting development of global civilization and challenges that mankind will face in the future.

ABOUT THE WORLD CONGRESS OF PHILOSOPHY:

- **It is a global meeting of philosophers held every five years (quinquennialy) under auspices of International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP)**.
- **It was first organized in 1900 in Paris, France** and since it has become one of the largest philosophical events in the world.
- **Its purpose is to contribute to development of professional relations between philosophers of all countries, promote philosophical education, and contribute to impact of philosophical knowledge on global problems**.
- **Each World Congress is sponsored by one of member societies in different country, which assumes responsibility for organization of that Congress**.

FORMER PRIME MINISTER ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE PASSES AWAY

The legend who led India into the nuclear club, dies at 93

- **Veteran political leader, prolific writer and former Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee passed away in New Delhi**.
- **He was 93**.
- He was Prime Minister thrice: in 1996 (13 days), 1998-1999 (13 months) and 1999-2004 (making him first non-Congress leader to have completed a full term as Prime Minister).

ABOUT ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:

- **He was born on 25th December 1924 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh**.
- **He was amongst founder members of erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh (and was its president in 1968 upon death of Deendayal Upadhyaya) which later became known as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**.
- **He was a parliamentarian for over 47 years** in which he was elected to Lok Sabha for 10 times (elected for first time in 1957 from Balrampur constituency in Uttar Pradesh) and 2 times to Rajya Sabha.
- **During first non-Congress Government of Prime Minister Morarji Desai in Centre he had served as Minister of External Affairs**.
- **He served as the PM of India between 1996 and 2004 in three non-consecutive terms viz. May 1996 (for 13 days), 1998-1999 (for 13 months) and 1999-2004**.
- **During his second term as PM, he had ordered thermonuclear tests in May 1998 which were seen as a strategic masterstroke to blunt Pakistan's nuclear ambitions**.
- **Some of his pet projects launched during his tenure as PM were National Highway Development Project (Golden Quadrilateral), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**.

- In 2009, he had retired from active politics due to health concerns.
- **He was awarded the India's highest civilian honour 'Bharat Ratna' in 2015.**
- **His birthday is celebrated as Good Governance Day (GGD) by the Central Government since 2014 to foster awareness among the people of accountability in government.**
- **His poetry collection is released in his book Meri Ekyaavan Kavitayein (My 51 Poems).**

INDIA TO GROW 7.2% IN 2018-19 DOWN FROM EARLIER PROJECTION OF 7.4%: IND-RA OUTLOOK

- **Rating agency India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) in its Mid-Year FY19 Outlook has revised down India's growth to 7.2% from its earlier projection of 7.4% for 2018-19 (FY19).**
- The downward revision comes as Indian economy to face headwinds from high crude oil prices, increase in minimum support prices (MSP) of kharif crops, rising trade protectionism, depreciating currency and no visible signs of abatement of the non-performing assets (NPA) of the banking sector.

IND-RA MID-YEAR FY19 OUTLOOK PROJECTIONS:

DRIVERS OF GROWTH:

- **Growth in India is being primary driven by private consumption and government spending.**
- **But other two engines of growth - investment and exports, have slowed down.**

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE:

- **Capex by government alone will be insufficient to revive the capex cycle of the economy.**
- Its share in total capex of economy was only 11.1% during 2012-17.
- On the other hand, share of private corporations was 40.9%.
- Private corporations in combination with household sector command 77.5% of total investment in the economy, so their capex revival is important for broad-based recovery in the investment cycle of the economy.

CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE:

- **Private final consumption expenditure is projected to grow at 7.6% in 2018-19 compared to 6.6% in 2017-18, while expansion of government final consumption expenditure is expected to slow down to 8.6% from 10.9% during the same period.**

EXPORTS:

- **The annual value of exports will touch $345 billion in FY19, crossing peak of $318 billion attained in FY14, but India will continue to face headwinds on the exports front.**

RUPEE:

- **It has already depreciated 7.7% till July 2018 in response to elevated global turbulence, worsening of current account deficit (CAD), rising inflation and concerns related to fiscal deficit**.

CAD:

- **India's currency account deficit to rise to 2.6% of GDP in 2018-19, up from 1.9 % in the last fiscal year**.
- In absolute terms, it is expected to widen to $ 71.1 billion in 2018-19 from $48.7 billion in 2017-18.
- **Mobilisation of $25 billion from non-resident Indians (NRIs), similar to funds raised in 2013, will be able to finance CAD**.

INDIA PITCHES FOR DECLARING 2019 AS INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS

- **India (Union Ministry of Agriculture) has written to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nations (UN) proposing declaration of year 2019 as "International Year of Millets"**.
- It has requested inclusion of this proposal in the agenda of 26th session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) meeting, scheduled to be held in October 2018 in Rome, Italy.
- Adoption of this proposal by FAO with support of its member nations will enable it to be moved to United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for declaration of 2019 as International Year of Millets.
- **India is already celebrating 2018 as National Year of Millets**.
- It is promoting cultivation of millets as part of this celebration by amending cropping pattern of areas which are especially susceptible to climate change.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPOSAL?

- **Millets are smart food and good for consumers, farmers and planet**.
- **It has multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, biofuels and brewing**.
- Observation of Year of Millets will help to promote production and consumption of millets.
- **It will inturn contribute in fight against targeted hunger and mitigate effect of climate change in the long run**.
- Popularizing millets will also benefit future generations of farmers as well as consumers.

ABOUT MILLET:

- **Millet is a common term to categorize small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals or dryland-cereals**.
- **It mainly includes sorghum, ragi, pearl millet, small millet, proso millet, foxtail millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet etc**.
- **They are adapted to harsh environment of semi-arid tropics**.
- **They require low or no purchased inputs, thus they are the backbone for dry land agriculture**.

BENEFITS OF MILLETS:

NUTRITIONAL SUPERIORITY:

- **Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fibre and minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous**.
- **It provides nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women**.

HEALTH BENEFITS:

- **Pellagra (niacin deficiency), Anaemia (iron deficiency), B-complex vitamin deficiency can be effectively tackled with intake of less expensive but nutritionally rich food grains like millets**.
- **It can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free and also have low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants**.

INCOME AND LIVELIHOOD SOURCE:

- **Millets are important staple cereal crop for millions of small holder dryland farmers**.
- **They offer nutrition, resilience, income and livelihood for farmers even in difficult times**.
- **They have multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, fodder, biofuels and brewing.**
- **Thus, millets are Smart Food as they are Good for the Farmer and Good for the Planet**.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

- **Millets are photo-insensitive and resilient to climate change**.
- **They are hardy, resilient crops that have low carbon and water footprint**.
- **They can withstand high temperatures and grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs**.
- **In times of climate change they are often last crop standing and thus are good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers**.

N RAGHURAM BECAME FIRST INDIAN TO GET ELECTED AS CHAIR OF INTERNATIONAL NITROGEN INITIATIVE

- **Indian scientist-academician N Raghuram became the first Indian and Asian to get elected as Chair of International Nitrogen Initiative (INI), a global policy making initiative**.
- He will succeed Mark Sutton of the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh.
- Besides him, David Kanter of the New York University was elected as Vice-Chair.
- The new chairs will formally take up their roles on January 1, 2019.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NEW CHAIR:

- **Their responsibility will be to steer a network of six regional centres each under INI Regional Director** (East Asia, South Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America).
- **Other INI projects under their purview will include N-print activity on nitrogen foot-printing and**

cooperation with Global Carbon Project on establishment of global nitrous oxide budget.

- They will also enable INI to strengthen its contribution to global science-policy processes, including supporting the International Nitrogen Management System (INMS) and providing regular input to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

ABOUT N RAGHURAM:

- He specialises in biological determinants of nitrogen use efficiency in crops.
- He has been the President of Indian Nitrogen Group (co-founded by him) and Steering Committee member of UNEP Global Partnership on Nutrient Management.
- He had also served as Director of the South Asian Nitrogen Centre.
- At present, he is a professor at GGS Indraprastha University, New Delhi.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL NITROGEN INITIATIVE (INI):

- INI is an international program set up in 2003 under the sponsorship of the Scientific Committee on Problems of Environment (SCOPE) and from International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP).
- Its key aims are to optimize nitrogen's beneficial role in sustainable food production and minimize nitrogen's negative effects on human health and environment resulting from food and energy production.
- INI is coordinated by Steering Committee, led by chair and six regional centre directors representing, North America, South Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and East Asia.
- INI is also currently the sustained partner of Future Earth (an international organisation that works to accelerate transformations to global sustainability through research and innovation).

NPCI LAUNCHES UPI 2.0 WITH OVERDRAFT FACILITY

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has launched UPI 2.0, an upgraded and renewed version of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) by adding four new features to make it attractive and safer for users.
- These new features will allow users to link their overdraft account to UPI, creation of one-time mandates and pre-authorisation of transactions for payment at later date and checking the invoice sent by merchant prior to making payment.

ABOUT THE UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE (UPI):

- UPI is payments system that allows multiple bank accounts belonging to any participating bank to be controlled via single mobile app.
- It was launched by NPCI in April 2016 to allows easy, quick and hassle free money transfer between any two parties.
- The UPI app merges a number of banking features, facilitating seamless and secure fund transfer

and merchant payments at single platform.

- **It also allows Peer to Peer collection request**.
- **UPI is a payment system much like existing NEFT, RTGS, IMPS etc. but it is far more sophisticated and standardized across banks**.
- Technically, UPI is standard set of APIs (Application programming interface).
- UPI allows us to pay directly from bank account to different merchants without putting details of card details, net banking, IFSC code, wallet password etc.
- Since, it is standardized across banks, **transaction through UPI is hassle free**.
- **The transactions which can be done using UPI include Merchant payments, remittances, bill payments and so on**.

FOUR ADDITIONAL SERVICES IN UPI 2.0 ARE:

OVERDRAFT FACILITY:

- **It will allow users to link their overdraft (OD) account to UPI**.
- **Earlier, only current accounts and savings accounts were allowed to be linked with UPI**.
- **It will help UPI customers to have instant transaction through an additional digital channel with access to OD account**.

ONE TIME MANDATE:

- **It allows users to schedule payments**.
- **It also allows pre-authorisation of transaction in which amount will be deducted on the date for which the payment has been scheduled**.
- **It can be used in cases where money is to be transferred later while commitment has been made now**.

INVOICE IN THE INBOX:

- **It allows users to get invoices sent by merchants in their inbox, which will help them to view and verify credentials**.
- **With this, users can view and verify credentials of merchant even before making payment and ensure their authenticity**.

SIGNED INTENT AND QR:

- **This feature will allow users to check the credentials of merchants via Quick Response (QR) code**.
- **It will enable to check whether merchant is UPI verified or not**.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PAYMENTS CORPORATION OF INDIA (NPCI):

- **NPCI is the umbrella organisation for all retail payments system in India**.
- **It is being promoted the Reserve Bank of India**.
- **It was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit organisation registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 2013**.
- **It has successfully played a pioneering role in development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay**, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

11TH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE BEGINS IN MAURITIUS

- **11th World Hindi Conference (विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन) is being held in Mauritius in its capital city Port Lois from August 18-20, 2018**.
- **It was inaugurated by Prime Minister of Mauritius Praveen Kumar Jagannath and was attended by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and some other ministers**.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

- **The theme of the Conference is "Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti"**.
- **It is organised by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in association with Government of Mauritius**.
- **The venue of the Conference is Swami Vivekanand International Convention Centre, Pailles Mauritius**.
- The conference is to provide a common platform to several Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world to contribute to the language.
- It is being attended by delegates from India and various countries of the world.
- They are deliberating on eight subtopics on Hindi World and Indian Culture.
- **It is for first time in the history of the conference that representatives from all 29 states and Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry attended the conference**.

HISTORY OF WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE:

- **World Hindi Conference was started in 1975 to make Hindi language a medium of service and knowledge and enable it to move forward with time**.
- **Since then, ten such Conferences have been held in different parts of the world**.
- **The 1st World Hindi Conference was held from 10 to 12 January 1975 in Nagpur, Maharashtra and was inaugurated by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi**.
- **To commemorate this event, every year 10th January is observed as World Hindi Day**.
- **The 10 edition of World Hindi Conference was held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (India) in 2015 with the theme of "Hindi Jagat-Vistar and Sambhavnaye"**.

SC ACCEPTS CENTRE'S PROPOSAL FOR USE OF COLOURED STICKERS TO INDICATE NATURE OF FUEL

A unique move to counter air pollution in Delhi NCR

- **Supreme Court has accepted Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) proposal to use hologram-based coloured stickers on vehicles, plying in Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) to indicate the nature of the fuel used**.
- The apex court has asked government to implement use of coloured stickers on vehicles plying in Delhi-NCR by September 30, 2018.
- It also clarified that this colour-coding will only be applicable in Delhi and NCR.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **With this approval, Delhi will be first city in India to have hologram-based coloured stickers according to the fuel they run on**.
- **This move aims to counter air pollution in the national capital**.
- **Under this colour scheme proposed by MoRTH, light-blue colour will be used for vehicles running petrol and CNG-run vehicles while orange colour sticker will be used for diesel-driven vehicles**.
- **These hologram-based stickers will also contain registration date of the vehicle**.
- **MoRTH is also considering to introduce green number plates for electric and hybrid vehicles**.

WHAT WILL BE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MOVE?

- **Introduction of coloured stickers will restrict use of more polluting vehicles in congested or polluted zone temporarily or permanently depending on the pollution level**.
- **The colour coding will help authorities identify and restrict vehicles running on high-polluting fuel from congested or polluted zone temporarily or permanently depending on the pollution level**.

ESOW ALBEN: TEEN CYCLIST CREATES HISTORY BY WINNING INDIA'S FIRST EVER MEDAL AT WORLD LEVEL

Teen aged athlete makes India proud!

- **Indian Teen cyclist Esow Alben (17) created history by winning the country's maiden medal in track cycling at the world level**.
- **He achieved this feat by winning silver medal in Men's Keirin event of UCI Junior Track Cycling World Championships held in Aigle, Switzerland**.
- In the final sprint of this event, Esow finished just 0.017 seconds behind gold medallist Jakub Stastny (Czech Republic).

ABOUT ESOW ALBEN:

- **Esow hails from Andaman and Nicobar**.
- **He is currently ranked world No. 1 in junior sprint category of cycling after a sensational run in Asian Championships and victories in 2018 Cottbuser Sprint Cup 2 and GP Brno Track Cycling competitions**.

- **This makes him the first Indian to reach the top spot in cycling**.
- **He is also ranked world no. 3 in Keirin event of cycling, where cyclists sprint for victory on track following controlled start**.
- **Esow had won hat-trick of gold medals at 2018 Asian Track Cycling Championships in Malaysia**.
- **In this event, he had won gold medals in individual and team event**.
- **He trains in Delhi at Sports Authority of India's (SAI) National Cycling Academy**.

ICRAFPT: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RECENT ADVANCES IN FOOD PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY HELD IN THANJAVUR

- **International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (iCRAFPT) was held at the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IFPT), Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu**.
- The theme of conference was **"Doubling farmers' income through food processing"**.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

- **The conference provided a strong platform for knowledge sharing and meaningful delegation among industry, academia, researchers and farmers which will potentially impact the food sector growth to a newer height**.
- **It featured eight technical sessions on diversified areas of food processing**.
- **It saw participation of over 9 overseas speakers, 77 Indian speakers, 18 food industry talks, 30 series lectures, 2 panel discussions etc**.

ABOUT THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOOD PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY (IIFPT):

- **It is a premier national institute working under the administrative control of Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)**.
- **It is headquartered in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu**.
- **It delivers research and education in food processing**.
- **It also incubates farmers, entrepreneurs and aspiring youth for prospective food business ventures**.

INVESTMENT IN P-NOTES HITS 9-YEAR LOW AT RS 80,341 CRORE

- **Investments through participatory notes (P-notes) into Indian capital markets- equity, debt, and derivatives have plunged to over nine-year low of Rs 80,341 crore till July 2018 end**.
- This is the lowest level since April 2009 when the cumulative value of such investments stood at Rs 72,314 crore.

REASON FOR THIS DECLINE:

- **The decline comes amid stringent norms put in place by market watchdog Securities Exchange**

- **Board of India (SEBI)** to check misuse of these instruments.
- In July 2017, Sebi had notified stricter norms stipulating fee of US $1,000 on each instrument to check any misuse for channelising black money.
- It had also prohibited FPIs from issuing such notes where underlying asset is derivative, except those which are used for hedging purposes.
- Earlier in April 2017, SEBI had also barred resident Indians, NRIs and entities owned by them from making investment through P-notes.

ABOUT PARTICIPATORY NOTES (P-NOTES):

- P-notes are offshore/overseas derivative instruments (ODIs) issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly.
- They, however, need to go through due diligence process.
- P-Notes are not used within the country but are mainly used outside India for making investments in shares listed in the Indian stock market.
- SEBI had permitted FIIs to participate and register in the Indian stock market in 1992.
- Earlier, investing through P-Notes was very simple and was very popular amongst FPIs and FIIs.

FSSAI CONSTITUTES B SESIKERAN COMMITTEE TO REVIEW FOOD LABELLING STANDARDS

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has constituted a three-member committee to look into the draft food labelling and display regulations- Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2018.
- The committee will be headed by B Sesikeran, former director of National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and comprises of current NIN director Hemalatha and AIIMS' endocrinologist Nikhil Tandon.

DETAILS:

- FSSAI had released the draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations 2018 in April 2018.
- It had proposed mandatory red-label marking on such packaged food products which are high in fat, sugar and salt contents.
- The front-of-the-pack red label mark was aimed to make consumers more aware about healthy and unhealthy food products.
- But, Union Health Ministry had put on hold on the draft regulations, after industry stakeholders had expressed concerns, citing that it may have an adverse impact on evolving packaged food industry.
- So to address their concerns, FSSAI has decided to set up a committee of experts with health and nutrition background to look into the draft regulations.

- India can learn from best practices from the other countries such as Denmark, Norway and Singapore on labelling and trans-fat regulations.
- **Consultation process started by FSSAI is seen as an attempt to begin dialogue among stakeholders on proposed draft labelling regulations**.
- **Moreover, recently, several companies had pledged to FSSAI's Eat Right Movement and have made voluntary commitments to reduce salt, sugar and fat in their products**.
- FSSAI in future is likely to push more and more companies to make similar voluntary commitments.

INSURERS TO COVER MENTAL ILLNESS UNDER MEDICAL INSURANCE POLICY: IRDAI

- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) has asked insurers to cover mental illness under medical insurance policy from immediate effect, treating it at par with physical illness**.
- At present, insurers exclude mental illness from the ambit of medical insurance policies.

DETAILS:

- **IRDAI's directive follows Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 enacted by Parliament and came into force from May 2018**.
- **The section 21(4) of the said Act mandates every insurer to make provision for medical insurance for treatment of mental illness on same basis as available for treatment of physical illness**.
- **According to provisions of the Act, mental healthcare includes analysis and diagnosis of person's mental condition and treatment, as well as care and rehabilitation of such person for his mental illness or suspected mental illness**.

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

- **As per Ministry of Law and Justice, mental illness is defined as a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs behaviour, judgment and capacity to recognise reality or ability to meet ordinary demands of life**.
- **It also includes mental conditions associated with abuse of alcohol and drugs, but does not include mental retardation which is a condition of arrested or incomplete development of the mind of a person, specially characterised by subnormality of intelligence**.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MOVE?

- **Bringing mental illness under medical insurance policy, will ensure life of dignity to those who have mental health issues**.
- **It will help to create awareness, acceptance and inclusion of mental illness as any other ailment**.
- Moreover, it will bring mental health disorders at par with physical illnesses, which will normalize

diagnoses, reduce associated myths and stigma related to mental health disorders.

- **It will be in lines with global practice, as globally, companies cover mental illness after initial waiting period of two-three years**.

GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTES BHASKAR RAMAMURTHY COMMITTEE FOR JEE (ADVANCED) REFORMS

- **Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has proposed to set up a five-member committee to suggest changes to JEE (Advanced)** in the wake of an inadequate number of candidates qualifying the entrance test this year.
- **The committee will be headed by IIT-Madras director Bhaskar Ramamurthy**.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE:

- **The mandate of the committee is to develop a robust and scientifically designed entrance exam system to test potential of candidates as well as to reduce their dependence on coaching institutes**.
- Other members of the committee will include Abhay Karandikar (Director of IIT-Kanpur), Vineet Joshi (Director General of National Testing Agency) and Professor Kannan Moudgalya of IIT-Bombay.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **The first merit list for JEE (Advanced) 2018 had only 18,138 candidates, which was only 1.6 times the total sanctioned seats**.
- **It was the smallest pool of qualified candidates since 2012**.
- It was also very less than the mandated requirement of twice the number of seats on offer.
- **This had forced HRD Ministry to step in at the last-minute and order IIT Kanpur (which had organised JEE-Advanced this year) to release list of candidates, twice the number of seats in each discipline and category (strictly as per merit) prior to starting the choice filling through JoSAA (Joint Seat Allocation Authority)**.
- Subsequently, IIT Kanpur added another 13842 candidates (8,954 general, 3,824 OBC, 771 SCs and 293 from ST category) to the merit list, taking total up to 31,980 candidates.
- **To avoid such incident in future, HRD Ministry has proposed to set up a five-member member Committee**.

ONLY 23% OF RURAL INCOME FROM FARMING: NABARD 2016-17 SURVEY

- **According to National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development's (NABARD) All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17, agriculture (farming) generates only 23% of rural income i.e. not even quarter of rural household incomes in India**.
- Even for so-called agricultural households, just over 43% of their average income comes from

cultivation of crops and rearing of animals.
- The reference period of survey was 2015-16.

- **It estimates that the total number of rural households in India are at 21.17 crore**.
- **Its definition of "rural" is broad, covering revenue villages and semi-urban centres with population of less than 50,000**.
- **Out of the 21.17 crore rural households, 10.07 crore, or under 48% are agricultural**.
- **At least one member is self-employed in farming with an annual value of produce at more than Rs 5,000.**
- **The remaining 11.10 crore households (around 52%) are non-agricultural**.
- The average net monthly income of Indian rural households after deducting expenses incurred in course of economic activity was Rs 8,059.
- **The highest share of this (Rs 3,504) was accounted for by wage labour (both farm and non-farm), followed by government or private service jobs (Rs 1,906)**.
- **The agriculture income i.e. income from crop cultivation and livestock rearing contributed only Rs 1,832**.
- Within agricultural households, the share of average income from cultivation and livestock rearing was just over 43%.
- The balance 57% income was from non-agricultural sources.

- **It reinforces the trend that has gathered momentum since start of this century of increasingly less 'Krishi' in 'Bharat'**.
- It also reconfirms and magnifies earlier findings of National Sample Survey Office's (NSSO) Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households conducted for 2012-13.
- Though both surveys were having methodological differences, but they highlight the same **fact of rural India becoming less agricultural, both in terms of share of families engaged in farming and diversification of income sources** even in their case.

PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS TO COME OUT OF PCA FRAMEWORK BY END OF 2018: GOVERNMENT

A respite for ailing PSBs

- **Union Government is expecting that public sector banks (PSBs) placed under RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework will come out of it by the end of this year**.
- As many as 11 out of 21 state-owned banks are currently under PCA framework.

- **Operational performance of PSBs has improved in April-June 2018 quarter, with steep reduction in net losses, increase in recoveries and significant improvement in provision coverage ratio**.
- Besides, Government is also providing PSUs with adequate capital when required.
- **Some of the capital has already been given, as recoveries are taking place and there is a possibility that some banks will not need it in the future**.
- **As of now, there is no bank that is breaching the regulatory norms prescribed by RBI**.

WHAT IS PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION (PCA) FRAMEWORK?

- **PCA framework is a supervisory tool of RBI, which involves monitoring of certain performance indicators of banks to check their financial health as an early warning exercise and to ensure that banks don't go bust**.
- **Its objective is to facilitate banks to take corrective measures including those prescribed by RBI, in timely manner to restore their financial health**.
- **It also provides opportunity to RBI to pay focussed attention on such banks by engaging with management more closely in those areas**.
- **PCA framework is invoked on banks when they breach any of three key regulatory trigger points (or thresholds)**.
- **They are: Capital to risk weighted assets ratio, Net non-performing assets (NPA) and Return on Assets (RoA)**.
- **Depending on the risk thresholds set in PCA framework, banks are put in two types of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary depending upon their placement in PCA framework levels**.
- **The mandatory restrictions are on dividend, branch expansion, director's compensation while discretionary restrictions include curbs on lending and deposit**.

18TH ASIAN GAMES INAUGURATED IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA

Lets Play!

- **The 18th edition of Asian Games was inaugurated in Jakarta, Indonesia**.
- This will be the second time that Indonesia will be hosting Asian Games.
- For the first time, it was held in Jakarta in 1962.
- **Javelin Thrower Neeraj Chopra was India's flag-bearer at the glittering opening ceremony**.

ABOUT THE 18TH EDITION OF ASIAN GAMES:

- **This edition of the pan-continental mega sporting event will be held from August 18 to September 2, 2018 in two cities- Jakarta (capital of Indonesia) and Palembang (capital of Indonesia's province of South Sumatra) to accommodate all branches of sports**.
- **This will be the first time that the Asian Games will be held in two cities**.
- It will see participation of around 11,000 athletes from 45 countries which will compete in 40

sports, 67 disciplines, 4 new Olympic sports and 8 non-Olympic sports.

- **For the first time, eSports (a form of competition using video games) and canoe polo will be contested as demonstration sports in Asian Games**.
- Indian contingent comprised of around 570 Indian athletes who will compete for top honours across 36 sports.

MASCOTS OF 2018 ASIAN GAMES:

- **Trio of Bhin Bhin (bird of paradise), Kaka (deer) and Atung (rhino) are mascots of 2018 Asian Games**.
- **These three represent east, west and centre of the country and they have dresses traditional to each locality**.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

- This edition of Asian Games was originally scheduled to be hosted by Vietnam in Hanoi, but it had withdrawn its bid citing reason of economic considerations.
- Following Vietnam's withdrawal, Indonesia proposed to host the 18th Asian Games.

ABOUT ASIAN GAMES:

- **It is a pan-continental multi-sporting event held every four years between athletes from all over Asia.**
- **It is also known as Asiad**.
- It is the second largest multi-sport event after Olympic Games.
- **It is organised by Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) since 1982, prior to that, it was regulated by Asian Games Federation (AGF)**.
- **The first Asian Games were held in New Delhi, India in 1951**.
- Since then overall, nine nations have hosted it and forty-six nations have participated in it, including Israel (now excluded from it after its last participation in 1974).
- **The 17th edition of the games was hosted by Incheon, from South Korea in 2014**.
- **The next games (19th edition) are scheduled to be held in**
- **between 10 and 25 September 2022**.
- **India had hosted Asian Games two times in 1951 (inaugural) and 1982, both in New Delhi**.

ATGM HELINA SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED AT POKHRAN RANGE

Death from above for enemy tanks!

- **Indigenously developed Helicopter launched Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) 'HELINA' was successfully flight tested from an Indian Army Helicopter at the Pokhran range**.
- The weapon system was tested for its full range.

- **ATGM HELINA weapon system was released smoothly from an Army Helicopter.**
- **After its launch, it tracked the target all through its course and hit it with high precision**.

ABOUT HELINA:

- **HELINA is the helicopter launched version of known NAG ATGM, designed and developed indigenously for Indian Army under integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP)**.
- **It is manufactured by India's sole missile producer, state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited**.
- **HELINA is one of the most advanced Anti-Tank Weapons in the world**.
- **It works on "fire and forget" principle and operates on "Lock in Before Launch" mode**.
- **It has an operational range of 7-10km (after air-launched)**.
- **It is equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IIR) seeker along with integrated avionics**.
- This technology is possessed by very few nations.
- It also possesses advanced passive homing guidance system.
- **It has been designed mainly to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets**.

FORMER UN GENERAL SECRETARY KOFI ANNAN PASSES AWAY

- **Former United Nations General Secretary and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kofi Annan passed away in Bern, Switzerland**.
- He was 80.
- He had served as the seventh Secretary-General of UN for two terms reigning from 1997 till 2006.
- **He was the first black African to become Secretary-General of UN and also the first to be elected from UN staff itself**.

ABOUT KOFI ANNAN:

- **He was born on 8 April 1938 in Kumasi, Gold Coast (now Ghana)**.
- After completing his education, he had joined UN in 1962 as a Budget officer for World Health Organization (WHO) in 1962.
- **He went on to work in various capacities at UN, which included serving as Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping from 1992 to 1996**.
- **Later he had served as UN Secretary-General for two terms reigning from 1997 till 2006** (He was succeeded by South Korean diplomat Ban Ki-moon in 2007).
- As the Secretary-General, he had reformed the UN bureaucracy.
- He was a passionate advocate of human rights and had played a major role in the formation of two new intergovernmental bodies in 2005 within UN: **Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council**.

- **He had also played a pivotal role in the creation of a Global Fund to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis during his term at UN**.
- **In 1999, he had launched UN Global Compact initiative, which is now the world's largest effort to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR)**.
- **He was also the founder and chairman of Kofi Annan Foundation and chairman of 'The Elders', an international organisation founded by Nelson Mandela**.
- **He was co-recipient of 2001 Nobel peace prize along with the United Nations**.
- **In September 2016, he was appointed to lead UN commission to investigate Rohingya crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine province**.

KOFI ANNAN'S FAMOUS QUOTES:

- *"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family."*
- *"To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there."*
- *"More countries have understood that women's equality is a prerequisite for development."*

SMART ANTI AIRFIELD WEAPON SUCCESSFULLY FLIGHT TESTED NEAR POKHRAN

Destroying the enemy in a smart way!

- **The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully tested indigenously developed light weight glide bomb- Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW) dropped from an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft**.
- Total of three tests with different release conditions and ranges were conducted at the Chandan range near Pokhran in Rajasthan.

DETAILS OF THE TESTS:

- **Total of three tests with eighth round of developmental trials with different release conditions were conducted during 16 to 18 August 2018 and all the mission objectives have been achieved**.
- During the test, the weapon system was integrated with a live warhead.
- It successfully destroyed the targets with high precision.

ABOUT THE SMART ANTI AIRFIELD WEAPON (SAAW):

- **SAAW project is India's first fully indigenous anti-airfield weapon project sanctioned by Government in September 2013**.
- It was indigenously developed by state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with IAF and the Research Centre Imarat (RCI).
- It will be inducted soon into the Armed Forces.

- **SAAW is a long-range lightweight high precision-guided anti-airfield weapon**.
- **It is a 120 kg smart weapon capable of engaging ground targets with high precision up to a range of 100 km**.
- It is designed for deep penetration with a high degree of precision and is armed with a high-explosive warhead, which is usually very difficult to achieve operationally with simple gravity bombs.
- **It is meant to deal debilitating damage to ground infrastructure such as runways, taxi ways, aircraft hangars and bunkers among other things**.
- **Depending on operational requirements, it can also be used against other ground targets to give Indian forces enhanced area-denial capabilities, like taking out ground infrastructure**.
- The guided bomb is considered to be one of the world-class weapons system.
- **It is said to have higher precision and is much cheaper when compared with missiles**.
- **It can be integrated into varied types of multi role fighter jets of IAF such as MiG, Sukhoi Su-30 and ground attack SEPECAT Jaguar**.
- SAAW's deep penetration capabilities and high explosive warhead carrying capacity **will enhance the capability of IAF to easily hit targets across border without putting the pilot and aircraft at risk**.

WHAT ARE ANTI-AIRFIELD WEAPONS?

- **They are critical in war-like scenarios, since they help to give a debilitating blow to adversarial air forces**.
- **These high-explosive warheads are meant to cause maximum damage possible to runways and other key infrastructure, in a way that prevents quick repair**.
- If successful, attack using such bombs render airfield useless, grounding all the war planes that are based at that air field.

UIDAI ANNOUNCES PHASED ROLLOUT OF FACE AUTHENTICATION

Aadhaar advances in technology!

- **Aadhaar-issuing body UIDAI (Unique Identity Authority of India) has announced phased roll-out of face recognition for carrying out Aadhaar authentication from September 15, 2018 as an additional security layer**.
- It has also announced a new feature 'live face photo', which is the live feed of a person's facial features whose 12-digit unique number Aadhaar is submitted.

ABOUT FACE RECOGNITION:

- **The face authentication will be in addition to fingerprint or iris scans for Aadhaar authentication**.
- **In the initial phase, telecom service providers (TSPs) will be the first to use face recognition to authenticate subscribers while issuing new SIM cards**.

- **In later phases, it will be rolled out to all agencies using Aadhaar for authentication in phases**.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MOVE?

- **This move is aimed at curbing the possibility of fingerprint cloning or spoofing and also seeks to tighten the audit process and security around the issuance and activation of mobile SIMs.**
- **It will also help to solve the authentication problem for those who have issues regarding fingerprint and iris scan**.
- **Fingerprints wear out either with a person's old age or due to jobs such as heavy manual labour.**

WHAT ARE THE DIRECTIONS TO TSPS FROM UIDAI?

- **UIDAI has directed TSPs to target at least 10% of their total monthly authentication transactions using face authentication**.
- Any shortfall in transactions using face authentication will be charged at Rs 0.20 per transaction.
- **It will be the responsibility of TSPs to verify live photo captured using face authentication at their backend system with photo received in eKYC (electronic know your customer) before activation of the SIM**.
- **TSP will store both photos in its database for audit purpose.**

GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI CONFERRED WITH 2018 RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL SADBHAVANA AWARD

- **Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi was conferred with 2018 Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award**.
- He was presented the award in New Delhi on the occasion of 74th birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

WHO IS GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI?

- **He was born on 22 April 1945 and is the grandson of Father of the Nation- Mahatma Gandhi**.
- He is a retired IAS officer (Tamil Nadu cadre) and had also served as a diplomat.
- **He was the 22nd Governor of West Bengal serving from 2004 to 2009**.
- As a former IAS officer, he had served as Secretary to President of India (1987-1992).
- **He had served as India's High Commissioner to South Africa and Sri Lanka** and also held other important administrative and diplomatic posts.
- **He was the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) nominee for 2017 Vice President of India election and lost with 244 votes against NDA candidate Venkaiah Naidu, who recieved 516 votes.**

ABOUT THE RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL SADBHAVANA AWARD:

- **It is awarded every year to persons for outstanding contribution towards promotion of**

communal harmony, national integration and peace.

- **It was instituted in 1992 by All India Congress Committee of Indian National Congress Party (INC)** to commemorate the lasting contribution made by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- **The award carries a citation and a cash award of Rs. Ten lakhs**.
- **It is given on 20 August (birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi), which is celebrated as Sadbhavna Diwas (Harmony Day)**.
- Former recipients of the award include Mother Teresa, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Lata Mangeshkar, Mohammed Yunus, Sunil Dutt, Kapila Vatsyayan, Dilip Kumar, Teesta Setalvad, Swami Agnivesh, K.R. Narayanan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Muzaffar Ali and Shubha Mudgal.
- In 2017, it was awarded to Former Cricketer Mohammad Azharuddin and Retired IAS Officer M.Gopala Krishna.

TELANGANA GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE IN HYDERABAD

Telangana making itself ready!

- **Telangana Government for the first time has launched Disaster Response Force (DRF) vehicles in the capital city of Hyderabad**.
- The main aim to start this DRF is that the state should have its own Disaster force to swiftly deal with emergency situations.
- DRF vehicles provided to this force will be parked at 24 locations with **Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)**.
- It will help the DRF staff to reach the emergency spots in no time.

ABOUT THE DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE (DRF):

- **It is a state level dedicated disaster force trained in tackling of urban flooding, tree falls, structural collapses and any other site of normal emergencies**.
- **Its disaster management personnel will be available on the field for 24/7**.
- **DRF personnel are capable to work continuously during emergencies and conduct first aid**.
- It has been first brought on to the ground with 120 personnel with 8 specialised vehicles and other equipments which are required.
- State Government will soon increase the number of DRF vehicles, equipments and all other special apparatuses that are required.

PANINI LANGUAGE LABORATORY INAUGURATED IN MAURITIUS TO PROMOTE HINDI

- **Panini language laboratory was recently inaugurated at the Mahatma Gandhi institute in Mauritius to promote reading and writing in Hindi amongst the young and its further development**.
- It was launched by External Affairs minister Sushma Swaraj on the sidelines of 11th World Hindi

<u>Conference held in Mauritius</u>.

ABOUT THE PANINI LANGUAGE LABORATORY:

- **Panini language lab aims to promote reading and writing Hindi amongst the young generation and its further development**.
- <u>It will serve as a medium to generate more interest in learning Hindi amongst youngsters thereby strengthening the language</u>.
- **It has been established in Mauritius with support from the Indian External Affairs Ministry**.
- **The lab has 35 computers and equipments along with advanced softwares of various Indian languages** installed by Indian IT professionals to aid students of junior, middle and high schools to imbibe new techniques of language learning and getting them acquainted with **four language mantras- hearing, prounciation, reading and writing through easy and scientific ways**.

S K ARORA AWARDED WHO WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2017 AWARD

A proud moment for Delhi

- **Delhi Government's additional director of health, SK Arora was awarded the prestigious World Health Organization (WHO) World No Tobacco Day 2017 Award for his extraordinary contribution towards tobacco control**.
- <u>He was presented the award by Henk Bekedam, WHO India country head in New Delhi</u>.

ABOUT WHO WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY AWARD:

- **It is awarded every year by WHO to individuals or organisations alike in each of six WHO regions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control**.
- <u>This award include: WHO Director-General Special Recognition Award and World No Tobacco Day Award</u>.
- **World No Tobacco Day is observed around the world every year on 31 May**.
- **It is intended to encourage 24-hour period of abstinence from all forms of tobacco consumption around the globe**.

ABOUT TOBACCO PREVALENCE IN DELHI:

- **Delhi government's health department for the past four years has been fighting against direct advertisement of brand promotion of tobacco and surrogate advertisement of tobaccos in name of pan masala and other eatables such as tea, ilaichi (cardamom)**.
- **National Health Policy (NHP) 2017** of Central Government has set targets of relative reduction in tobacco prevalence by: 15% by 2020, 30 % by 2025.
- **Delhi has already achieved these targets before 2017**.
- **Tobacco prevalence in Delhi has come down by 6.5% in the past six years which is more than the rest of India average figures**.

- **According to Global Adult Tobacco Survey-2 (GATS 2) 2016-17, prevalence of tobacco use has reduced by 27% in Delhi as compared to 17% for the rest of India average**.
- Similarly, current tobacco smokers in Delhi have reduced by 35% as compared to 23% for the rest of India average.
- The current gutkha users have also significantly reduced by 63% in Delhi as compared to rest of India average figures of just 17%.
- For cessation modalities also, Delhi has performed much better than rest of India average figures.

WRESTLER BAJRANG PUNIA WINS INDIA'S FIRST GOLD MEDAL AT 2018 ASIAN GAMES

Indian prowess on the wrestling mat!

- **Wrestler Bajrang Punia (24) won India's first gold medal at the 18th edition of the Asian Games held in Jakarta, Indonesia**.
- In the men's freestyle 65 kg final event, **he defeated Japan's Takatani Daichi** by 11-8 score.
- It was Bajrang's maiden gold medal and overall second medal in Asian Games after **he had earlier won a silver medal in 2014 Asian Games** (Incheon, South Korea) in the men's freestyle 61 kg category.

WHO IS BAJRANG PUNIA?

- **Bajrang is a freestyle wrestler from India**.
- **He hails from Haryana**.
- At present, he is India's fastest, most powerful and focussed grappler.
- **He works as a Traveling Ticket Examiner (TTE) with Indian Railway**.
- **Ahead of 2018 Asian Games, he had won three consecutive international gold medals-Commonwealth Games (Gold Coast), Tbilisi Grand Prix (Georgia) and Yasar Dogu International (Istanbul)**.
- **In 2013, he had won a bronze medal (third place) in the World Championships held in Budapest (Hungary) in the 60 kg freestyle category**.

ANOTHER INTERESTING THING TO NOTE:

- **Apurvi Chandela and Ravi Kumar were the first Indian athletes to win medals in 2018 Asian Games**.
- **Both had won bronze medals in the mixed team rifle shooting event**.

SAURABH CHAUDHARY WINS INDIA'S FIRST GOLD MEDAL IN THE SHOOTING EVENT AT THE 2018 ASIAN GAMES

- **Shooter Saurabh Chaudhary (16) won gold medal in Men's 10m Air Pistol event with a record score**

of 240.7 at the 2018 Jakarta Palembang Asian Games in Indonesia.

- For the first time he was competing in a senior event and won gold medal in his Asian Games debut.
- **It was India's first shooting gold in the ongoing event**.
- Another Indian shooter, Abhishek Verma (29) also won bronze medal in the same event.
- In Men's 50-metres Rifle 3 Positions event, India's Sanjeev Rajput won silver medal.

ABOUT SAURABH CHAUDHARY:

- **He hails from Kalina village in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh**.
- He is the son of a farmer.
- He started shooting at the age of 15 in Meerut.
- He was trained with senior shooters in the run-up to the 2018 Asian Games.
- **He had won gold medal while setting new World record at the ISSF Junior World Cup in Germany in June 2018**.
- **He will participate in 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, Argentina in October 2018**.
- **He had won gold medal with a junior world record at the 10th Asia Youth Olympic Games qualification event in December 2017**.

GOVERNMENT TO SET UP CYCLONE WARNING CENTRE IN KERALA

- **Union Ministry of Earth Sciences has announced to set up a Cyclone Warning Centre in Kerala's capital Thiruvananthapuram**.
- **It also proposed to set up a C-band Doppler weather radar at Mangalore, Karnataka**.
- This comes in view of the recent heavy rainfall and concerns over extreme weather activities in future.

ABOUT THE CYCLONE WARNING CENTRE:

- **The centre will be equipped with state- of-the-art infrastructure including forecasting tools to provide daily weather alerts, issue weather warnings and coastal warnings or bulletins (for fishermen etc)**.
- **It is expected to be functional within a month and will cater to the needs of Kerala and Karnataka states**.
- It will further strengthen the present forecasting activity in India Meteorological Department's existing office in Thiruvananthapuram.
- **At present, IMD has six cyclone warning centres**, four along the east coast at Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Bhubaneswar (Odisha) and Kolkata (West Bengal), and two along the west coast at Ahmedabad (Gujarat) and Mumbai (Maharashtra).

ABOUT C-BAND DOPPLER WEATHER RADAR:

- **It is proposed to be set up at Mangalore, Karnataka to provide nowcast alerts for severe weather, including thunderstorms triggered by heavy rain for the next 2-3 hours**.

- **This radar will cover northern Kerala and Karnataka**.
- It is expected to be installed by the end of next year.
- **Currently, there are two Doppler radars in Kerala at Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, which cover the central and southern districts, respectively**.
- With addition of this new radar, the entire state will be covered for monitoring rainfall and severe weather events.

HAL BECOMES FIRST PSU TO TRANSACT ON TREDS PLATFORM

- **State-owned aerospace and defence manufacturer Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) became the first public sector enterprise (PSU) to make transaction on RXIL TReDS platform**.
- It executed its first digitised invoice discounting transaction on RXIL TReDS platform by accepting digital invoice uploaded by Nasik-based MSME (micro category) vendor Narendra Udyog.
- **This transaction was financed by Bank of Baroda**.

ABOUT THE RXIL- TREDS PLATFORM:

- **TReDS is an online electronic institutional mechanism for facilitating the financing of trade receivables of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) through multiple financiers**.
- **RXIL is India's first TReDS platform operating since January 2017**.
- It promoted by the National Stock Exchange (NSE), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), State Bank of India (SBI), ICICI Bank and Yes Bank.
- **It enables MSMEs to gain control of their receivables with enhanced visibility and timeliness**.
- **In October 2017, Union Government had mandated all major PSUs to join TReDS platform to facilitate payments to MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) vendors**.

SC SCRAPS USE OF NOTA OPTION IN RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS

- **Supreme Court scrapped the use of NOTA (none of the above) option for Rajya Sabha elections**, saying it defeats fairness in indirect elections, destroys democratic values and serves as the Satan of defection and corruption.
- The ruling was given by three judges bench of SC comprising of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud.
- It came on a petition by Shailesh Parmar, who was the Congress chief whip in Gujarat, challenging EC's decision to allow NOTA in Rajya Sabha polls.

ABOUT THE SC PRONOUNCEMENT:

- **It quashed the June 2014 notification of Election Commission that allowed use of NOTA option in Rajya Sabha elections**.
- **It held that NOTA will destroy the concept of value of vote and representation, and encourage defection that shall open doors for corruption which is a malignant disorder**.

- It said that introduction of NOTA in indirect elections may on first glance, tempt the intellect but on keen scrutiny, it falls to the ground and completely ignores the role of an elector in such election and fully destroys democratic value.
- **NOTA's practical application defeats fairness ingrained in indirect election**.
- It held that the choice of NOTA will have a negative impact in the voting process of Rajya Sabha where open ballot is permissible and secrecy of voting has no room and discipline of political parties matters.
- Though elector, in Rajya Sabha has a single vote and has a quantified value of his vote and transferable surplus votes but there is an existence of a formula for determining value of the vote which has a different connotation.

HISTORY OF NOTA:

- **NOTA was introduced in Lok Sabha polls (direct election) by Election Commission of India (ECI) following the 2013 Supreme Court decision**.
- **It was extended to Rajya Sabha election (i.e. indirect elections) via notification in January 2014**.
- Thereafter, biennial elections to 76 Rajya Sabha seats across 21 states in 2014, 8 seats across three states in 2015, 70 seats across 21 states in 2016, 10 seats across three states in 2017, and 58 seats across 16 states in 2018 have been held.
- **NOTA option was provided on ballot paper after name of the last candidate in each of these biennial elections held since 2014**.
- **Election Commission in the apex court had justified its decision of introducing NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections, mentioning that it did not make any distinction between direct and indirect elections**.

WORLD SENIOR CITIZENS DAY: 21 AUGUST

A reminder for us to take care of our elderly.

- **The World Senior Citizens Day is celebrated every year on 21 August across the world to raise awareness of the condition of elder people and support them through the process of senescence**.

IMPORTANCE OF THE DAY:

- **This day is observed to raise awareness about factors and issues affecting older people, such as deterioration with age and examine issues that affect their lives such as abuse of elderly people**.
- **It is also recognizes and appreciates the contributions that older people make to the society**.
- It calls for welfare of elder persons to enroll and appreciate their achievements and involvement in the society to get promoted from their ability and knowledge.

HISTORY OF THIS DAY:

- **The day was officially established by former President of United States Ronald Reagan after he had signed Proclamation on August 19, 1988, declaring August 21 as National Senior Citizens Day in US**.
- Other countries later adopted the day to pay respect to the elderly community.
- **Later, United Nations General Assembly on 14th of December 1990 proclaimed to observe 21 August as World Senior Citizens Day**.

FSSAI NOTIFIES STANDARDS FOR HONEY AND ITS PRODUCTS TO CURB ADULTERATION

Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) has notified food safety standards for honey and its products in a bid to curb adulteration. These standards will be applicable to both domestic manufacturers and importers. It will help farmers to fetch better prices for their products.

KEY FEATURES OF NEW STANDARDS:

- It defines honey as a natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from nectar of blossoms or from secretions of plants, which honey bees collect, transform and store in honeycombs for ripening.
- Honey products should comply with 18 parameters like that of sucrose content, glucose ratio, pollen count, foreign oligosaccharides etc.
- These products should contain fixed maximum 5% limit for sucrose, 10% for carviacallosa and honeydew honey.
- The moisture percentage should be maximum 20% and pollen count should be 25,000 per gram.
- If product is sold as honey then food ingredients, including food additives should not be added to it.
- Honey should not be heated or processed to such extent that its essential composition is changed and its quality is impaired.
- Honey can be labelled according to the floral or the plant source, if it comes from any particular source and has organoleptic, physicochemical and microscopic properties corresponding with its origin.
- In case of 'Monofloral Honey', minimum pollen content of plant species concerned should not be less than 45% of total pollen content.
- In case of 'Multi Floral Honey', pollen content of any of plant species should not exceed 45% of total pollen content.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- About 90,000 tonnes of honey of all varieties is produced annually in the country.
- There are about 30 lakh honey bee colonies and five lakh people are engaged in the business.
- Government considers promoting farmers to venture into beekeeping business as a key component to increase their income.
- Union Government is promoting honey production through "Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)".
- It has established a National Bee Board for implementing various activities for development of scientific beekeeping under MIDH.

RAHI SARNOBAT BECOMES FIRST INDIAN WOMAN SHOOTER TO WIN GOLD MEDAL AT 2018 ASIAN GAMES

- Rahi Sarnobat became the first Indian woman to win a shooting gold medal at Jakarta-Palembang 2018 Asian Games in 25m pistol event.
- She shot a score of 34 in the final to tie with Thailand's Naphaswan Yangpaiboon who won silver medal and Kim Minjung of South Korea who won bronze with a score of 29.
- It was Rahi's biggest medal of her shooting career.

ABOUT RAHI SARNOBAT:

- She hails from Kolhapur, Maharashtra.
- She was the first Indian pistol shooter to win a gold medal in the Shooting World Cup (25m pistol event in the ISSF World cup in Changwon, China).
- She had won her first gold medal at 2008 Commonwealth Youth Games in Pune, India.
- She was the first Indian shooter to qualify for 25 meters sports pistol event in the Olympics (London Olympics in 2012).
- She won a gold medal at the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games (women's 25-metre pistol).
- She also won a bronze medal at the 2014 Incheon Asian Games (25-metre pistol team event).
- She had teamed with Anisa Sayyed and Heena Sidhu.

INDIA BANKING CONCLAVE 2018 HELD IN NEW DELHI

India Banking Conclave (IBC) 2018 was held in New Delhi from 23-24, 2018. It was organised by Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) along with its knowledge partner and government Think Tank, NITI Aayog.

The conclave was aimed at making India's banking sector more adaptable to face multiple future challenges in the coming years.

ABOUT THE INDIA BANKING CONCLAVE (IBC) 2018:

- IBC 2018 focused on engaging corporates, law and policy makers of country, academicians and professionals on a common platform to make all stakeholders share their views on all impending issues including bad debts and non-performing assets (NPAs) that have been accumulated in an unbiased manner.
- IBC 2018 aimed to serve as an effective platform for varied stakeholders connected to India's banking and financial sectors.
- It also seek to act as a bridge between government and key stakeholders and synergize to re-invigorate India's banking and financial sectors as many believe that a healthy, effectively running banking system can only revive India's investment cycle and support the country's growth story.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC POLICY RESEARCH (CEPR):

- CEPR is a network of over 1100 researchers who are based mainly in universities throughout Europe and

collaborate in research and its dissemination.
- It was founded in 1983 and is based in London, United Kingdom.
- It aims to enhance quality of economic policy-making within Europe and beyond by fostering high quality, policy-relevant economic research and disseminating it to decision-makers in public and private sectors.
- It is funded by a registered, European charity founded in 1983 by Richard Portes, FBA, CBE.

INDIA WINS FOUR BRONZE MEDALS IN WUSHU AT 2018 ASIAN GAMES

India has won four bronze medals in Wushu sporting event (all in Sanda style) at Jakarta-Palembang 2018 Asian Games held in Indonesia. It was India's best performance so far in Wushu in Asian Games as in Incheon games in 2014, India had won just two bronze medals.

FOLLOWING ARE THE FOUR BRONZE MEDALS WINNERS:

- Roshibina Devi: 60kg category
- Santosh Kumar: 56kg category
- Surya Bhanu Partap Singh: 60kg category
- Narender Grewal: 65kg category (He had earlier won bronze in Sanda 60kg in 2014 Asian Games)

ABOUT WUSHU:

- Wushu is Chinese Kung-fu.
- It is a martial art form that deals with the exhibition and full-contact sport derived from the traditional Chinese martial arts.
- It is different from other combat sports as it is a mix of kick-boxing and wrestling.
- It is made up of two disciplines, namely Taoulu (forms) and Sanda (sparring).
- Sanda comprises combative aspect of art-form, while Taoulu involves demonstration of the moves, acrobatic routines and techniques that are implemented in Sanda.
- Wushu is an international sport governed through the International Wushu Federation (IWUF).

RAVEENA TANDON APPOINTED AS BRAND AMBASSADOR OF SANJAY GANDHI NATIONAL PARK

Maharashtra Government has appointed Bollywood actor Raveena Tandon as the brand ambassador of Mumbai city-based Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). She was appointed to spread awareness among fellow citizens as she is an environmentally-conscious citizen and a respected member of the community. As brand ambassador, she will help the state forest department to create awareness about its various initiatives, like 50 crore tree plantation drive, eco-tourism in SGNP and conservation of leopards in SGNP, among others.

ABOUT SANJAY GANDHI NATIONAL PARK:

- It is a protected area near Mumbai in Maharashtra.
- It was formerly known as Borivali National Park (renamed to present name in 1996, after Sanjay Gandhi, eldest son of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi).
- It is noted as one of the major national parks existing within metropolis limit and is one of the most visited

parks in the world.

- It is spread over an area of 103 sq.km in the heart of Mumbai city and surrounded by a population of 20 million people.
- It is a part of Western Ghats biodiversity.
- It is home to more than 274 species of birds, 35 species of mammals, 78 species of reptiles and amphibians, 170 species of butterflies and over a staggering 1,300 species of plants.
- Kanheri Caves, a 2000 year old complex of some 160 rock-cut caves (was an important Buddhist learning centre) is situated within the national park and is a protected archeological site.

BOND-I: WORLD BANK LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST BLOCKCHAIN BOND

The World Bank has launched world's first public blockchain bond named bond-i created, allocated, transferred and managed by using blockchain technology. Bond-i is an acronym standing for Blockchain Offered New Debt Instrument and also refers to the tourist famous Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. Funds raised from this bond will go towards sustainable development initiatives.

ABOUT BOND-I:

- Bond-i is an Ethereum blockchain bond denominated in Australian dollars, making it a Kangaroo bond (referring to foreign bonds issued in Australia in local currency).
- World Bank had chosen the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (largest bank in Australia) as sole arranger for this bond.
- The bond has a two-year maturity and had raised Australian $100 million (US$73.16 million) after its issuance.
- It was issued and distributed on blockchain platform that runs on a private Ethereum network managed and operated by CBA and World Bank.
- Funds raised through it will go towards endeavours tied to World Bank's Reconstruction and Development division for sustainable development initiatives.

WHAT IS BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY?

- Blockchain is a decentralized incorruptible digital ledger for storing data across peer-to-peer network.
- It decentralizes information without it being copied.
- Information is held on blockchain through shared database which can be accessed on a real-time basis.
- This database is not stored on physical servers but on cloud, which makes it easy to store unlimited data.
- Blockchain technology is not controlled by any single entity and has no single point of failure.
- It is transparent and incorruptible.
- The most popular application of this technology so far has been cryptocurrency.
- But it is not limited to, financial transactions and can be also used in smart contracts, supply chain management logistics, sharing economy, crowdfunding, governance, file storage and date management and Internet of Things (IoT).

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE SLAVE TRADE AND ITS ABOLITION: 23 AUGUST

The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition is observed across the world every year on 23 August.

SIGNIFICANCE AND HISTORY OF THIS DAY:

- The day is designated by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to memorialize the transatlantic slave trade.
- Observance of this day marks the anniversary of 1791 insurrection of enslaved men and women in western part of the island of Santo Domingo, which is now known as Haiti.
- These men and women torn from Africa and sold into slavery, had revolted against the slave system.
- This Haitian Revolution had led to their freedom and independence in 1804.
- This uprising was a turning point in human history.

A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF THIS DAY:

- The International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition was proclaimed by UNESCO Executive Board by adopting resolution 29 C/40 by its General Conference at its 29th session.
- The Day was first celebrated in a number of countries, particularly in Haiti in 1998 and in Senegal in 1999.

ICOMOS LAUNCHES KERALA HERITAGE RESCUE INITIATIVE

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) launched the Kerala Heritage Rescue Initiative to assess damage to the rich cultural and built heritage in flood-devastated Kerala. ICOMOS is a global monument conservation body.

ABOUT THE KERALA HERITAGE RESCUE INITIATIVE:

- The initiative aims at setting up a platform for emergency response to the cultural heritage damaged by the floods in Kerala.
- It also has set a Facebook page to collect information on the damage to buildings, museum collections, cultural artefacts, libraries, archives, and even intangible heritage.
- Under this initiative, ICOMOS will assess the damage and risks to rich tangible, intangible, movable and immovable heritage that has been adversely affected by floods, including monuments, historic buildings, museum collections and artefacts of important significance.
- It will also create heritage response team and train its members to undertake damage assessment and emergency measures.
- ICOMOS has also approached the International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to partner in post-disaster work.
- ICCROM based in Rome (Italy) is an inter-governmental organisation dedicated to preservation of cultural heritage worldwide through training, information, research, cooperation and advocacy programmes.

ABOUT THE RECENT KERELA FLOODS:

- Kerala is endowed with natural beauty and is home to a number of iconic forts, palaces and other heritage buildings, which attract huge number of tourists every year.
- It is facing its worst floods in nearly a century due to heavy rainfall that has left 223 dead and forced over 10 lakh people out of their homes.
- The Central Government has declared this as a calamity of 'severe nature'.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES (ICOMOS):

- ICOMOS is a global monument conservation body (non-government organisation) dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques for conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage across the world.
- It is also an advisory body to UNESCO for cultural heritage, in particular for implementation of World Heritage Convention.
- It was founded in 1965 in Warsaw (Poland) as a result of the Venice Charter of 1964.
- It is headquartered in Paris, France.

RELIANCE INDUSTRIES BECOME FIRST INDIAN COMPANY TO CROSS RS. 8 TRILLION MARKET CAP

Mukesh Ambani-led oil-to-telecom behemoth Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) became the first Indian company to cross Rs 8 lakh crore ($114 billion) market capitalisation. This record m-cap of RIL also bumped up Mukesh Ambani's (India's richest man) wealth to over $48 billion (according to Bloomberg Billionaires Index). M-cap is the value of a company that is traded on the stock market, calculated by multiplying total number of shares by present share price.

MORE DETAILS:

- RIL achieved Rs 8 lakh crore m-cap feat, after its shares rose by 1.86% to close at a record high of Rs 1,269.70 on Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) in intra-day trade, elevating its market cap to Rs 8.05 lakh crore.
- So far this year, RIL shares have surged over 38 per cent.
- RIL added the latest Rs 1 trillion in market cap in just 23 trading sessions.
- It had first crossed Rs 7-trillion market cap in July 2018 (for the second time after it had achieved $100 billion m-cap for the first time in 2007).
- It took 181 trading days to move from Rs 6 trillion to Rs 7 trillion m-cap.
- Currently, RIL's market value accounts for 5% of India's total market cap.
- The market valuation of RIL is considerably higher than IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS') Rs 7,77,870 crore m-cap.
- TCS was the first Indian IT company to reach Rs. 7 lakh crore ($100 billion club) market capitalisation (m-cap) milestone in May 2018 and second company after to achieve that milestone after RIL.

ABOUT RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LIMITED (RIL):

- It is an Indian conglomerate company founded in 1977 by Dhirubhai Ambani.
- It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.
- At present, Mukesh Ambani is the Chairman and MD of RIL and owns about 47% stake in it.

- RIL is engaged in energy, petrochemicals, textiles, natural resources, retail, and telecommunications.
- It is the second largest company in India as measured by revenue after government-controlled Indian Oil Corporation.
- It is ranked 203rd on the Fortune Global 500 list of the world's biggest corporations as of 2017.
- It is ranked 8th among the Top 250 Global Energy Companies by Platts as of 2016.

P.V SINDHU SEVENTH IN FORBES LIST OF HIGHEST PAID WOMEN SPORTSPERSON

India's ace Shuttler and Rio Olympics silver medallist P.V Sindhu (23) was ranked seventh on Forbes list of highest-earning women sportspersons in the world (earnings between June 2017 and June 2018).

The list was topped by tennis legend Serena Williams with total earning of $18.062 million including $62,000 as prize money. Eight of the 10 top highest-earning women sportspersons were tennis players, remaining two were badminton player and professional racing driver.

LIST OF THE TOP 10 HIGHEST-EARNING WOMEN SPORTSPERSONS:

1. Serena Williams (Tennis): Total earnings: $18.1 million (Prize money: $62,000, Endorsements: $18 million).
2. Caroline Wozniacki (Tennis): Total earnings: $13 million (Prize money: $7 million, Endorsements: $6 million).
3. Sloane Stephens (Tennis): Total earnings: $11.2 million (Prize money: $5.7 million, Endorsements: $5.5 million).
4. Garbine Muguruza (Tennis): Total earnings: $11 million (Prize money: $5.5 million, Endorsements: $5.5 million).
5. Maria Sharapova (Tennis): Total earnings: $10.5 million (Prize money: $1 million, Endorsements: $9.5 million).
6. Venus Williams (Tennis): Total earnings: $10.2 million (Prize money: $4.2 million, Endorsements: $6 million).
7. P.V. Sindhu (Badminton): Total earnings: $8.5 million (Prize money: $500,000, Endorsements: $8 million).
8. Simona Halep (Tennis): Total earnings: $7.7 million (Prize money: $6.2 million, Endorsements: $1.5 million).
9. Danica Patrick (professional racing driver): Total earnings: $7.5 million (Salary/prize money: $3 million, Endorsements: $4.5 million).
10. Angelique Kerber (Tennis): Total earnings: $7 million (Prize money: $3 million, Endorsements: $4 million).

NETA APP LAUNCHED TO RATE AND REVIEW ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Former President Pranab Mukherjee has launched the National Electoral Transformation (NETA) mobile application that allows voters to rate and review their political representatives. The app is the brainchild of a 27-year-old entrepreneur Pratham Mittal. It is a first of its kind platform in India that allows voters to rate and review the political representatives in their constituencies.

ABOUT THE NETA APP:

- The app aims to foster political accountability and transparency among leaders.
- It is inspired by US' approval system.
- Using it, voters can review and rate their elected representatives (MLAs, MPs and ministers) and hold them accountable as well.
- It will also help to determine the popularity of politicians and electoral candidates, using public polls.
- This app is also seen as an instrument to gauge voter sentiment across constituencies in the country.
- It uses multiple mediums like the app, IVR calls, SMS and even offline activations with the help of Aashawadi and Aanganwadi workers to gather data on evolving political inclinations.
- The app is available on Andriod and iOS and web in 16 languages to cater to a diverse user profile.
- It uses combination of Artificial Intelligence (AI), one-time password (OTP) and Aadhaar numbers to ensure that voters who rate leaders are genuine.
- This app was piloted during February 2018 bypolls in Rajasthan's Ajmer and Alwar constituencies.
- It was later used in Karnataka ahead of the assembly elections in May 2018.
- The app in its beta version has already seen over 1.5 crore voters rating and reviewing their local leaders.

IAF LAUNCHES SPEEDEX CONTRACT

Indian Airforce has formally launched The Stores, Proactive, Efficient and Expeditious Despatch of Extra Size/ Wt Consignment (SPEEDEX) contract. It was concluded in June 2018 between with Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd and Ashok Travel and Tours for air and surface component respectively.

ABOUT THE SPEEDEX CONTRACT:

- The contract aims to overcome delay in piecemeal dispatch of consignment and to move operationally urgent stores by air and normal consignments by surface mode.
- This will facilitate door to door pickup and delivery facility with fixed timelines, lesser than speed post.
- It will help to enhance IAF's support maintenance activities and improve operational preparedness.

NEED FOR THIS CONTRACT

- The ability to lift, shift and move is the essence of sound transportation management.
- It has a profound impact on all principles of military logistics.
- In the past, IAF had been using hired transport for the movement of cargo to various IAF bases, which resulted in delay in dispatch of critically required stores.
- Therefore, to overcome this delay and reduce time taken for transportation of items and ensure early availability of stores to the field units, this contract was formulated.

TRIBES INDIA OUTLETS TO OPEN AT AHMEDABAD, UDAIPUR AND KOLKATA AIRPORTS

Airport Authority of India (AAI) has allotted space to Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of

India Limited (TRIFED) for opening of Tribes India outlets at Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Udaipur (Rajasthan) and Kolkata (West Bengal) airports. Tribes India Outlets will provide good opportunity to market tribal products and help to promote Tribes India as a brand among target customers. AAI has also offered TRIFED spaces at international airports at Dehradun (Uttarakhand), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Pune (Maharashtra), Goa, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu), Lucknow (UP), Amritsar (Punjab) and Gangtok (Sikkim) for setting up of Tribes India Outlets.

ABOUT TRIBAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING DEVELOPMENT FEDERATION OF INDIA LIMITED (TRIFED):

- TRIFED is a multi-State Cooperative Society under Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- It was established in August 1987 under Multi State Cooperative Societies Act 1984 (now been replaced by Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002).
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It aims at promoting economic development of tribal communities of the country through marketing development and sustained upgradation of their skills and products.
- It achieves this by promoting and marketing tribal products, tribal art and crafts within the country and abroad by providing marketing support to tribal products through its network of retail outlets.
- It also organizes exhibitions like National Tribal Craft Expo called "Aadi Mahotsav" etc. to promote and market tribal products.
- It also facilitates participation of tribal artisans to enable them to interact directly with art lovers to assess market needs.

INDIA, SINGAPORE SIGN SECOND PROTOCOL AMENDING CECA

India and Singapore have signed Second Protocol amending Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in New Delhi. Its provisions will come into effect on 14th September, 2018.

ABOUT THE SECOND PROTOCOL AMENDING CECA:

- It will help to boost bilateral trade between India and Singapore.
- It formally brings to closure negotiations on the second review of CECA.
- It will give effect to provisions agreed between India and Singapore during closure of the second review of CECA.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE BEGINNING:

- CECA was the first comprehensive agreement covering trade in goods, services and investments signed by India with any of its trading partners.
- It was signed in June, 2005 and its first review was concluded in October, 2007.
- The second review was started in May 2010.
- In closing the second review, India and Singapore had successfully reached a mutual understanding and agreement.
- They also had agreed to expand coverage of tariff concessions, liberalize Rules of Origin, rationalize

Product Specific Rules and include provisions on Certificate of Origin and Cooperation on its verification.
- These measures will further facilitate trade between India and Singapore and also improve utilization of CECA.
- The conclusion of second review was announced during the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Singapore in June, 2018.
- Now, both countries are exploring the possibility of launching the 3rd Review of India-Singapore CECA in September, 2018.

A LOOK AT INDIA-SINGAPORE TRADE:

- Singapore is the second largest trading partner of India within ASEAN and India is the largest trading partner of Singapore in South Asia with bilateral trade of US $17.7 billion in 2017-18.
- Singapore's trade with India constitutes about 21.8% of our total trade with ASEAN and 2.3% of our global trade.
- India had a trade surplus of US $2.73 billion with Singapore in 2017-18.

HOME MINISTRY REVOKES SECURITY CLEARANCE OF QATAR-BASED ENGLISH NEWS CHANNEL AL JAZEERA

Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has revoked the security clearance of Qatar government's state-funded English news broadcaster Al Jazeera. It is believed that the main reason for this revocation is considered to be over a documentary made by the Qatari channel on militancy in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), which Indian Government viewed as "biased". Al Jazeera has reportedly filed petition for reviewing this decision.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

- •The role of MHA is limited to matter related to security clearance.
- The decision on cancellation of broadcasting licence of a news channel is taken by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

A LOOK AT RECENT HISTORY:

- Foreign channels need security clearance from MHA and broadcasting clearance from Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry.
- Al Jazeera's security clearance was valid from December 3, 2010, and expired on May 29, 2018.
- Earlier also, Al Jazeera was involved into a controversy with the Indian government.
- In 2015, it had published an incorrect map of J&K.
- For this, Government had then suspended it for 5 days in which time, they carried blank screen with a message running on it as instructed by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Some other channels who were rejected security clearances recently include ABC News, Focus NE TV, Voice of Nation, Jhankar News, Maa TV, Bhakti Sagar, M Tunes and Lemon News.
- In some cases channels have their permissions withdrawn for other reasons too, such as owners seeking cancellations, non-operationalisation of channel, non-submission of documents.

ABOUT MEA MAY 2018 NOTIFICATION:

In May 2018, Ministry of External Affairs had reminded foreign journalists that it is mandatory for them to take prior permission before travelling to areas such as J&K as well as Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and parts of Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan as these are considered protected and restricted areas.

DAC APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF 24 MULTI ROLE HELICOPTERS FOR INDIAN NAVY

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the procurement of 24 anti-submarine capable multi role helicopters to enhance the capability of Indian Navy at sea.
- This approval will allow Government to sign contract with US based aviation giant Lockheed Martin for purchasing 24 MH-60R helicopters for Indian Navy.
- This contract will be a direct government-to-government (G2G) deal with United States worth approximately $1.8 billion.
- MH-60R helicopters (or Seahawk multi-mission helicopters) are anti-submarine helicopters.
- Buying them will replace British-built Sea King helicopters, many of which are more than three-decades-old.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Multi role helicopters are an integral part of frontline warships like aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates and corvettes.
- Availability of MRH with Indian Navy will help to plug existing capability gap.
- For years, Indian Navy has argued that its warships lack any modern anti-submarine helicopters with existing Sea King fleet now being obsolete.
- At present less than 10 Sea King helicopters are operational and their absence has forced Indian Navy to sail its warships without the support of these helicopters.
- Frontline destroyers of Indian Navy have hangars which can house two helicopters of this class but are frequently put to sea without any integral helicopter support.

DAC APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF 155 MM ADVANCED TOWED ARTILLERY GUN SYSTEMS

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved procurement of 150 indigenously designed and developed 155 mm Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems for Indian Army at approximate cost of Rs 3,364.78 crores. This procurement will further quest for modernisation of Armed forces.

ABOUT THE 155 MM ADVANCED TOWED ARTILLERY GUN SYSTEMS:

- These guns have been indigenously designed & developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- They will be manufactured by production agencies as nominated by DRDO.
- They are likely to be the mainstay of Artillery in the near future.
- Procurement of indigenous artillery gun systems will provide major fillip to 'Make in India' programme of Government.
- It will also help to create self-reliance in country's defence manufacturing sector.

- It also has the potential of making the defence industry as a major engine of India's economic growth.

FABCI: IIT HYDERABAD LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE INCUBATOR TO BOOST CHIP DESIGN

Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) has launched "Fabless Chip Design Incubator (FabCI)", an exclusive incubator to boost chip design. It is a first of its kind in India that will focus on creating an ecosystem for start-ups in chip design.

ABOUT THE FABLESS CHIP DESIGN INCUBATOR (FABCI):

- FabCI is funded by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) along with technology partners Cadence Design Systems and Mentor Graphics both are leading providers of Electronic Design Automation (EDA) software, hardware and IP.
- FabCI's purpose is to incubate at least 50 'Make-in-India' chip design companies that can compete globally and generate Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).
- It will provide a bouquet of offerings including free software tools with leading technology partners in Electronic Design Automation (EDA), characterization facility for testing chips and equipment for performing DC and RF characterization.
- It will also offer virtual support to non-Hyderabad start-ups which can join FabCI and leverage the offerings and participate remotely.

DAC APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF 111 UTILITY HELICOPTERS FOR INDIAN NAVY

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has approved the procurement of 111 utility helicopters for Indian Navy at a cost of over Rs 21,000 crore. DAC is Union Defence Ministry's highest decision making body on capital procurement of Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force).

DETAILS:

- The procurement of 111 utility helicopters will be the first project under Defence Ministry's prestigious Strategic Partnership (SP) Model that aims at providing significant fillip to Government's 'Make in India' programme.
- Several aviation majors including Airbus (Europe), Kamov (Russia) and Bell (US) have offered their bids for this project in addition to state owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Indian Navy will shortlist the helicopter it wants after an extensive evaluation process which will be followed by a contract where most of these helicopters will need to be built in the country in conjunction with local partners.
- The contract when finalised will result in a vibrant and wide-spread Defence industrial eco-system in the Indian Aviation Sector with private industry and MSMEs as major stakeholders.

ABOUT THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (SP) MODEL:

- It envisages indigenous manufacturing of major defence platforms by Indian Strategic Partner, who will collaborate with foreign OEMs (original equipment manufacutures), acquire niche technologies and set up production facilities in the country.
- The model has a long-term vision of promoting India as a manufacturing hub for defence equipment.
- It will help in enhancing self-sufficiency and establishing an industrial and R&D ecosystem, capable of meeting future requirements of Indian Armed Forces.

DAC APPROVES PROCUREMENT OF VERTICALLY LAUNCHED SHORT RANGE MISSILE SYSTEMS

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved procurement of 14 Vertically Launched Short Range Missile Systems.
- Of these, 10 systems will be indigenously developed and remaining four will be imported.
- These missile systems will help boost the self-defence capability of ships against anti-ship missiles.
- DAC is Union Defence Ministry's highest decision making body on capital procurement of Indian Armed Forces (Army, Navy and Air Force).
- It is chaired by Defence Minister.

ABOUT VERTICALLY LAUNCHED MISSILE SYSTEMS (VLS):

- VLS is an advanced system for holding and firing missiles on mobile naval platforms, such as surface ships and submarines.
- Each vertical launch system consists of a number of cells, which can hold one or more missiles ready for firing.
- Typically, each cell can hold number of different types of missiles, allowing ship flexibility to load the best set for any given mission

SHOT-PUTTER TEJINDER PAL SINGH TOOR WINS INDIA'S FIRST GOLD MEDAL IN ATHLETICS AT 2018 ASIAN GAMES

Shot-putter Tejinder Pal Singh Toor (24) has won Gold medal in men's shot put final at the 2018 Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games held in Indonesia. He finished first in men's shot put final and set a new record at 20.75 m in his fifth attempt. It was India's first Gold medal in an Athletics event in this edition of the Asian Games.

WHO IS TEJINDER PAL SINGH TOOR?

- He hails from Punjab (Khosa Pando village in Moga district) and is the son of a farmer.
- He holds an outdoor national record of 20.75m in shot put throw.
- He had won silver medal at the 2017 Asian Athletics Championships held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha in shot put with throw of 19.77m, missing out on gold medal by 0.03 m.
- He had finished eighth in the final of 2018 Commonwealth Games with a throw of 19.42m.

MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT SEEKS REVIVAL OF CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION PROJECT

Madhya Pradesh forest department has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to revive its Cheetah Reintroduction Project to reintroduce Cheetahs in the Nauradehi sanctuary located in Sagar district of the state. The ambitious project was conceived in 2009 but had hit a roadblock for want of funds.

CONDITION OF CHEETAH IN INDIA:

- Cheetah, the fastest land animal was declared extinct in India in 1952.
- India's last spotted Asiatic cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus) had died in Chhattisgarh in 1947.
- This species was hunted into extinction by British colonial officers and the Indian royalty.
- According to an earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa.
- Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate felines to India.
- However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PAST:

- In 2011, NTCA, a statutory body under Union Environment Ministry had committed Rs.50 crore to State for this project.
- Dehradun based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) also had prepared Rs. 260 crore Cheetah Re-introduction Project in 2012.
- It was estimated that Rs. 25 crore to Rs. 30 crore will be needed to build an enclosure with huge boundary walls in an area of 150 sq km for introduction and protection of Cheetahs in Nauradehi before releasing them in the wild.
- Nauradehi sanctuary was found to be the most suitable area for reintroduction of Cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict fast movement of Cheetahs and also has abundant prey base.

BNHS TO OPEN ITS FIRST REGIONAL CENTRE NEAR CHILIKA LAKE

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, will start operating its first regional centre or avifauna observatory on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake (Asia's largest brackish water lagoon), Odisha.

ABOUT THE AVIFAUNA OBSERVATORY:

- The avifauna observatory will carry out research on avian disease by collecting samples and monitor Nalabana Bird Sanctuary.
- It will be engaged in identifying air route of foreign birds flocking Chilika lake during winter, sample collection, training related to bird census, publishing bird migration atlas books, examining various diseases among the birds and review condition of Nalabana bird sanctuary along with counting birds.

ABOUT THE BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY (BHNS):

- BNHS is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in India engaged in conservation and biodiversity research.
- It was founded on 15 September 1883 and is headquartered at Hornbill House, Mumbai.
- It supports many research efforts through grants and publishes Journal of Bombay Natural History Society.
- Department of Science and Technology has designated it as a 'Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation'.

ABOUT CHILIKA LAKE:

- It is the largest coastal lagoon or brackish water lake in India and Asia and second largest lagoon in the world (after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia).
- It is located at the mouth of Daya River, flowing into Bay of Bengal.
- It is spread over Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Odisha on the east coast of India, covering an area of over 1,100 km sq.
- It hosts nearly one million birds with 97 species being intercontinental migratory in nature during the winter season.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent.
- It is one of the hotspot of biodiversity in the country and of some rare, vulnerable and endangered species listed in the IUCN Red List of threatened animals.
- It was the first waterbody in India to be designated as wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1981.
- It was put under Montreux Record (record for such sites where there has been or likely to be adverse ecological change due to manmade activities), but was later removed from it due to conservation efforts.

3RD INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE HELD IN HANOI, VIETNAM

The third edition of the Indian Ocean Conference will be held in Hanoi, capital city of Vietnam from 27-28 August 2018. It was inaugurated by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Vietnamese counterpart Pham Binh Min, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam.

FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE:

- The third edition of the Conference is organised by India Foundation in association with Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)- Sri Lanka and Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.
- Its theme is "Building Regional Architectures".
- It will see participation from around 35 countries and will have speakers from 25 countries.

ABOUT THE INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE:

- It has been initiated by the Delhi based think tank India Foundation along with its partners from Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- It is an annual conference that aims to bring together Heads of States/Governments, Ministers,

thought leaders, scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats and practitioners from across the region on a single platform.
- So far, two successful editions of the conference were hosted in 2016 and 2017 in Singapore and Sri Lanka respectively.
- Both Conferences were supported by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India and had seen participation from over 35 countries.

INS VIKRAMADITYA FOR FIRST TIME TO BE FITTED WITH MARINE HYDRAULIC SYSTEMS

India's only aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya for the first time will be fitted with marine hydraulic systems to boost the air operations of the ship. It will be fitted with two marine hydraulic systems whose technical terms go by "GS-1MF" and "GS-3".

MORE DETAILS:

- Marine hydraulic systems GS-1MF and GS-3 will be used for refuelling, cleaning and pressurisation of hydraulic systems of aircraft and helicopters on board INS Vikramaditya.
- GS-1MF hydraulic system is used in helicopters, while GS-3 is used in aircraft.
- The upgrades and sea trials of these systems will be done in India.
- The system will be installed by Technodinamika, a subsidiary of Russia's Rostec State Corporation by May 2019.
- Technodinamika specialises in development, manufacturing and after-sales servicing for systems and equipments of civil and military aircraft.

ABOUT INS VIKRAMADITYA:

- It is a powerful aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy.
- It was built in 1987 and had served the Soviet navy (named as Baku).
- It was later renamed Admiral Gorshkov under the Russian navy.
- India had purchased it in 2004 at a cost of $2.3 billion and was commissioned in the Indian Navy in November 2013 at Severodvinsk in Russia.
- INS Vikramaditya's design is based on the Kiev-class aircraft carriers.
- It is 284 metres long and 60 metres high (high as 20-storeyed building).
- It weighs 40,000 tonnes and is the biggest and heaviest ship in the Indian Navy.
- Its air wing consists of 30 MiG 29K fighter jets and six Kamov helicopters.
- It is based at its home port at Karwar in Karnataka.

INDIA'S FIRST BIOFUEL FLIGHT TO FLY FROM DEHRADUN TO DELHI

India's first flight using biofuel will fly from Dehradun (capital of Uttarakhand) to Delhi. The first ever biofuel test flight was conducted by SpiceJet on its turborporp Q-400 plane. With this, India will join the elite club of nations who have operated flight on alternative energy source like biofuel. Developed countries like Canada, Australia and US have already conducted these test flights. India will be the first developing nation to experiment biofuel test flight.

DETAILS:

- SpiceJet operated first such biofuel flight from Dehradun to Delhi using alternative environment friendly fuel for 10 minutes over Dehradun.
- Based on the result of test flight, the second flight took off later to Delhi.
- The objective of this biofuel flight is to make air travel economical and bring some respite to airlines reeling under high fuel price through use of alternate fuel.
- Moreover, use of biofuel has the potential to reduce aviation carbon emissions by up to 80%.
- According to a recent data from International Air Transport Association (IATA), recent rising aviation fuel costs in India has eroded aviation sector's profitability.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL SCENARIO?

- The world's first dedicated biofuel flight (by Dreamliner Boeing 787-9) was flown for the first time from Los Angeles (US) to Melbourne (Australia) in January 2018 by Australian carrier Qantas.
- The fuel for this 15-hour flight was a blended one and was 10% derived from industrial type of mustard seed.
- In 2011, Alaska Airlines had operated some flights using biofuel made of 50% used cooking oil.
- Air carrier KLM had also operated few biofuel flights between New York and Amsterdam in 2013.

BIOFUEL AND INDIA:

- Biofuel is produced from vegetable oils, recycled grease, algae and animal fat.
- It is a cleaner, environmental friendly fuel that can be used as an alternative in place of fossil fuels.
- To reduce its dependence on fossil fuels and its imports, India is trying to promote biofuels.
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy recently on August 10, 2018 (World Biofuel Day 2018) had released National Policy on Biofuels 2018.
- Under it, Government plans to triple ethanol production over the next four years.
- It also has set a target of 20% blending of ethanol in petrol by 2030.

GOVERNMENT INKS $250 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT WORLD BANK FOR ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION SECTOR REFORMS IN RAJASTHAN

Central Government along with Government of Rajasthan has signed a $250 million Development Policy Loan (DPL) agreement with World Bank for Electricity Distribution Sector Reforms in Rajasthan. The loan will be provided by World Bank's lending arm International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). It has maturity of 21 years and a 3-year grace period.

ABOUT THE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION SECTOR REFORMS PROGRAM:

- The loan proceeds will support Rajasthan Government in improving performance of its electricity distribution sector under the State's 24×7 Power for All program.
- This loan is second in the series of two operations planned for comprehensive turnaround of Rajasthan's electricity distribution sector.

- The first loan was closed in March 2017.

KEY AREAS OF THE REFORMS PROGRAM:

- Strengthen Governance in the Distribution Sector in state by establishing Annual Performance MoUs between DISCOMs and the State Government.
- Put in place Performance Management System.
- Provide incentives to employees for improving performance.
- Financial Restructuring and recovery in the Sector by transferring considerable amounts of DISCOMs debt to State.
- Bring in more discipline in revenue requirements of DISCOMs.
- Take initiatives in reducing the costs of energy procurement.
- Improve operational performance of DISCOMs through initiatives like publishing feeder level energy audits and increased usage of IT among others.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROGRAM?

- This program is aligned to the Broader Reform Program developed by Central Government and adopted by Rajasthan Government to improve the performance of DISCOMs in the State.
- This will contribute to state's fiscal sustainability and achieve objective of 24×7 Power for All initiative, which aspires to provide continuous, reliable power supply to all households in Rajasthan by 2019.
- It will also help to deepen the Institutional and Operational Reforms that were launched in late 2015 centered around Central Government's Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojna (UDAY), for which Rajasthan had joined in 2016.
- It also supports Rajasthan State Electricity Distribution Management Responsibility (RSEDMR) Act, which aims to reform the Governance of DISCOMs and bring greater public accountability in their functioning.
- The improved financial health of DISCOMS through these initiatives will help to free up state's resources for spending on social sectors, allowing for businesses to grow and jobs to be created.

AESF-IV: 4TH ASIAN ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM HELD IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

The fourth edition of Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum (AESF-IV) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. This was for first time AESF was held in South Asia. It was jointly organised by Election Commission of Sri Lanka and Asian network for free elections (ANFREL).

DETAILS OF AESF-IV:

- The theme of AESF-IV was 'Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together'.
- It was attended by more than 250 delegates from 45 countries.
- India was represented by Chief Electoral Officer of Maharashtra Ashwini Kumar.
- It covered a wide array of crucial election issues like current state of democracy in Asia, common electoral challenges in the region, and various good practices employed to make elections better.

- It culminated with endorsement of a landmark document, urging election stakeholders from within Asia and beyond to promote and defend democracy in the region.

ABOUT THE ASIAN ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM (AESF):

- ASEF is the largest gathering of election management bodies (EMBs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Asia.
- It is being held in order to secure the broad establishment of democracy and security when holding elections within the region.
- It provides opportunity for Asian election commissions, election observers, non-government organizations (NGOs) and interstate bodies to gather and discuss state of elections and democracy in the region.
- It also provides platform for institutionalizing capacity building efforts to pave the way for more meaningful and credible elections through cooperation among stakeholders.
- Previous AESF gatherings were instrumental in setting benchmarks and guidelines on conducting truly democratic elections which respect internationally recognized human rights and election principles and norms.
- The first AESF was held in Thailand in 2012 and had endorsed Bangkok Declaration on Free and Fair Elections.
- The second AESF was held in Dili, Timor Leste in 2015 and had established Dili Indicators of Democratic Elections.
- The third AESF was held in 2016 in Bali, Indonesia which had framed Bali Commitment: Eight Keys to Electoral Integrity.

UNIVERSAL INFLUENZA VACCINE IDENTIFIED

Scientists of The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), U.S.A, have found a potential universal Influenza vaccine which could protect people against most strains of the virus.

ABOUT THE VACCINE:

- It is a strong antibody response to a structure on the surface of flu viruses called the Hemagglutinin (HA) stalk.
- It has the potential to be developed into a universal flu vaccine.
- Unlike the current seasonal flu vaccines, it could be given a few times over a lifetime to provide protection potentially similar to a tetanus vaccine.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Flu viruses are classified by two proteins on the outer surface of the virus: hemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N).
- There are 18 different H subtypes and 11 different N subtypes, and viruses can be further broken down into different strains within those subtypes.
- The H protein (also called HA) enables the flu virus to enter a human cell.
- It is made up of a head and a stem.

- Seasonal flu vaccines fight infection by inducing antibodies that target the HA head.
- This region varies season to season, which is why flu vaccines must be updated each year.
- However, scientists discovered the stem typically remains unchanged, making it an ideal target for antibodies induced by a universal flu vaccine.

RIVER GANGA DRYING UP IN SUMMERS DUE TO GROUNDWATER DEPLETION: STUDY

According to a recent study conducted by IIT-Kharagpur, River Ganga has witnessed unprecedented low levels of water in several lower reaches in last few summer seasons. The study was carried out under IIT-KGP Science and Heritage Initiative (SANDHI) Initiative, which focuses on river systems and its relationship with settlement system. It had used combination of satellite images of groundwater levels of Ganga, numerical simulations and chemical analyses to draw the conclusion.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY:

- Drying of Ganga River in recent years during summer seasons is possibly related to groundwater depletion in Gangetic aquifers.
- The decline of groundwater inflow (base flow) is also impacting the health of the river.
- Present day base flow to Ganga from adjoining aquifers may be third or more of total river water volume in pre-monsoon months.
- The base flow might have dipped by 50% from beginning of irrigation-pumping phase in 1970s.
- In forthcoming summers, for next 30 years, groundwater contribution to river Ganga will continue decreasing.
- This trend can lead to a disastrous effect on the riverine ecology and lead to food scarcity for 115 million people in the Ganga basin.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY?

- It is of interest to hydrology, global change community and policymakers.
- It can help general public understand wider implications of groundwater depletion.
- It also brings out scientific reasons for the decreased flows of the river Ganga, especially in the lower reaches.
- The findings will be extremely helpful in providing quantitative data for future planning of water resources projects in the Ganga basin.

CBSE HAS DEVELOPED PARINAM MANJUSHA, A DIGILOCKER FACILITY

A step to ease the board exam academic document problems arised due to Kerela Floods. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) along with National e-Governance Division has developed 'Parinam Manjusha'. It is a digital academic repository, to provide digital mark sheets, migration certificates and pass certificates to students from CBSE-affiliated schools in Kerala, whose board exam academic documents have been lost or damaged in the recent floods.

ABOUT THE REPOSITORY:

- This academic repository has been integrated with DigiLocker.
- Over 1,300 schools are affiliated to the CBSE in Kerala.
- The digital academic documents are digitally signed by the Controller of Examinations of CBSE which make them legally valid digital document as per the IT Act.
- These documents are also having QR codes and such documents can be verified for the authenticity using the DigiLocker mobile app.

NAVLEKHA: GOOGLE UNVEILS NEW PLATFORM FOR INDIC LANGUAGE PUBLISHERS

Search engine giant Google has unveiled Project Navlekha to make online content relevant for more Indian users, especially in local languages. It was unveiled along with a host of upgrades of Google's other products at the fourth 'Google for India' event held in New Delhi. India is an important market for Google as it is the second largest population of internet users in the world. At present, the amount of online content in Indian languages is only 1% of what is available in English.

ABOUT PROJECT NAVLEKHA:

- Navlekha is a word derived from Sanskrit meaning "a new way to write".
- This project aims to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.
- It will allow local publishers who do not have websites to make their offline content fit for online publishing in less than a minute.
- It also comprises of a tool that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to allow publishers to simply scan documents or PDFs and create instant web pages on the platform.
- No expert digital knowledge is required in the process.
- Under Navlekha project, Google will help these publishers to receive training and support and a branded page domain for the first three years.

GOVERNMENT INKS $300 MILLION AGREEMENT WITH WORLD BANK TO SCALE-UP ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

Union Government (Finance Ministry) has inked a $220 million Loan Agreement with World Bank to scale-up Inida's Energy Efficiency Program. It also signed an $80 million guarantee agreement with World Bank.

MORE ABOUT THE LOAN:

- The loan will be provided to Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), by World Bank through its lending arm International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
- It has a maturity of 19 years and a 5-year grace period.
- The $80 million IBRD guarantee will partially cover re-payment risks to commercial lenders or investors to enable EESL to raise funds for its program.

ABOUT THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM (EEP):

- It will be implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- It will help to scale-up deployment of energy saving measures in residential and public sectors, strengthen EESL's institutional capacity and enhance its access to commercial financing.
- Under it, EESL will deploy 219 million LED bulbs and tube lights, 5.8 million ceiling fans, and 7.2 million street lights, which will be supplied by private sector manufacturers and suppliers.

KEY COMPONENTS OF PROGRAM:

- Create sustainable markets for LED lights and energy efficient ceiling fans.
- Facilitate well-structured and scalable investments in public street lighting.
- Develop sustainable business models for emerging market segments such as super-efficient air conditioning and agricultural water pumping systems.
- Strengthen institutional capacity of EESL.
- Increase private sector participation in energy efficiency, including through private sector energy service companies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ALL THIS FOR INDIA:

- The World Bank investments under this program are expected to avoid lifetime greenhouse gas emissions of 170 million tons of CO_2.
- It will also contribute to avoiding an estimated 10 GW of additional generation capacity.
- This will help to achieve 50% of National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency target of 19.6 GW indicated in India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under 2015 Paris Agreement (India has committed to reduce carbon emissions by 33-35% by 2030 under NDC).
- Thus, help India to move further towards a more resource-efficient growth path.
- It will help tackle financing, awareness, technical and capacity barriers faced by new energy efficiency programs and also support Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) program of Central Government.

NVIDIA MADE DEEP LEARNING TECHNOLOGY PARTNER OF NITI AAYOG FOR MOVEHACK

Union Government's premier think tank NITI Aayog has made computer chip manufacturer NVIDIA its deep learning technology partner to support its MoveHack event. MoveHack is a global mobility hackathon event organized by NITI Aayog to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India.

WHAT IS DEEP LEARNING TECHNOLOGY?

It is a subset of machine learning (ML) in artificial intelligence (AI) that has networks capable of learning unsupervised from data that is unstructured or unlabelled.

HOW WILL NVIDIA HELP?

- As deep learning technology partner, NVIDIA will help NITI Aayog to solve the grand challenge of making innovations in the mass mobility matter of national importance using Artifical Intellegence (AI) and deep learning.
- It will provide participants in the MoveHack event with graphics processing unit (GPU) and deep learning technologies, as well as remote access to NVIDIA DGX systems, purposely built deep learning supercomputers.
- Moreover, participants will also get a chance to be mentored by experts from the chip-making company.

SATYA TRIPATHI APPOINTED AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL AND HEAD OF THE NEW YORK OFFICE OF UNEP

Indian development economist and environment expert Satya S. Tripathi is appointed as the assistant secretary general of UN Environment Programme (UNEP). He was appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

WHO IS SATYA TRIPATHI?

- Tripathi holds commerce and law bachelors degrees and masters in law from Berhampur University in Odisha.
- He has a rich experience of over 35 years with UN and has worked at UN since 1998 in Europe, Asia and Africa on strategic assignments in sustainable development, human rights, democratic governance and legal affairs.
- Since 2017, he has been the senior adviser to UNEP on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- He had also served as the UN Recovery Coordinator for $7 billion post-tsunami and post-conflict recovery efforts in Aceh and Nias in Indonesia.
- He had also chaired the Committees on Laws and Treaties for the UN-mediated Cyprus unification talks in 2004.
- He has also served as the director and executive head of UN Office for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD)+ Coordination in Indonesia.

INTERESTING TO NOTE:

Satya Tripathi is possibly the third-highest ranking Indian in the UN bureaucracy at present after Atul Khare, an under-secretary general who heads the department of operations and Nikhil Seth who is the assistant secretary general and had headed Geneva-based UN Institute for Training and Research in 2015.

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY PASSES BILLS TO MAKE DESECRATION OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS PUNISHABLE WITH LIFE TERM

Punjab Legislative Assembly has unanimously passed Indian Penal Code (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2018 and Code of Criminal Procedure (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2018 to make sacrilege of all religious texts punishable with life imprisonment. This comes a week after State Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Arminder Singh approved the amendments. Besides, Justice (retired) Ranjit Singh Commission report on incidents of desecration of religious texts was also tabled in the assembly.

- These Bills amends Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to add necessary provisions.
- IPC (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2018 inserts section 295AA to IPC which says that whoever causes injury, damage or sacrilege to holy religious texts with intention to hurt religious feelings of people, will be punished with imprisonment for life.
- The main objective of making sacrilege of religious texts punishable offence with life imprisonment is to preserve communal harmony in the society.

A LOOK AT THE PAST EVENTS:

- Previously Punjab assembly in 2016, when the previous SAD-BJP government was in power, had also passed Indian Penal Code (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2016 and Code of Criminal Procedure (Punjab Amendment) Bill, 2016.
- The amendments at that time were approved to seek life imprisonment for desecration of Guru Granth Sahib, holy book of Sikhs which is considered as a living Guru in Sikhism.
- President had refused to grant assent after Centre had raised objections to these Bills.
- Centre had raised objection, saying punishment of life imprisonment could not be limited to desecration of holy book of just one religion and should instead be for all religions.
- Both of these earlier bills now stand withdrawn with passage of new Bills.

GOVERNMENT ASKS STATES TO BAN E-CIGARETTES

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued advisory to all states and Union Territories to not allow manufacture, sale and advertisement of e-cigarettes and other Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS). It also has issued a warning that use of e-cigarettes and other ENDS devices pose great health risk to public at large, especially to children and pregnant women. Punjab, Karnataka, Kerala, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar already have prohibited manufacture, import, sale and distribution of e-cigarettes and ENDS.

WHAT ARE E-CIGARETTES AND ENDS?

- ENDS are devices that heat solution to create aerosol, which also frequently contains flavours, usually dissolved into propylene glycolor and glycerin.
- e-cigarettes (electronic cigarettes) are most common prototype of ENDS.
- These devices do not burn or use tobacco leaves but instead vaporise solution, which user then inhales.
- The main constituents of the solution are nicotine, propylene glycol (with or without glycerol and flavouring agents).

WHY IS THE HEALTH MINISTRY ADVISORY?

- According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report on Global Tobacco Epidemic 2017, 30 countries like Mauritius, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Brazil, Mexico,

Uruguay, Bahrain, Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE have already banned ENDS.

- ENDS including e-cigarettes, heat-not-burn devices, vape, etc. are great health risk to public at large, especially to children, adolescents, pregnant women and women of reproductive age.
- ENDS are not approved as NRTs (nicotine-replacement therapies) under Drugs and Cosmetics Act and rules made thereunder.
- ENDS solutions and emissions contain other chemicals, some of them considered to be toxicants.
- They contain nicotine, an addictive component of tobacco products.
- In addition they contain metals, including lead, chromium and nickel and chemicals like formaldehyde with concentrations equal to or greater than traditional cigarettes.
- Use of ENDS may affect development of foetus during pregnancy.
- It may contribute to cardiovascular disease to people who use ENDS.
- Moreover, nicotine may function as 'tumour promoter' and seems to be involved in biology of malignant diseases.
- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.

GAGANYAAN MISSION: ISRO UNVEILS PLANS FOR INDIA'S MANNED SPACE FLIGHT MISSION

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) unveiled details of its first indigenous human space mission dubbed as Gaganyaan to be launched in 2022. The mission was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his 72nd Independence Day speech. Under it, three Indian astronauts (Gaganyatris) will be taken to space on board Gaganyaan spacecraft by 2022. This will be the first human space mission to be indigenously developed by ISRO. If successful, India will become fourth nation in the world to send astronaut into space after US, Russia and China. Former Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot Rakesh Sharma was the first Indian to travel to space. He was part of the Soviet Union's Soyuz T-11 expedition, launched on April 2, 1984, of the Intercosmos programme.

OBJECTIVES OF GAGANYAAN MISSION:

- Enhancement of science and technology levels in the country.
- To serve as a national project involving several institutes, academia and industry.
- Improvement of industrial growth.
- Inspire the youth.
- Develop technology for social benefits and improve international collaboration.

KEY FEATURES OF THE MISSION:

- The entire cost of Gaganyaan mission will be less than Rs 10,000 crore.
- It will be totally indigenous, very cost-effective mission by Indian standards which is not viable from international standards.
- Prior to actual launch of this manned mission by 2022, ISRO will launch two unmanned Gaganyaan missions (first in 30 months' time and then 36 months).

ABOUT THE SUPPORT TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED BY ISRO FOR GAGANYAAN MISSION:

- So far, ISRO has developed some critical technologies required for manned space mission like re-entry mission capability, crew escape system, crew module configuration, thermal protection system, deceleration and floatation system and sub-systems of life support system.
- Some of these technologies have been demonstrated successfully through Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-2007), Crew module Atmospheric Reentry Experiment (CARE-2014) and Pad Abort Test (2018).
- These technologies will enable ISRO in accomplishing the programme objectives in a short span of 4 years.

FIRST SAARC AGRI COOPERATIVE BUSINESS FORUM HELD IN KATHMANDU, NEPAL

The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal. The theme of this forum was **'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'.**

ABOUT SAARC AGRI COOPERATIVE BUSINESS FORUM:

- It was co-organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- It provided a platform to bring together representatives both from government and non-governmental entities from member states of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.

ABOUT SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC):

- SAARC is a regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia.
- Its member states include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- It comprises 3% of world's area, 21% of world's population and 3.8% of global economy as of 2015.
- It was established in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 8 December 1985.
- Its secretariat is based in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- It promotes development of economic and regional integration.
- It also maintains permanent diplomatic relations at United Nations as an observer.

GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTE 21-MEMBER PRIME MINISTER'S SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Union Government has constituted a new 21-member advisory panel on science, technology and innovation called Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). It will be headed by the Principal Scientific Advisor to Government- K Vijay Raghavan. It will replace the earlier Scientific Advisory Committee to Prime Minister and to Cabinet.

ABOUT PM-STIAC:

- The council will advise PM on science, technology, as well as innovation.

- It will also coordinate implementation of PMs scientific vision.
- It will actively aid in formulation and timely implementation of major science and technology missions and evolve interdisciplinary technology development programmes.
- It will also advise Government on developing 'Clusters of Excellence' in science including city-based R&D clusters.
- It will work to bring together all science and technology partners from academia and institutes to industries near such centres or cities.

COMPOSITION OF PM-STIAC:

- Besides the chairperson, the panel has eight members and 12 special invitees.
- Secretaries of at least 10 central ministries, related to science, technology, energy and education, are special invitees to the panel.
- The members include noted mathematician and Princeton University professor Manjul Bharghava; former Isro chairman A S Kiran Kumar and industrialist and MD of Bharat Forge Baba Kalyani.
- The panel also has provision to include an additional member, decision of which has to be taken by the chairman of the committee.

HORIZON 2020: INDIA, EU JOIN HANDS FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME TO DEVELOP A NEXT GENERATION INFLUENZA VACCINE

Union Government and European Union (EU) have collaborated for a research programme named Horizon 2020 to develop Next Generation Influenza Vaccine to protect citizens across the globe. For this research programme, India's Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and EU have committed Euro 15 million (Rs. 240 crore).

ABOUT THE HORIZON 2020 RESEARCH PROJECT:

- Under this project, cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine will be developed.
- It aims at advancing the efficacy, safety, duration of immunity, and reactivity against an increased breadth of influenza strains.
- Rs. 240 crore fund has been earmarked for research and innovation actions under this project.
- The vaccine will be developed by EU-India consortia by bringing together multi-disciplinary stakeholders who represent any part of chain from lab to market.
- It will comprise minimum of three applicants from Europe (three different EU member states) or countries associated to EU programme Horizon 2020 and minimum three applicants from India.
- Other countries are also free to join this EU-India consortia.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT:

- The outcome of this project is expected to contribute to achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG-3) to ensure health and well-being for all.
- It will help the international community to better prepare in the event of an influenza pandemic.

- It will also give boost to India's National Health Mission.

ARPINDER SINGH WINS GOLD MEDAL IN MEN'S TRIPLE JUMP EVENT AT 2018 ASIAN GAMES

Another Golden day for India

India's Arpinder Singh (25) won the gold medal in Men's Triple Jump event at 2018 Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games. He lodged a best jump of 16.77m in the third attempt to win a gold medal. Ruslan Kurbanov of Uzbekistan won the silver medal with a best jump of 16.62m while Shuo Cao of China was third with an effort of 16.56m. India's last Asian Games gold medal in men's triple jump had come in 1970 from Mohinder Singh Gill.

ABOUT ARPINDER SINGH?

- He hails from Punjab.
- He had last won a medal in a multi-sporting event in 2014 when he had won the bronze medal at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.
- He had finished fifth in 2014 Incheon Asian Games.

MEDALS WON:

- Bronze medal: 2013 Pune Asian Championships.
- Bronze medal: 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.
- Gold medal: 2017 Ashgabat Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH ASSEMBLY PASSES BILL FOR CREATION OF 3 NEW DISTRICTS

Arunachal Pradesh gets a makeover!

Arunachal Pradesh Legislative assembly has passed Arunachal Pradesh Re-Organisation of Districts (Amendment) Bill, 2018 for the creation of three new districts, Pakke-Kesang, Lepa Rada and Shi Yomi, in the state. The bill was passed by voice vote. These new districts were created keeping in view the growing demands of people, bring administration to their door-steps and for an all-round equal development in all parts of the state. With addition of these three new districts, the state will have total 25 districts from earlier 22 districts.

ABOUT THE 3 DISTRICTS:

Pakke-Kessang district:

- It will be carved out of East Kameng district with five administrative units namely Pakke-Kessangn, Seijosa, Pijiriang, Passa Valley and Dissingn Passo with district headquarters at Lemmi.

Lepa Rada district:

- It will be created by bifurcating Lower Siang district with headquarters at Basar.

- It will have four administrative units Tirbin, Basar, Daring and Sago.

Shi-Yomi district:

- It will be created by bifurcating West Siang district with its headquarters at Tato.
- It will have four administrative units namely Mechuka, Tato, Pidi and Manigong.

GERMANY TO PROVIDE EURO 120 MILLION SOFT LOAN FOR CLEAN GANGA MISSION

Germany has announced to provide a soft loan of euro 120 million (Rs. 990 crore approximately) to India to strengthen sewage water treatment infrastructure in Uttarakhand in an effort to clean River Ganga under Clean Ganga Mission. German development agency GIZ also prepared 'Ganga Box' aimed to target school-going children and inform them about the river.

DETAILS:

- The proceeds from this soft loan will be used for the project focusing on extension and replacement of sewerage system (around 360 kilometres) including complete house connection, construction of sewage treatment plants (STPs) of around 15 million litres per day (mld).
- The purpose of this project is to reduce the inflow of untreated waste water in River Ganga and, thus, to improve the water quality of the river.
- This project also includes construction of 13 sewage pumping stations.

ABOUT GANGA BOOK:

- Ganga book has been prepared on lines of 'Danube Book' when cleaning of European river was undertaken.
- This book will have information on mythological, socio-cultural, economic importance about the river and suggestions to avoid pollution, like not dumping plastic in water body.
- Its aim is to bring a behavioural change in people towards Ganga River.
- Ganga book project has been piloted in government schools in Uttarakhand and it will be replicated in other states.

UNION GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES ATAL RANKING FOR INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE INNOVATION

Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has introduced Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA) to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators.

ABOUT THE ATAL RANKING OF INSTITUTIONS ON INNOVATION ACHIEVEMENTS (ARRIA):

- ARRIA is named after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- It measures some parameters which are India-specific considering the current scenario and status of

higher education in India.

- ARRIA parameters are primarily organised in five broad heads which are further elaborated into suitable sub-heads.
- Each of the five main parameters has certain weightage assigned to it and the sub-heads also have appropriate weight distribution.
- The institutions will be rank-ordered based on scores.
- The overall score can take a maximum value of 100.

- Five main focus parameters of ARRIA are:
- Budget expenses and revenue generated through Innovation and entrepreneurship development (weightage: 20)
- Facilitate access to advance centres and facilities and entrepreneurial support system (10)
- Idea to entrepreneurship (54)
- Development of innovation ecosystems supported through teaching & learning (10)
- Best innovative solutions developed in-house for improving governance of institution (6)

SIGNIFICANCE OF ARRIA:

- ARRIA will inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- It will focus on quality of innovations rather than quantity and measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally.
- It will set tone and direction for institutions for future development for making them globally competitive and in forefront of innovation.

CALL FOR CODE INITIATIVE: IBM PARTNERS WITH INDIAN IT COMPANIES TO BUILD GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Global IT giant IBM has partnered with Indian IT companies for its 'Call for Code' initiative that aims to build global solutions for disaster management. Indian IT companies that will partner with IBM for Call for Code initiative include Persistent Systems, Invest India, Wipro, Capgemini and NASSCOM.

ABOUT THE CALL FOR CODE INITIATIVE:

- IBM's Call for Code initiative aims to bring startup, academic and enterprise developers together to respond to and recover from natural disasters.
- The initiative seeks to solve one of the most pressing societal issues of preventing, responding to and recovering from natural disasters.
- For this, IBM will provide access to its cloud, data, Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technologies, along with training and code to developers.
- Through this initative, IBM and David Clark Cause are joining forces to benefit their charitable partners such as United Nations Human Rights and American Red Cross.
- Since its inception in May 2018, over 35 organizations and over 20 IBM clients have participated in this initiative.

PARAMPARAGAT KRISHI VIKAS YOJANA

LAUNCH DATE:

April 2015

AIM:

- For supporting and promoting organic farming as a result it will improve soil health.
- Encouraging farmers to adopt an eco-friendly concept of cultivation and reducing their dependence on fertilizers and chemicals.
- Raise farmer's income and create a potential market for traders.

FACTS:

- Govt. launched various schemes for promotion of the organic farming such as
  - ➤ National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture,
  - ➤ National Project on Organic Farming,
- National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility etc.
- but not achieve much success, with revamped PKVY promotes organic farming by adopting organic village by cluster approach and Participatory Guarantee System of certification.
- There is no liability on the farmers for expenditure on certification.
- Each cluster or group must have 50 farmers willing to take up organic farming under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and possess a total area of at least 50 acres.
- Scheme will be provided INR 20,000 per acre to Every farmer by the government spread over three years' time.
- Government's plan to form around 10,000 clusters in three years and cover an area of 5 Lakh hectares.
- For obtaining organic seed, harvesting of the crops, and transporting the produced crop to the local markets, the funds can be utilized.
- In Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), 2 lakh hectares has been made suitable for organic farming thereby benefitting 5 lakh farmers.
- In the North Eastern states, government's target
- To cover 50,000 hectares under organic farming, out of which 45,918 hectares have been made suitable for organic farming.

REGIONAL AIR CONNECTIVITY SCHEME

NODAL AGENCY:

- The Central Government
- Airport Authority of India

AIM:

- To Make Regional Air Travel Affordable and Promote Balanced Growth.
- To promote tourism.
- Increase employment.
- Put life not only un-served airport but also under -served airports.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Aircrafts and helicopter operators would be required to assess the demand on various routes and submit their proposal for providing connectivity on such routes.
- Required to earmark a certain number of seats on every flight for the RCS (Regional Air Connectivity Scheme). fare for such seats would be capped based on flight distance and time.

FEATURES OF RCS (REGIONAL AIR CONNECTIVITY SCHEME)

- Under these scheme, RCS route would have to include un-served airports.
- Routes would cover a length between 200 to 800 km, but this criterion would not apply to hilly areas, islands, North-east region and for helicopter operations.
- Procedure for selecting Airline Operators would be based on reverse bidding mechanism.
- Other Facts:
- For fixed wing aircrafts and helicopters depending upon the distance, an index has been prepared for airfare caps for the RCS seats.
- Service tax will be levied at only 10% of the taxable value of tickets for RCS seats for a period of one year.
- Operating Airline will be free to enter into code sharing arrangement with domestic and international airlines.
- Airline Operators will exempt RCS flights from landing charges, parking charges, and terminal navigation landing charges.
- Selected airlines on their part would be expected to commit 50% of the seats on RCS flights to be sold at the specified airfare cap.
- Required to maintain a frequency of minimum, three flights per week and maximum of seven flights per week.
- Exit Mechanism for selected airlines would be made easy after a period of one year.

FUND TO SUBSIDISE THE OPERATION OF THE RCS IS:

- The Viability Gap Fund (VGF)
- Calculated on the normative basis.
- The fund support for respective routes would be indexed to inflation and ATF prices which would be reviewed periodically, also be linked to the passenger load factor.

INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT SCHEMES FOR FARMERS

AIM:

For providing hassle-free crop loans to farmers including Small Farmer Marginal Farmer.

NODAL AGENCY

- The Government of India
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)

To promote institutional credit to farmers, The Government of India, has taken the following major initiatives, some of these schemes are:

- ➤ Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS)
- ➤ Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme

INTEREST SUBVENTION SCHEME (ISS)

- Provide short term crop loans up to Rs. 3.00 lakh at a subsidised interest rate for a period of one year.
- If farmers make prompt repayment, additional 3% incentive is given, thereby reducing the effective rate of interest to 4%.
- For providing Short Term Credit to farmers at subsidized rate of interest, Interest subvention is provided to
  - ➤ NABARD,
  - ➤ Regional Rural Banks,
  - ➤ Cooperative Banks,
  - ➤ Public Sector Banks and scheduled Private Sector Banks.
  - ➤ Expenditure is being partly funded from Krishi Kalyan Kosh.

KISAN CREDIT CARD (KCC) SCHEME

- It enables farmers not only purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, but also draw cash to satisfy their agricultural and consumption needs.
- Covers all farmers including tenant farmers, oral lessees and share croppers.
- On the base of land holding and crops grown including post-harvest warehouse storage related credit needs and other farm expenses, a flexible limit of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 50,000 has been provided to marginal farmers.
- The term loan component will be normally repayable within a period of 5 years.

GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO TAKEN THE FOLLOWING MEASURES TO RELIEVE THE DEBT BURDEN OF FARMERS:

- An additional grace period of 60 days for prompt repayment incentive @ 3% will be provided to such of the farmers whose crop loans dues fell due between 01/11/2016 to 31/12/2016 and if such farmers repaid the same within 60 days from their due date in this period.
- Also grant interest waiver for two months (November and December, 2016) for all short term crop loan availed from Cooperative Banks between 01.04.2016 to 30.09.2016.

KNOW YOUR CURRENCY - FEATURES OF NEW CURRENCY NOTES

India is a cash-based economy, so circulation of fake currency notes continues to be a threat. In order to contain the rising incidence of fake currency notes and black money, On November 8, 2016, the government of India announced a historic measure to demonetize the two largest denomination notes Rs500 & Rs1000.

- According to Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, The Reserve bank has sole authority of currency management. The design and denomination of banknotes are required to be approved by the Government of India on the recommendations of RBI. However, there can't be banknotes in denominations higher than 10,000 rupees in terms of the current provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. Coins can be issued up to the denomination of R1000 in terms of The Coinage Act, 2011. Coins are minted at the four India Government Mints at Mumbai, Alipore (Kolkata), Saifabad (Hyderabad), Cherlapally (Hyderabad) and NOIDA (U.P.).
- The Indian rupee sign (R) is the currency sign for the Indian rupee, it was designed by D. Udaya Kumar.

Currency Symbol for
Indian Rupee

- Currency notes reflect the nation's rich and diverse culture, her struggle for freedom and her proud achievements as a nation.
- The Reserve bank of India launched a new series of banknotes in a new design in order to bring the identity closer to the cultural heritage of the country and for showing our scientific advances in interplanetary space. The new design banknotes are distinctly different from the old Mahatma Gandhi Series of bank notes in colour, size and theme. The theme of the new series notes is India's heritage sites.
- The Numerals in Devanagari and the logo of Swachh Bharat Mission are other elements added in the new design notes. The new notes also have design elements in myriad and intricate forms and shapes.
- While the security features in the current series of banknotes, such as the watermark, security thread, latent image of denomination numeral, denomination numeral in colour shifting ink, number panels, see-through register, electro-type, bleed lines, etc., continue to remain, their relative positions have been changed in the new design notes.

PRODUCTION

- The Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL), owned by the Government of India, is responsible for printing notes and minting coins.
  - ➢ It has printing presses at Nasik in Maharashtra and Dewas in Madhya Pradesh.
  - ➢ It also has four mints for coin production at Mumbai, Noida, Kolkata and Hyderabad.
- The Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Pvt. Ltd. (BRBNMPL), owned by the RBI, also has printing presses at Mysore in Karnataka and Salboni in West Bengal.

CURRENCY SYSTEM IN INDIA - ISSUANCE AND DISTRIBUTION

- o RBI has selected branches of banks called Currency Chest or (ICMC) which facilitate the distribution of currency.
- o They have been established with State Bank of India, six associate banks, nationalized banks, private sector banks, a foreign bank, a state cooperative bank and a regional rural bank.
- o They distribute notes and coins to other bank branches in their area.

TWO THOUSAND RUPEES:

Currency Value	2000
Dimension	66×166 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Mangalyan
Colour	Magenta
Signature	RBI governor: Urjit R Patel

FIVE HUNDRED RUPEES:

Currency Value	500

Dimension	63×150 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Red fort
Colour	Stone Grey
Signature	RBI governor

TWO HUNDRED RUPEES NOTE:

Currency Value	200
Dimension	66×146 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Sanchi Stupa
Colour	Bright Yellow

Signature	RBI governor

Obverse (Front)

Reverse (Back)

HUNDRED RUPEES NOTE:

Currency Value	100
Dimension	66×142 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Rani ki vav (Queen's stepwell)
Colour	Lavender
Signature	RBI governor

FIFTY RUPEES NOTE:

Currency Value	50
Dimension	66×135 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Hampi with chariot
Colour	Fluorescent Blue
Signature	RBI governor

TEN RUPEES NOTE:

Currency Value	10
Dimension	63×123 mm
Obverse Design	Mahatma Gandhi
Reverse Design	Konark and the Sun Temple
Colour	Chocolate brown
Signature	RBI governor

AWARDS AND HONOURS AUGUST 2018

Name of the Winner	Category	Organized by /Presented by / Some facts
Gopalkrishna Gandhi	Rajiv Gandhi National Sadbhavana Award	For promoting communal harmony, peace and goodwill.
Indian-Australian mathematician, Akshay Venkatesh	Mathematics' prestigious Fields medal	Contributions to an exceptionally broad range of subjects in mathematics.

Dr Najma Heptullah (for year 2013) Hukum Dev Narayan (for year 2014) Ghulam Nabi Azad (for year 2015) Dinesh Trivedi (for year 2016) Bhartruhari Mahtab (for year 2017)	Outstanding Parliamentarian Award	President Ram Nath Kovind
Rifleman Aurangzeb and Major Aditya Kumar of Indian Army	Shaurya Chakra	By President Ram Nath Kovind
US scientists ü James Allison, ü Carl June and ü Steven Rosenberg	2018 Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research	Research in immunology and translation into effective therapies which led to innovative treatments for cancer, HIV and other diseases
Oscar-winning director Ang Lee	Recipients of the annual Directors Guild of America (DGA) honours	At the DGA Theatre in New York City
General Dalbir Singh Suhag (Retired), of the Indian Army	The Legion of Merit (Degree of Commander)	By The United States government. for exceptionally meritorious service as chief of the Army staff, Indian Army.
SK Arora	World Health Organization (WHO) World No Tobacco Day 2017 Award	By WHO for his extraordinary contribution towards tobacco control.
David Beckham, Former England captain	The UEFA President's Award	Contribution to football and promoting the sport in "every corner of the planet".
PepsiCo's India-born CEO Indra Nooyi	The Game Changer of the Year award	By a global cultural organisation Asia Society
DBS Bank	The world's best bank for digital innovation	By Global Finance magazine
Javed Akhtar	Shalaka Samman, highest honour of Hindi Sahitya Academy	
K.Anvar Sadath	The International Contributions Award	The Association for Educational Communications and Technology

		(AECT), USA
Indian-origin prison guard Sashi Cheliah	10th MasterChef Australia 2018	He hails from Coimbatore, Tami Nadu
Nobel Prize-winning scientist Marie Curie	The most influential woman in history	By BBC History Magazine.
Annie Zaidi	The Hindu Playwright Award 2018	Her play is Untitled-1
Actress Scarlett Johansson	World's highest paid female actress	By Forbes
Godrej's Smitha Crishna	India's wealthiest women list for 2018	Kotak Wealth-Hurun Report