

Monthly Current Affairs GK Digest



December 2019

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MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS GK DIGEST: DECEMBER 2019

WORLD AIDS DAY

Current context: The World AIDS Day is observed on **1st December** every year across the world.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The day is observed to raise public awareness about **Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS**.
- AIDS is a **pandemic disease caused due to the infection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)**.
- This year, the **theme** is "**Communities Make the Difference**."
- The central government has launched the **National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)** for prevention and control of AIDS.
- The three-pronged strategy of **prevention, testing and treatment** are followed in NACP response to HIV.
- A seven-year **National Strategic Plan from 2017 to 2024** has also been developed by the government to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

FIRST INDIA-JAPAN 2+2 FOREIGN AND DEFENCE MINISTERIAL MEETING

Current context: The **first India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting** took place on 30th Nov 19 in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The delegation was led by the **Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh** and **External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar**, along with the Foreign Affairs Minister of Japan, **MOTEGI Toshimitsu**, and Minister of Defense of Japan, **KONO Taro**.
- India has a similar ministerial level 2+2' dialogue with the US also.
- Key decisions taken at the meeting include:
 1. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to advancing bilateral security cooperation based on the **2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation** and the **2009 Action Plan** to advance Security Cooperation.
 2. Concurred to proceed with coordination for the **first India-Japan joint fighter aircraft exercise in Japan**.
 3. The Indian side looked forward to Japanese side dispatching a **liaison officer at the IFC-IOR in the near future**.
 4. They underlined the need for all countries to ensure that all territory under their control is not used to launch terrorist attacks.

SOMA ROY BURMAN APPOINTED AS CGA

Current context: The Finance Ministry appointed **Soma Roy Burman, as the Controller General of Accounts (CGA)** with effect from 1st December 19.

ABOUT SOMA ROY BURMAN

- Soma Roy Burman is a **1986-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service Officer**.
- She is the **24th CGA and is the 7th woman** to hold this position.
- Smt. Burman holds the degree of M.Phil in Mathematical Statistics from the University of Delhi.
- She has held **cadre positions** at different levels in Ministries of Finance, Human Resource Development, Home Affairs, Information & Broadcasting etc.
- She has served as the **chief controller of the Central Pension Accounting Office (CPAO)** and director of the Institute of Government Accounts and Finance (**INGAF**), New Delhi.
- Smt. Burman served as **Additional Controller General of Accounts** in the office of CGA, before assuming the charge of CGA.

NATIONWIDE VACCINATION DRIVE

Current context: The central government has announced to launch a **nationwide vaccination drive** to prevent eight diseases under **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0** across the country.

DETAILS

- **Children under the age of 2 years and pregnant women** are covered under the government's flagship scheme against the eight vaccine preventable diseases.
- The **8 vaccine preventable diseases** included in the scheme are:
 1. Diphtheria
 2. Whooping cough
 3. Tetanus
 4. Poliomyelitis
 5. Tuberculosis
 6. Measles
 7. Meningitis
 8. Hepatitis B.
- **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0 (IMI)** aims to achieve targets of full immunization coverage in 272 districts spread over 27 States.
- The IMI 2.0 will be carried out between **December 2019 and March 2020**.
- The campaign has been launched in **Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh** on 2nd Dec 19 and would be conducted in 4 phases.

NOVEMBER GST REVENUE COLLECTION

Current context: **Rs 1,03,492 crore** is the amount of gross GST revenue collected in the month of November, 2019.

KEY POINTS

- Out of the total revenue collection:
 1. CGST is Rs 19,592 crore
 2. SGST is Rs 27,144 crore
 3. IGST is Rs 49,028 crore (including Rs 20,948 crore collected on imports)
 4. Cess is Rs 7,727 crore (including Rs 869 crore collected on imports)
- The total revenue earned by Central Government and the State Governments after regular settlement in the month of November, 2019 is Rs 44,742 crore for CGST and Rs 44,576 crore for the SGST.
- GST has witnessed a recovery growth of 6% in Nov 19 over Nov 18.
- Highest growth during the year of 12% is seen in the GST collection on domestic transactions.
- However, negative growth of (-) 13% was seen in the GST collection on imports.
- November 2019 collection is the third highest monthly collection since the introduction of GST, next only to April 2019 and March 2019 collections with crossing the mark of Rs one lakh crore.

EXERCISE MITRA SHAKTI- 2019

Current context: The 7th edition of Exercise MITRA SHAKTI- 2019 was held between the armies of **India and Srilanka** on 1st Dec 19 at Aundh Military Station, Pune.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Exercise MITRA SHAKTI **aimed** at enhancing interoperability and operational efficiency amongst the armies of both India and Sri Lanka.
- The **objective** of the exercise is to build and promote positive relations between armies of India and Sri Lanka.
- The **focus of the Exercise** is on sub unit-level training on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in the urban and rural environment under United Nations mandate.

1ST WOMAN PILOT OF INDIAN NAVY

Current context: Sub-Lieutenant **Shivangi Swarup** of the Indian Navy has become the **first naval woman pilot**.

ABOUT LIEUTENANT SHIVANGI

- She is a native of **Muzaffarpur, Bihar** and was inducted into the Indian Navy under the **Short Service Commission Pilot entry scheme**.
- Two other trainee officers of the **7th Dornier Conversion Course (DOCC)** also qualified as **Dornier pilots along with Shivangi** and were awarded at the **coveted golden Wings** ceremony held at **INS Garuda**.
- **The award of the Wings** marks the culmination of one year of flying training at the **Air Force Academy (AFA)**.
- As part of her training, Shivangi has flown Pilatus PC 7 Mk II, Basic Trainer at AFA and completed Dornier Conversion with the Indian navy in Kochi.
- She was commissioned into the Navy in June **2018**.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Current context: International Day of Persons with Disabilities is being observed on **3rd December every year across the world.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- The day is observed to increase awareness about the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and their development.
- This year the **theme is “Promoting the Participation of Persons with Disabilities and their leadership: Taking Action on the 2030 Development Agenda”.**
- The theme has been chosen for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development of persons with disabilities, as anticipated in **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**
- The day is observed after its proclamation in **1992 by the United Nations General Assembly resolution.**
- The International Day of the People with Disabilities is also known as **World Disabled Day.**
- **1981 was notified as the International Year of Disabled Persons** by the United Nations General Assembly.

POLITICAL PARTIES REGISTRATION TRACKING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Current context: The **Election Commission of India** has issued **new guidelines** for the system and process of **registration of political parties.**

KEY FACTS

- The new system is named as the **“Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System” (PPRTMS).**
- PPRTMS will facilitate tracking of **status of application** by applicants through an online portal.
- In addition of the facility of tracking, the applicant will also get the status update through SMS and email.
- The new guidelines will be effective from **1st January, 2020.**
- The Registration of Political Parties is governed by the provisions of **section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.**

ANAEMIC MukT BHARAT(AMB) STRATEGY

Current context: Harsh Vardhan Minister of health and Family welfare told in Lok Sabha that **“58.5% of children between the age of 6 month to 59 month are affected by Anaemia”.**

ANAEMIC MukT BHARAT (AMB) STRATEGY

- He also added that **53.1% of women between 15-49 years are also anaemic.**
- To encounter this problem government has launched **Anaemic MukT Bharat(AMB) strategy under POSHAN Abhiyaan in 2018** which aims to reduce anaemia by 3% each year till 2022.
- AMB is a **6x6x6 strategy targeting 6 age groups, with 6 interventions and 6 institutional mechanism.**
- **6 age groups** are
 1. 6-59 months pre school children

2. 5-9 years children
 3. 10-19 years Adolescent boys
 4. 10-19 years Adolescent girls
 5. 15-49 years Women of reproduction age
 6. Pregnant and lactating women
- **6 interventions** are
 1. Prophylactic Iron folic acid supplementation
 2. Periodic deworming
 3. Addressing non nutritional cause of Anaemia in endemic pockets
 4. Special focus on malaria
 5. Haemoglobinopathies
 6. Fluorosis
 - **Institutional Mechanisms** includes a National Anaemia Mukh Bharat unit, Advanced research on Anaemic Control and a National centre of excellence.

PRITHVI-II MISSILE

Current context: India test-fired its **indigenously developed surface-to-surface nuclear-capable Prithvi-II missile** off **Odisha** coast on 3rd Dec 19.

PRITHVI-II MISSILE

- The user trial of the Prithvi-II missile was conducted from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the **Integrated Test Range at Chandipur**.
- The missile weighs about 4,600 kg and is capable of carrying **500 to 1000 kilograms of warheads**.
- The target range of the missile is **350 km** and is thrust by liquid propulsion **twin engines**.
- Prithvi-II is the **first missile** that has been developed by the DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) under the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme**.
- The trial was conducted to reconfirms the Army's readiness to fire it at short notice.
- The missile is developed by the **joint collaboration of DRDO and Bharat Dynamics Limited**.

TRAI REVAMPED MOBILE NUMBER PORTABILITY RULES

Current context: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has revamped **Mobile Number portability (MNP) rules**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The rules have been revamped to make the entire process **faster and simpler**.
- According to present rules, telecom operators and MNP service providers are required to process the request of subscribers to change their telecom operator without changing their mobile number **within 4 days in the same circle**.
- The TRAI has prescribed **3 working days timeline for port out requests within a service area**.
- A timeline of **5 working days** has been prescribed for **requests for port out from one circle to another i.e. inter-circle**.
- The new rules will come into effect from **16th December 2019**.

- Validity of the **Unique Porting Code (UPC)** has also been brought down to **4 days instead of a fortnight earlier**.
- It will be applicable to all circles **except Jammu & Kashmir, Assam and North East**.

INDIAN NAVY DAY 2019

Current context: Indian Navy Day is being celebrated across the country on **4th Dec every year**.

INDIAN NAVY DAY 2019

- The day signifies the achievements and role, the Navy plays in securing the country's marine borders.
- The date i.e. 4th December is chosen in honour of the maritime force's role during **the war with Pakistan in 1971**.
- In the war, Indian warships attacked **Karachi port** and successfully thwarted Pakistani operations in the western coast.
- During **Operation Trident**, the Indian Navy sank four Pakistani vessels including PNS Khaibar.
- **Theme** of 2019 is "**Indian Navy - Silent, Strong and Swift**".
- The Maratha Emperor, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Bhonsle** of the 17th century is considered as "**Father of the Indian Navy**".
- Chief of the Naval Staff: **Admiral Karambir Singh**
- Commander-in-Chief: President of India, **Ram Nath Kovind**

S&P REAFFIRMED INDIA'S RATING AT 'BBB-'

Current context: Rating Agency **Standard & Poor's Financial Services LLC (S&P)** has reaffirmed the Sovereign Credit Rating of India at 'BBB-'.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Along with the BBB rating, it has also reaffirmed the outlook as stable.
- The **Key highlights of the agency's findings** are:
 - India's economy continues to achieve impressive long term growth rates despite a recent deceleration.
 - The economic slowdown is **cyclical rather than structural**.
 - The economy will continue to outperform with rising domestic demand and strong demographics.
 - Over the next two years the growth will remain strong.
 - Fiscal deficit will remain elevated but broadly in line with their forecast.

20TH HORNBILL FESTIVAL

Current context: The **20th edition of the Hornbill Festival** has begun at **Naga Heritage Kisama in Nagaland**.

ABOUT NAGALAND HORNBILL FESTIVAL

- This is an **annual festival** and is being organised by the Nagaland Government to showcase the **state's traditional and rich cultural heritage**.

- The Hornbill Festival is a **10 Day festival** (celebration held every year from 1 to 10 December) that began with the traditional blessing pronounced by Mongtei of Aniashu village by beating the traditional gong.
- **Nagaland Governor R N Ravi** was the chief host of the festival, while **Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio** was the host.
- The **theme** of this year festival is **“Colours of Nagaland”**.
- Cultural performance of different tribes of Nagaland, art exhibition, photo-fest, city tour, night carnival etc. are the highlights of the Hornbill Festival.
- The first festival was held in **2000** and is named after the **Indian hornbill**, a forest bird.

NCLT ADMITS BANKRUPTCY RESOLUTION FOR DHFL

Current context: The **Mumbai bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** has admitted an RBI petition seeking bankruptcy resolution for **Dewan Housing Finance (DHFL)** under the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- RBI filed a plea under **Rule 5 (a)(i) and Section 227 of IBC** for bankruptcy proceedings to resolve the credit and liquidity crisis of the company.
- **Rule 5 (a) (i) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Rules, 2019** prescribes that **Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)** can be initiated against **Financial Service Providers (FSP)** committing default upon an application made by the Appropriate Regulator.
- With the approval of the bankruptcy resolution, DHFL has become **the first financial sector player (Non—bank lender) being for bankruptcy**.
- RBI has superseded DHFL’s Board on 20th Nov 19 and appointed **R Subramaniakumar**, former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Indian Overseas Bank as DHFL Administrator.
- The Reserve Bank had, on 22nd November 2019, constituted a **three-member Advisory Committee** to assist the Administrator of DHFL consisting:
 1. **Dr Rajiv Lall**, Non-Executive Chairman, IDFC First Bank Ltd.
 2. **Shri N.S. Kannan**, MD & CEO, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Ltd.
 3. **Shri N.S. Venkatesh**, Chief Executive, Association of Mutual Funds in India.
- Now, three-member Committee shall continue as the Advisory Committee to advise the Administrator in the operations of the DHFL during the corporate insolvency resolution process.

RBI 5TH BI-MONTHLY MONETARY POLICY

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had discussions during 3rd, 4th and 5th December, 2019.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a **six-member committee**, headed by **Governor Shaktikanta Das**.
- Main Highlights of Fifth Bi-monthly Monetary Policy, 2019-20 are:
 1. The MPC voted unanimously to keep the **policy rate unchanged at 5.15%**.
 2. It decided to **continue with the accommodative stance** as long as it is necessary to revive growth, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target.

3. The MPC revised the **CPI inflation projection upwards to 5.1-4.7 %** for H2:2019-20 and 4.0-3.8 % for H1:2020-21.
 4. **Real GDP growth for 2019-20** is revised downwards **from 6.1 %** in the October policy to **5.0 %** – 4.9-5.5 % in H2 and 5.9-6.3 per cent for H1:2020-21.
- The RBI has reduced the repo rate by **135 basis points** between February and October 2019.

UYGHUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY ACT

Current context: The US Congress has passed the **Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act for Uighur Muslims in China**.

KEY POINTS

- The bill counters the '**arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment**' of **Uighur Muslims** in China.
- The bill calls for **targeted sanctions on members of the Chinese government** for violating the Human Rights of the Uighur Muslims in **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region** (China).
- It proposes that America redirect resources to address the mass internment of over 10 lakh Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in China.
- The Bill directs various US government bodies to prepare reports on China's treatment of the Uighurs.
- **Uighurs are a predominantly Muslim Turkic ethnic group** originating from and culturally affiliated with the general region of Central and East Asia.
- The Uighurs have been recognized as **native to only one region, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China**.
- China rejects the idea of them being an **indigenous group** and give them recognition as a **regional minority**.

3RD NATIONAL PUBLIC PROCUREMENT CONCLAVE

Current context: Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry and Railways inaugurated the **3rd edition of National Public Procurement Conclave** in New Delhi on 5th Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The conclave is jointly organised by the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** in association with **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**.
- It is focused to make **improvements in the GeM platform** particularly in the process of accessing, onboarding and navigating through the platform.
- In the conclave, a **future roadmap for GeM is put in place** that will unify all government procurement, across all Ministries and Departments, of not only Government of India but State Governments and local bodies.
- In the future GeM will also be open for the citizens of India to procure at products and services at a lower cost.
- The government has **set the target of 5 lakh crore business through the GeM platform in next 5 years**.
- West Bengal-cadre IAS officer **Talleen Kumar** is the **chief executive officer (CEO)** of GeM.

EXERCISE INDRA 2019

Current context: Exercise **INDRA 2019**, the **tri-services exercise** between **India and Russia**, will be conducted from 10th to 19th Dec 19 in India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The exercise will be conducted simultaneously at **Babina (near Jhansi), Pune, and Goa**.
- The **INDRA** series of exercise **began in 2003 and the First joint Tri Services Exercise was conducted in 2017**.
- The exercise is being conducted to imbibe the best practices from each other and jointly conducting drills to defeat the scourge of terror as per the **United Nation mandate**.
- The exercise will consist of a **five day training phase** consisting of a comprehensive training curriculum.
- Tactical operations end drills such as cordon house intervention, handling and neutralisation of Improvised Explosive Devices, prevention of arms smuggling through the sea route and anti-piracy measures will be practiced.

WOMEN HELP DESKS IN POLICE STATIONS

Current context: Union Home Ministry has sanctioned a sum **Rs 100 crore from Nirbhaya Fund** for setting up **Women Help Desks in Police Stations**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- This scheme would be implemented by the **States and Union Territories**.
- The Help Desks is focused on making the Police Stations **more women-friendly and approachable**.
- It will serve as the **first and single point of contact for any woman** walking into a police station.
- Essentially, lady police officers would be deployed at these help desks.
- **The Help Desk would consist of experts** like lawyers, psychologists and NGOs to facilitate legal aid, counselling, shelter, rehabilitation and training.
- **Nirbhaya Fund** is Rs 10,000 crore corpus announced by the Government of India in its 2013 Union Budget.
- According to the **then Finance Minister P. Chidambaram**, this fund is expected to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring the safety of women in India.
- **The Women and Child Development Ministry** is the nodal agency for expenditure from the Nirbhaya Fund.

RBI TO AMEND REGULATORY GUIDELINES FOR UCBS

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India has announced that it is mulling to amend regulatory guidelines for primary **Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs)**.

GUIDELINES

- The guidelines would primarily relate to **Exposure norms for single and group/interconnected borrower, promotion of financial inclusion and priority sector lending**.

- A Decision regarding a **comprehensive cyber-security framework for the UCBs** has been taken to bring the UCBs at par with commercial banks in addressing cyber-security threats through implementation of progressively stronger security measures, like:
 1. The implementation of bank-specific email domain
 2. Periodic security assessment of public-facing websites/applications
 3. Strengthening the cyber-security incident reporting mechanism
 4. Governance framework along with setting up of Security Operations Centre.
- RBI has also decided to bring **UCBs with assets of 500 crore rupees and above under the Central Repository of Information on Large Credits - CRILC reporting framework** to strengthen off-site supervision and early recognition of financial distress.

RBI TIGHTENS NORMS FOR ARCS

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has to tighten norms for **asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) to acquire financial assets.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- RBI has put **restriction on the ARCs from buying financial assets from its sponsor firms and lenders** (bank or financial institution) on a **bilateral basis.**
- **Asset Reconstruction Company (India) (Arcil)**, which is sponsored by State Bank of India (SBI), ICICI Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB) and IDBI Bank is likely to be affected the most.
- RBI has also restricted ARCs to buy financial assets from a bank or financial institution, which is:
 1. A **lender** to the ARC
 2. A **subscriber** to the fund raised by the ARC for its operations
 3. An **entity** in the group to which the ARC belongs
- However, the **ARCs are allowed to participate in auctions of such assets** provided-
 1. Such auctions are conducted in a transparent manner
 2. On arm's length basis
 3. The prices are determined by market forces
- As per the **amendment made in the Sarfaesi Act, 2002 (Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act)**, RBI had permitted ARCs in June to acquire financial assets from other ARCs on meeting certain conditions that includes:
 1. The transaction has to be settled on cash basis between two ARCs.
 2. The selling ARC will utilise the proceeds for redemption of underlying security receipts.
 3. The date of redemption of security receipts would not extend beyond eight years from the date of acquisition by the first ARC.

AVAILABILITY OF NEFT ON A 24X7 BASIS

Current context: RBI has decided that the **National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) System** shall be made available on a **24x7 basis from 16th December 2019.**

KEY POINTS

- This directive is issued under Section 10(2) read with Section 18 of the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.**

- With this, all provisions of **NEFT procedural guidelines** will be applicable for NEFT 24x7 transactions as well.
- The existing discipline for **crediting beneficiary's account or returning the transaction** (within **2 hours of settlement** of the respective batch) to originating bank will continue.
- NEFT transactions would be done through **automated transactions initiated using 'Straight Through Processing (STP)' modes**, after the usual banking hours of banks.
- The system would be available all-round the year, including holidays.

RBI IMPOSED MONETARY PENALTY ON ANDHRA BANK

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 25 lakh on Andhra Bank by an order dated 5th December 2019.

DETAILS

- The penalty has been imposed for non-compliance with certain provisions of directions issued by RBI on:
 1. Know Your Customer (KYC) Norms
 2. Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Standards
 3. Opening of Current Accounts.
- Under the provisions of section 47 A (1) (c) read with section 46 (4) (i) and section 51 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 RBI has been vested powers to impose the penalty.
- Deficiencies in regulatory compliance of the bank were found in an examination of current accounts opened by two entities in Andhra Bank.
- RBI came to the conclusion of imposing a monetary penalty after considering the reply from the bank and personal hearing as to why penalty should not be imposed for non-compliance with the directions.
- Andhra Bank Founder: Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya
- Founded: 20 November 1923, Machilipatnam
- Tagline: Where India Banks
- Headquarter: Hyderabad

INDIA'S TOP 10 POLICE STATIONS FOR 2019

Current context: The Ministry of Home Affairs has released the **list of 10 best performing Police stations from across the country.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- The **top 3 police stations** in the list are:
 1. **Aberdeen**, Andaman District, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
 2. **Balasinor**, Mahisagar District, Gujarat
 3. **Ajk Burhanpur**, Burhanpur district, Madhya Pradesh
- Prime Minister while addressing the DGPs during the 2015 Conference in Kutch, Gujarat had directed to do grading and ranking of Police Stations.
- The **objective** was to rank the top 10 Police Stations out of 15,579 Police Stations in the country through:
 1. Data analysis
 2. Direct observation
 3. Public feedback

- The best-performing police stations, in each state, were shortlisted on the basis of addressing:
 1. Property offence
 2. Crime against women
 3. Crime against weaker sections

8TH NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Current context: Press Information Bureau's Photo Division under the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**, has invited entries for the **8th National Photography Awards**.

AWARDEES LIST

- The National Photography Awards are conferred under **three categories**:
 1. Lifetime Achievement Award
 2. Award for Professional Photographers
 3. Award for Amateur Photographers
- The Photo Division confers the award **every year** to encourage professional and amateur photographers across the country and promote various facets of the country like history, society, art & culture, heritage etc.
- The **Lifetime Achievement Award** carries a Cash Prize of Rs. 3,00,000.
- The **theme of this year for the Professional Photographers is 'Life and Water.'** The awards under this Category carries a Cash Prize of Rs. 1,00,000 for one 'Professional Photographer of the year' award and five Special Mention Awards with a cash prize of Rs. 50,000 each.
- The **theme of this year for the Amateur Photographers is 'Cultural Heritage of India.'** The awards under this Category carries a Cash Prize of Rs. 75,000 for one 'Amateur Photographer of the year' award and five Special Mention Awards with a cash prize of Rs.30,000 each.

EXERCISE HAND-IN-HAND-2019

Current context: the 8th edition of **India China joint training exercise 'Hand-in-Hand-2019'** began at Joint Training Node, Umroi, **Meghalaya** on 7th Dec 19.

EXERCISE HAND-IN-HAND-2019

- This is a 14 days long joint training exercise and the **People's Liberation Army (PLA) contingent** from the Tibet Military Command and **Indian Army contingent** will participate in the exercise.
- The theme of the exercise is "counter-terrorism" under United Nations mandate.
- The exercise aims to share the experience between both the contingents in counter - terrorism operations in Semi-Urban Terrain and Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
- The Chinese contingent is led by Col Hu Chunguang while the Indian contingent is led by Col KJ Singh.
- The joint military exercise 2019 marks the 70th year since the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and China.

INDIA WON THE 3-NATION HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Current context: The Indian junior women's team won the **three-nation hockey tournament** which was held at **Canberra, Australia** on 8th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **India lost to Australia** 1-2 in the final game but still won due to **highest points** (7 points from 4 matches).
- India was ahead of the hosts, Australia on **goal difference**.
- **New Zealand** with 3 points scored **third position** in the tournament.
- In the final match, Gagandeep Kaur scored the solitary goal for India in the 53rd minute to cancel out Abigail Wilson's 15th minute strike.
- The women's team secured a 4-1 win over New Zealand in its third match of the 3-Nations Tournament.
- The 3-Nations Tournament including **India, Australia and New Zealand** was held at Canberra in Australia.

GLOBAL MIGRATION FILM FESTIVAL (GMFF)

Current context: The **Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF)** was organised in Dhaka on 3rd Dec 19.

GLOBAL MIGRATION FILM FESTIVAL

- The Festival screened 15 films on the **theme "migration and its various aspects"**.
- The GMFF was **initiated in 2016** and this year it is being organised across many cities in the world from **28th November to 18th December**.
- **The Global Migration Film Festival** is a global initiative simultaneously being run in many countries of the world to draw attention to the issues of:
 1. Internal migration
 2. Forced migration
 3. Climate change related migration
- The festival helps to engage people in a conversation on the issue of migration.
- The festival was organised by the **International Organisation of Migrants (IOM)** and **Dhaka University Film Society** with the support of European Union.
- IOM was **established in 1951**, is the **UN migration agency** that works to ensure orderly and humane management of the migration issue.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH 2.0

Current context: The Government's flagship scheme Mission Indradhanush 2.0 has begun from 3rd Dec 19.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH 2.0

- The **Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0** has been launched to **focus on**:
 1. 272 districts of 27 states
 2. 652 blocks of **Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**
 3. Hard-to-reach and tribal populations
- The program **aims to escalate efforts to achieve the goal of:**

1. Attaining **90% national immunization coverage** across India.
 2. **Prevent 8 diseases** that includes Diphtheria, Whooping cough, Tetanus, Poliomyelitis, Tuberculosis, Measles, Meningitis and Hepatitis B.
- **Highlights** of Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0 are:
 1. Its target is to immunize children under the **age of 2 years and pregnant women**.
 2. The immunization drive under the Mission consists of **four rounds of immunization, which would be completed by March 2020**.
 3. Focus on urban, underserved population and tribal areas.
 4. Immunization session will include flexible timing, mobile session & mobilization by other departments.
 5. Enhanced focus **on left outs, dropouts, and resistant families**.

4TH INDIA WATER IMPACT SUMMIT

Current context: The **Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** has inaugurated the **4th India Water Impact Summit** held in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Summit was organised by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India and the Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) led by IIT Kanpur** from 5th-7th Dec 19.
- The Summit was **focused on:** **a)** Integrated Water Resource Management in rural and urban areas **b)** Restoring Ground Water levels and other water related issues.
- The **objective of the summit** was to bring together global financial investors and institutions to focus on water impact in smart cities.
- The Minister said India today is placed **3rd among countries with the highest number of large dams in the world**.
- The Ministry of Jal Shakti released various reports including:
 1. **'The Report on Ambassadors' Meet** held on 22nd August, 2019.
 2. Report on **'River Restoration and Conservation – A Concise Manual and Guide'**.
 3. Documents on **"cGanga Hubs"**.

GIRISH CHANDRA CHATURVEDI APPOINTED AS NSE CHAIRMAN

Current context: The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has appointed **Girish Chandra Chaturvedi** as the its new **Chairman**.

ABOUT GIRISH CHANDRA CHATURVEDI

- The appointment was made after getting **approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**.
- The chairman's position of the NSE was vacant since **Ashok Chawla resigned from the post** in January 19.
- **Girish Chandra Chaturvedi** is a retires IAS officer and former Secretary of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- He has also served as a non-executive chairman of the **ICICI** (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) Bank.
- The **Headquarter** of the National Stock Exchange is in **Mumbai, Maharashtra** and was founded in **1992**.

WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Current context: The world Human Rights Day is celebrated on **10th December every year**.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

- The day is observed to commemorate the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**.
- The UDHR was adopted as the shared standard yardstick to protect human rights across the globe by the **General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948**.
- It lays the foundation of the equal and inalienable rights of mankind as the foundation of justice, freedom and peace in the world.
- This year's **theme of Human Rights Day is "Youth Standing up for Human Rights"**.
- The theme aimed to encourage youth all over the world to take action and Stand Up for Human Rights.
- **President Ram Nath Kovind** will address the gathering organised by the **National Human Rights Commission** as the Chief Guest on this day in New Delhi.
- At the occasion, **NHRC Chairman Justice H. L. Dattu** will release NHRC journals and DVD of award winning short films on human rights.

GOVERNMENT AMENDED IEPFA RULES, 2016

Current context: The government has amended the **Investor Education & Protection Fund (Accounting, Audit, Transfer and Refund) Rules 2016**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister of State for Finance & Corporate Affairs**, stated in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha on 9th Dec 19.
- The Rules were amended to simplify the process of refund of claims filed with The Investor Education & Protection Fund Authority.
- The amended rules inter-alia provide for **digitisation with transparent and faceless processing of claims** by the Authority.
- The Authority has been set up under **Section 125 of the Companies Act, 2013 (The Act)**.
- The **objective** of setting up the Authority is to promote investor education, protection and also to make refund of claims to the investors as per extant provisions of the Act.
- Other initiatives taken by the Authority includes:
 1. A joint campaign of Investor awareness in association with **RBI, SEBI and Department of Consumer Affairs**.
 2. The Authority has also collaborated with **Department of Telecommunications, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan** for achieving the objective of Investor Education and Protection.

WADA BANS RUSSIA FROM INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS

Current context: The **World Anti-Doping Agency, WADA**, has banned **Russia** from participation in global sporting events for **four years**.

HIGHLIGHTS WADA

- The ban is imposed as Moscow was accused of falsifying data from an anti-doping laboratory.
- The ban includes the **2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics**.
- The ruling means that if Russian athletes can demonstrate that they were **not part of state-sponsored system of doping**, they can still be allowed to compete at the Tokyo Olympics as **neutrals**.
- Russia's anti-doping agency can appeal the decision to the **Court of Arbitration for Sport within 21 days**.
- The independent **McLaren report released in 2016** revealed the significant extent of state-sponsored doping in Russia, notably between 2011 and 2015.

ZOZIBINI TUNZI CROWNED MISS UNIVERSE 2019

Current context: South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi has been crowned Miss Universe for the year 2019.

ABOUT MISS UNIVERSE 2019

- The 26-year-old Tunzi was declared the winner at **Atlanta in the United States** on 9th Dec 19.
- This is the **third Miss Universe crown for South Africa**.
- **Indian contestant Vartika Singh** crashed out of the world's biggest beauty pageant after securing a place in the top 20.
- **Miss Puerto Rico Madison Anderson was named the first runner-up**, followed by **Mexican contestant Ashley Alvidrez** as the second runner-up.
- The winners were declared at a televised event, hosted by American comic-turned-TV personality **Steve Harvey, held at Tyler Perry Studios**.
- **Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray, from the Philippines**, presented Tunzi with the crown.

ARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2019

Current context: The Parliament passed the Arms (Amendment) Bill 2019 on 10th Dec 19.

KEY FEATURES OF BILL

- The bill was passed by the **Lok Sabha** on 9th Dec 19 and the **Rajya Sabha** approved it on 10th Dec 19.
- The Bill seeks to amend the **Arms Act, 1959**.
- It contains the provision to:
 1. Decrease the number of **licensed arms allowed per person**.
 2. Increase the quantum of **penalties for violations of the law** to prison time between 10 years to life imprisonment. Illegal manufacturing, sale, conversion, repair, import/export would attract 7 years to life imprisonment.
 3. Increases the duration of the validity of arms license from **3 years to 5 years**.
 4. Issue **arms license in its electronic form** to prevent forgery.
- The bill seeks to improve the regulation in transportation, trafficking, import, export, manufacturing etc. of illegal arms and its smuggling for the safety of the people.
- The new Bill allows only **two guns for the license holders**.
- The Bill has a provision to keep **hereditary weapons for exhibition purpose** after the deactivation and surrendering of licenses.

GOVT AUTHORISED NHAI TO SET UP INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT TRUST

Current context: The Union Cabinet gave its nod on 11th Dec 19 to **authorize National Highways Authority of India, NHAI to set up Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has given the proposal to set up the Infrastructure Investment Trust.
- The setting up of the **Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT)** is approved as per Guidelines issued by **Securities and Exchange Board of India, SEBI.**
- The proposal seeks to enable NHAI to perform the functions including:
 1. To monetize completed National Highways that have a toll collection **track record of at least one year.**
 2. NHAI reserves the right to levy a toll on the identified highway.
 3. Provides greater flexibility to investors.
 4. Create opportunities like the generation of **specialized Operation and Maintenance Concessionaires.**
 5. Attract **long-term capital** to the Indian highway market and retail domestic savings.
- NHAI's InvIT will be a **Trust established by NHAI under the Indian Trust Act, 1882 and Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014.**
- The **objective** of the InvIT Trust is to invest primarily in infrastructure projects (as defined by Ministry of Finance).
- InvIT may hold assets either **directly or through an SPV or a holding.**

RISAT-2BR1

Current context: ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) successfully launched its **50th mission RISAT-2BR1** on 11th Dec 19.

ABOUT LAUNCH

- The PSLV (PSLV-C48), launched its fiftieth flight **RISAT-2BR1** along with nine commercial satellites from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota.**
- The **RISAT-2BR1** was successfully injected into the orbit of 576km after 16 minutes and 23 seconds of its launch from the First LaunchPad.
- **Chairman, ISRO, Dr K. Sivan** released a book titled '**PSLV@ 50**' on this occasion.
- RISAT-2BR1 is a **radar imaging earth observation satellite** and has a mission life of **5 years.**
- The satellite will provide services in the field of **Agriculture, Forestry and Disaster Management.**
- The 9 commercial satellites belong to **Israel, Italy, Japan and USA** and were successfully injected into their designated orbits.
- Besides being the **50th launch of PSLV**, RISAT-2BR1 launch was also the **75th launch vehicle mission from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota.**

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 2019

Current context: Ethiopia's Prime Minister **Abiy Ahmed** has received the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize on 10th Dec 19.

ABOUT ABIY AHMED ALI

- **Ethiopia PM Abiy Ahmed** received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to “**achieve international peace and co-operation**” and resolving the long-running **conflict with neighbouring foe Eritrea**.
- The award was given to him in a formal ceremony at **Oslo's City Hall, Norway**.
- This year's Nobel Peace Prize was the **100th to be awarded**.
- The Nobel Peace Prize consists of a **diploma, a gold medal and a cheque for nine million Swedish kronor** (850,000 euros).
- Abiy Ahmed and **Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki** formally ended a 20-year-old stalemate between their countries (for the **1998-2000 border conflict**) on 9th July 2018.
- Abiy Ahmed became the Prime Minister in **April 2018** (the youngest head of government in Africa).

UNFCCC COP25

Current context: The **25th session of Conference of Parties under the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change** (UNFCCC COP25) began in **Madrid, Spain**.

COP25

- The Conference will take place from **2nd to 13th December 2019**.
- **Chile** was the **original host** of UNFCCC COP25 and it cancelled the **original hosting agreement for COP 25** on 30th October 2019.
- The conference incorporates the:
 1. **25th Conference** of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
 2. The **15th meeting** of the parties for the **Kyoto Protocol (CMP15)**.
 3. The **2nd meeting** of the parties for the **Paris Agreement (CMA2)**.
- The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change (**MoEF&CC**), **Prakash Javadekar** delivered India's Statement at the UNFCCC COP 25 that include:
 1. India has reduced the emissions intensity of GDP by **21 %**.
 2. India is on track to achieve the goal of **35% emissions reduction** as per the Paris Agreement.
 3. India has already achieved **83 Giga Watts of the 175 Giga Watts targets** for renewables under Paris Agreement.
 4. India has put a **carbon tax on coal production** at the rate of Dollars 6 per tonne.
 5. India leapfrogged from **Bharat Standard IV to Bharat Standard VI** for vehicle emission norms and from 1st April 2020.
 6. India has promised the creation of additional carbon sinks of **2.5 to 3 billion tonnes** of carbon equivalent through increasing green cover.
 7. India will be investing about **50 million Dollars** in water conservation.

INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE (SECOND AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

Current context: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the proposal to make amendments in the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019**.

SIGNIFICANCE

- The amendments aim to ease insolvency resolution process to realise the objects of the code and to further ease doing of business.
- The Amendment Bill seeks to **amend sections** (5(12), 5(15), 7, 11, 14, 16(1), 21(2), 23(1), 29A, 227, 239, 240) **of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code)** and insert **new section 32A in the code**.
- The amendment aims to boost investment in financially distressed sectors by removing bottlenecks and streamlining **the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)**.
- In order to prevent frivolous triggering of CIRP, **additional thresholds for Financial Creditors** represented by an authorized representative has been introduced.
- It clarified that the **licenses, permits, concessions, clearances etc. cannot be terminated or suspended or not renewed during the moratorium period**.

SOCIAL SECURITY CODE BILL

Current context: Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar on 11th Dec introduced **Social security Bill in Lok Sabha**.

KEY FEATURES OF THE BILL

- This bill was **approved by Union Cabinet last week** to pave the way for Universalisation of social security for 50 crore workers in the country.
- This Bill proposes to setup a **Social security Fund** to provide welfare benefits like Medical cover, Pension and Death & disablement benefits to all workers including gig workers.
- After this bill came in effect, organised sector employees will be relieved as their **Provident fund contribution will be decreased and return would increase**.
- Even **contract workers** will also get gratuity on pro-rate basis.
- The Social Security Code **subsumes 8 central labour laws**. They are:
 1. The Employees Compensation Act, 1923.
 2. Employees State Insurance Act, 1948.
 3. Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
 4. Maternity Benefit Act, 1961.
 5. Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.
 6. Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981.
 7. Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996.
 8. Unorganized Workers' [Social Security Act](#), 2008.
- To make thing even more simpler Ministry has decided to amalgamate 44 labour laws into 4 codes -
 1. On wages
 2. Industrial relations
 3. Social security and safety
 4. Health and working Conditions

NAVARMS-19

Current context: The **4th edition** of the International Seminar cum Exhibition on **Naval Weapon Systems 'NAVARMS-19'** is being held in New Delhi from 12th-13th Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The **theme of NAVARMS-19** is **"Make in India - Fight Category: Opportunities and Imperatives"**.
- The event will provide opportunity for exchange of ideas and identify emerging prospects for Indian/International defence industry in domain of **Naval Weapon Systems**.
- **NAVARMS** is the **only international seminar and exhibition on Naval Weapon Systems** conducted in the country to share the views and concerns of stakeholders at a common platform.
- The past three editions of NAVARMS were organised in 2007, 2010 and 2013 with active participation of Ministry of Defence, DRDO, Industry and the users.
- The event spread over **five plenary sessions**:
 1. The first session of 'NAVARMS-19' will bring out **'Opportunities for Industry in Naval Weapon Systems - 2030'** in all the three dimensions viz. **surface, air & underwater** through seminar with Indian Navy speakers.
 2. The second session will focus on **'Needs and Concerns of the User and Industry'** to bring out their respective needs and concerns with prevailing policies/issues.
 3. The third session focuses on **'Naval Weapon Systems - Modern Trends and Technology in Upgrade & Upkeep'**.
 4. The fourth session is an interactive session of Panel Discussion on **'Govt Policy Imperatives to Encourage Indigenisation'**.
 5. The fifth session is on **'Building of Indigenous Capability through Collaborative Approach between Industry, R&D organisations and IN'**.

CABINET APPROVES "PARTIAL CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME"

Current context: The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval to the **"Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme"** for **purchase of high-rated pooled assets from financially sound NBFCs/HFCs by PSBs**.

ABOUT "PARTIAL CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME"

- Public Sector Banks (PSBs) can purchase high-rated pooled assets from financially sound Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) / Housing Finance Companies (HFCs):
 1. With the amount of overall guarantee being limited to **first loss of up to 10 % of fair value of assets being purchased by the banks under the Scheme**.
 2. Or Rs. 10,000 crore, whichever is lower, as agreed by Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- The scheme would cover **NBFCs / HFCs** that:
 1. May have slipped into **SMA-0 category during the one year period** prior to 1.8.2018, and
 2. Asset pools rated **"BBB+" or higher**.
- The window for **one-time partial credit guarantee will remain open till 30th June, 2020** or till such date by which **Rs. 1 lakh crore assets** get purchased by the Banks, whichever is earlier.
- Finance Minister is given the power to **extend the validity of the Scheme by up to three months** taking into account its progress.

- The Guarantee support will help address NBFCs/HFCs resolve their temporary liquidity or cash flow mismatch issues, enable them to continue contributing to credit creation etc.
- The Finance Minister announced in the **Budget 2019-20** that the Government will provide **one time six months' partial credit guarantee to Public Sector Banks for first loss up to 10%**, for purchase of high-rated pooled assets of financially sound NBFCs, amounting to a total of **Rs 1 lakh crore during the current financial year**.

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX (CCPI)

Current context: Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2019 is released on 11th Dec 19 at the **COP25 climate summit in Madrid, Spain**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- India, for the first time, ranks among the top 10 in this year's CCPI.
- **India ranked 9th** in the current levels of per capita emissions and energy use, showing that emissions are still comparatively low.
- It suggests that India has yet to develop a roadmap to phase-out fossil fuel subsidies and reduce the country's high dependence on coal.
- The index is **jointly presented by German watch, New Climate Institute and Climate Action Network**.
- CCPI defines a country's aggregated performance in 14 indicators within the **four categories**:
 1. "GHG Emissions"
 2. "Renewable Energy"
 3. "Energy Use"
 4. "Climate Policy"
- **The first three places of the ranking remained unoccupied** as the report noted that none of the countries assessed is already on a path compatible with the Paris climate targets.
- **Sweden leads the ranking on rank 4, followed by Denmark (5) and Morocco (6)**.
- Bottom five in this CCPI 2019 are Islamic Republic of Iran (57), Republic of Korea (58), Chinese Taipei (59), Saudi Arabia (60) and the United States (61).

FICCI INDIA SPORTS AWARD 2019

Current context: FICCI India Sports Awards 2019 has been awarded to **Railway Sports Promotion Board** on 11th December 2019 at **New Delhi**.

FICCI INDIA SPORTS AWARDS 2019

- The FICCI India Sports Awards 2019 is given by **FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry)** to acknowledge and recognize the contribution of **sportspersons and various stakeholders** who deliver excellent results in **promotion of sports ecosystem during the year**.
- **The Railway Sports Promotion Board** received the award under the category of **Best Company Promoting Sports (Public Sector)**.
- Railway Sports Promotion Board provides all facilities and coaching to its in-serving and active 8000 athletes and have started Summer Coaching Camps for school children to attract them towards field of Sports and help them with mental and physical fitness.

- **Indian women's hockey team captain Rani Rampal and ace pistol shooter Saurabh Chaudhary won the Sports Person of the Year awards** at the FICCI India Sports Awards 2019.
- **Odisha** received the **Best State Promoting Sports award**.
- **Justice Mukul Mudgal**, Retired Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, headed the **Jury of the FICCI India Sports Awards 2019**.

AP GOVT TO BRING NEW LAWS TO PROTECT WOMEN & CHILDREN

Current context: The **Andhra Pradesh Cabinet**, headed by **Chief Minister Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy** has approved to enact the new law to protect women & children.

KEY FEATURES

- The new laws made by the government include:
 1. **Andhra Pradesh DISHA Act**
 2. **Andhra Pradesh Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2019**
 3. **Andhra Pradesh Special Court for Specified Offences against Women and Children Act- 2019**
- The draft **DISHA ACT** contains the provision for harsher punishments, including death sentence, to those guilty of heinous crimes against women.
- Once the bill is passed, Andhra Pradesh will become the **first state in India** to have capital punishment for rape cases.
- The bill also seeks to complete the **entire trail along within 21 days** of the FIR being filed.
- The bill provides the death penalty for sexual abuse of children on the lines of **POCSO Act, 2019**.
- Fast-track courts will be set up under the **Andhra Pradesh Special Courts for Specified Crimes against Women and Children Act- 2019**.

7TH ECONOMIC CENSUS

Current context: The 7th Economic Census was launched in the National Capital Territory of Delhi on 13th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The economic census is being carried out by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** that has a tie-up with **Common Service Centre**.
- For the **first time, the entire census is being conducted on an IT-based digital platform** to ensure high accuracy and data security.
- The survey is already in process in 20 states and 5 Union Territories and Delhi is the 26th State where the survey has been launched.
- The **economic census** is conducted throughout the country counting all **entrepreneurial units, agricultural or non-agricultural** that are engaged in production/ distribution of goods/services, not for the sole purpose of own consumption.
- The **First Economic Census** was conducted by the Central Statistical Organisation throughout the country, except Lakshadweep, during **1977**.
- The subsequent Censuses were conducted in the years **1980, 1990, 1998, 2005**. The 6th and the latest census was conducted in **2013**.
- **A K Sadhu** is the **Director-General of Social Statistics at the Central Statistics Office (CSO)**.

NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION DAY

Current context: The National Energy Conservation Day is organized every year on 14th December by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power.

ABOUT NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION DAY

- The day is observed to showcase India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation and spread mass awareness.
- Every year on 14th Dec, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) recognizes and encourages endeavours of industries and other establishments in reducing energy consumption by felicitating them with National Energy Conservation Awards.
- The National Energy Conservation Awards Programme recognizes the energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub sectors across industry, establishments and institutions.
- The Ministry of Power is observing National Energy Conservation Week from 9th to 14th December 2019 to drive mass awareness about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation.
- The National Energy Conservation Day is being celebrated since 1991.

BRITISH PM BORIS JHONSON WON GENERAL ELECTION IN UK

Current context: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has won the UK General Election on 13th Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- His **Conservative Party crossed the required number of 326 (out of 650 seats)** that is mandated for a majority in the Parliament.
- Johnson hailed the projected win to move forward with his deal to **leave European Union, the 28-member economic bloc.**
- The Opposition **Labour Party** is projected to get 203 seats with which **leader Jeremy Corbyn** would be stepping down.
- The snap election had been called by Johnson in a bid to win a majority for his Conservative Party and break the Commons deadlock over Brexit.

NATIONAL GANGA COUNCIL

Current context: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh on 14th Dec 19.

ABOUT GANGA COUNCIL

- The first meeting was aimed at reinforcing the importance of a 'Ganga-centric' approach in all departments of the concerned states as well as relevant Central Ministries.
- The National Ganga Council supervises the pollution prevention and rejuvenation of River Ganga Basin, including Ganga and its tributaries.
- The council was constituted in 2016 to oversee the cleaning of the Ganga and is supposed to meet at least once a year.

- For the first time, the Central Government had made commitment of Rs. 20,000 crores for the period 2015-20 to the five states (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal) through which Ganga passes.
- PM Modi also took a boat ride from Atal Ghat to Sisamau drain outfall point.
- The Sisamau drain was one of Asia largest drains that emptied nearly 140 million litres of untreated sewage into the Ganga.

36TH INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Current context: India will host the **36th International Geological Congress (IGC) in March 2020.**

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL CONGRESS (IGC)

- The **theme** of the conference is '**Geosciences: The Basic Science for a Sustainable Development**'.
- International Geological Congress (IGC) is described as the **Olympics of Geosciences**, which is a global geoscientific event held **once in four years**.
- The 36th IGC includes an exhaustive Science program, a range of field excursions, a state-of-the-art geo exposition, etc.
- With this event, India will become the **only Asian country to host the event twice**.
- India had hosted it for the first time in 1964, which was the 22nd IGC.
- The **event is being funded by the Ministry of Mines and Ministry of Earth Sciences** with the support of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and the national Science Academies of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- **Geological Survey of India is the nodal agency** for organizing the event.

FIH NEW WORLD RANKING SYSTEM FOR 2020

Current context: The **International Hockey Federation (FIH)** unveiled a new world ranking system for **2020 in Lausanne, Switzerland** on 13th Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- It will come into effect from **1st Jan 2020**.
- The new ranking will be **match-based instead of tournament-based** calculation, for a better reflection of current performances.
- The FIH cited "numerous restrictions" of the tournament-based system for the change:
 1. These include limited opportunities for lower-ranked teams to earn points.
 2. The "subjectivity" required to determine the strengths of the five continents in order to calculate continental ranking points.
 3. The new match-based world ranking system involves an exchange of points between two teams competing in each FIH-sanctioned match played.
 4. The number of points exchanged depends on a trio of factor 1) the result of the match 2) the relative ranking of the teams 3) the importance of the match.
- The outgoing world ranking system was in existence **since 2003**.

VIJAY DIWAS CELEBRATED

Current context: Vijay Diwas is celebrated across the nation on **16th December every year.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The day is observed to commemorate **India's victory over Pakistan in 1971 war.**
- On 16th Dec 1971, **General AA Khan Niazi**, the chief of the Pakistani forces, had surrendered unconditionally to the allied forces consisting of **Indian Army and Mukti Bahini.**
- The war also resulted into the subsequent **secession of East Pakistan into Bangladesh.**
- To mark the day, a wreath laying ceremony will be held at **'Vijay Smarak' at Fort William** that is the Head Quarters of Eastern Command, which was at forefront of the war.
- The decision to go for war with Pakistan was laid on **3rd Dec 1971**, to save Bengali Muslims and Hindus of 'East Pakistan'.
- This war was fought under the leadership of **Field Marshal Manekshaw** and continued for 13 days.

NEXT ARMY CHIEF: LT GEN MANOJ MUKUND NARAVANE

Current context: Lt Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane has been appointed as the next Chief of Army Staff.

ABOUT LT GENERAL NAVARNE

- He is currently serving as **Vice Chief of the Indian Army.**
- **Bipin Rawat (Present Army Chief)** will retire on the 31st Dec 19 and is succeeded by Lt Gen Naravane.
- **Lt Gen Naravane** has served as the head of the **Eastern Command of the Army**, in highly active **counter-insurgency environments** in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast.
- He was a part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka during **Operation PAWAN.**
- He has served as a **Defence Attache at the Indian Embassy in Myanmar for three years.**
- During his **distinguished military career spanning almost four decades**, he has been awarded **Sena Medal (Distinguished), Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Param Vishisht Seva Medal etc.**

MINISTRY OF MSME APPROVED CHANGES IN THE INTEREST SUBVENTION SCHEME

Current context: Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has approved the changes in the **Interest Subvention Scheme guidelines for MSMEs** on 16th Dec 19.

INTEREST INVENTION SCHEME

- The changes have been made to boost MSMEs productivity through **access to credit at reduced cost.**
- The **modifications** to the scheme include:
 1. Settlement of claims based on internal or concurrent auditor certificate and submission of statutory auditor's certificate once by June, 2020.
 2. Acceptance of claims in multiple lots for a given half year by eligible institutions.
 3. Requirement of **Udyog Aadhar Number, UAN** is dispensed with for units eligible for GST.

4. Trading activities without UAN have been made eligible.
 5. The last date of submission of claims for the half-yearly period ended 31st March 2019, has now been extended till 31st December 2019.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Interest Subvention Scheme for MSMEs in **November 2018**.
 - As part of access to credit, Prime Minister announced **2% interest subvention for all GST registered MSMEs, on fresh or incremental loans**.
 - **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.
 - The "**Interest Subvention Scheme for Incremental credit to MSMEs 2018**" will be implemented over **2018-19 and 2019-20**.
 - The Scheme will be in operation for a period of **two financial years FY 2019 and FY 2020**.

INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY

Current context: The International Tea Day is observed **annually on 15th December**.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL TEA DAY

- The day is celebrated in **tea producing countries** like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malawi, Malaysia, Uganda, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kenya etc. **since 2005**.
- The Tea Day **aims** to draw global attention to the impact of the global tea trade on workers and growers for price supports and fair trade.
- The **first International Tea Day was celebrated in New Delhi in 2005**, after initial discussions at the **World Social Forum** in 2004.
- **Trade union movements jointly** organises the International Tea Day and related Global Conferences.
- India has moved a proposal at the **FAO Intergovernmental Group (IGG) on Tea** in October 2015 to observe International Tea Day.
- The **United Nations General Assembly** has accepted the proposal and has designated **May 21 as International Tea Day**.
- The **FAO IGG on Tea is an intergovernmental consultation and exchange forum** on trends in production, consumption, trade and prices of tea in the global market situation.

STEELING INDIA 2019

Current context: Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Steel delivered the inaugural address at "**Steeling India 2019**".

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The "Steeling India 2019" was held in **New Delhi** on 16th Dec 2019.
- The event was organised by the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** with the **theme 'Driving Metal Intensity in key Sectors'**.
- The event was focused on the opportunities in steel sector of India, growing steel demand and how technology and innovation can make the Indian steel sector more vibrant.
- A collaborative **campaign 'Ispati Irada'** has been launched by the Ministry of Steel to increase appropriate usage of steel in the country.

- The Minister said that there is a huge potential for **increasing steel intensity** in key user sectors like housing, infrastructure, automobiles, railways and defence etc. Govt. schemes like Har Ghar Jal Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana etc. will drive the **consumption of steel in rural areas**.
- India has **recently replaced Japan as the world's second largest steel producing country**, while **China is the largest producer** of crude steel in the world.

HARYANA POLICE TO USE TRAKEA IN FORENSIC REPORTS

Current context: Haryana Police has adopted a **unique barcoding software named Trakea**, to ensure **forensic reports** of the criminal investigation system are presented without being tampered in the courts of law.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Haryana Police claims to be the **first police force in the country** to have introduced this unique barcoding for forensic reports.
- **Trakea** is aimed at ensuring security and a tamperproof tracking system for forensic reports.
- The software was originally designed by a **prisoner Amit Mishra**, a software engineer by profession who was lodged in **Bhondsi jail** for 13 months.
- The system works in a two-stage barcoding, make real-time tracking of the status of cases through automated e-mail and SMS notifications.

CARNIVAL OF AALST REMOVED BY UNESCO

Current context: UNESCO has removed an **annual Belgian carnival of Aalst** from its **List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

KEY POINTS

- The UNESCO committee has removed it over **persistent charges of anti-Semitism**.
- The officials found the "**recurrence of racist and anti-Semitic representations**" to be incompatible with its principles of **the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**.
- **The carnival of Aalst of Belgium**, was initially added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity in **2010**.
- The carnival is mainly a **street happening** and is celebrated in the days preceding Ash Wednesday **annually**.

NATIONAL BROADBAND MISSION

Current context: **Ravi Shankar Prasad**, Minister for Communication and Electronics & Information Technology, has launched the **National Broadband Mission (NBM)** on 17th Dec 19.

ABOUT NATIONAL BROADBAND MISSION

- The NBM is a part of the **National Digital Communications Policy, 2018**.
- The mission will secure universal broadband access for the implementation of broadband initiatives.
- Ravi Shankar Prasad also launched the **Logo of the NBM** on the occasion.

- The **vision of the NBM** is to provide:
 1. Fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure
 2. Bridge the digital divide
 3. Facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion
 4. Provide affordable and universal access to broadband for all
- The **target set under the NBM includes**:
 1. Broadband access to all villages by **2022**
 2. Laying of incremental 30 lakhs km route of **Optical Fiber Cable by 2024**
 3. Develop a **Broadband Readiness Index (BRI)** to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure
 4. Investment of **\$ 100 billion (Rs 7 Lakh Crore)** from stakeholders including Rs 70,000 crore from **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)**

GEM SAMVAAD

Current context: Ministry of Commerce & Industry launched the national outreach Programme, **GeM Samvaad** on 17th Dec 19.

ABOUT GOVERNMENT E-MARKETPLACE (GEM)

- **Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan** launched the programme in **New Delhi**.
- The outreach programme will facilitate **on-boarding of local sellers on the marketplace** and caters to specific requirements and procurement needs of buyers.
- The outreach programme will take place from **19th Dec 2019 to 17th Feb 2020 across the country (covering all States and UTs)**.
- **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**, commenced on 9th August 2016, is the national public procurement portal that offers end to end solutions for all procurement needs of Central and State Government Departments, PSUs, autonomous institutions and local bodies.

VISITOR'S AWARDS 2019

Current context: The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented the 5th Visitor's Awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17th Dec 19.

VISITOR'S AWARDS 2019

- The Recipients of the 5th Visitor's Awards are:
 1. **Prof. Sibnath Deb** was conferred on the Visitor's Award - for Research in **Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences**. He is from the Department of Applied Psychology, Pondicherry University.
 2. **Prof. Sanjay Puri** was presented the Visitor's Award- for Research in **Physical Sciences**. He is from the School of Physical Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
 3. **Prof. Asad Ullah Khan** from Aligarh Muslim University and **Dr Partima** from Jawaharlal Nehru University were jointly awarded the Visitor's Award - for Research in **Biological Sciences**.
 4. **Dr Shaon Ray Chaudhuri** from Tripura University was presented The Visitor's Award- for **Technology Development**.
- The Visitor's award was **instituted in 2014** to promote healthy competition amongst Central Universities.
- The **Objective** of the awards is to adopt best practices from around the world in pursuit of excellence.

GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2020

Current context: The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released the **Global Gender Gap Report 2020** on 17th Dec 19.

ABOUT GENDER GAP REPORT 2020

- The Global Gender Gap Report measures the **gender gap in political, economic and social spheres in a country**.
- **Bangladesh is the only country to feature in the top 50** of the Report among 153 countries and stands out to be the **best-performing country in South Asia** in reducing the gender gap for women.
- **India Slipped to 112th position** in the WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2020 which was ranked 108th in 2018.
- As per the report, the largest gender disparity in the world remains **in political empowerment**.
- The WEF Gender gap report points out that it will take **71 years to fully close the gender gap in the South Asia region** with the current rate of improvement in Gender Gap.
- Overall for the world, it will take **99.5 years to close the gap**.
- **Iceland is the most gender-equal country in the world for the 11th time** in a row and is followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden.
- Since **2006**, the WEF has been bringing out the Global Gender Gap Index to measure the relative gap between men and women on **health, education, economy and politics**.

PINAKA MISSILE SYSTEM

Current context: **Pinaka Missile System**, the upgraded version of **Pinaka guided rocket system** was successfully flight-tested from the **Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the Odisha coast** on 19th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The all-weather tracked-chassis **Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QR-SAM)** was also tested from the Integrated Test Range.
- The Pinaka Missile System is developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- The mission has the objective of enhancing the range, accuracy and sub-system functionality.
- **The Pinaka MK-II Rocket** is modified as a **missile** by integrating with the Navigation, Control and Guidance System to improve the end accuracy and enhance the range.
- The Navigation system of the Pinaka missile is also aided by the **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)**.
- Pinaka system has a **maximum range of 75 km** for Mark-II variant.
- **The QR-SAM missile** intends to defend Army formations operating in plains and semi-desert areas for enhancing the security of Indian Defense Force.

38TH GST COUNCIL MEETING

Current context: The Union Minister for **Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman** chaired the **38th meeting of the GST Council** on 18th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The council refrained from any generalized rate increase or removal of exemptions.
- The GST Council had earlier asked the state governments about their **views on reviewing rates and 21 states voted in favour of a uniform rate** during the Voting.
- The GST council for the **first time** after the launch of GST has taken a decision through the **voting route instead of consensus-based decision making**.
- The major decisions taken at the meet are:
 1. The council voted for a **uniform GST rate of 28% on state-run and authorized lotteries** across the country, effective from 1st March 2020.
 2. It was decided to **extend the annual date of GSTR 9 filing to January 31, 2020**.
 3. The GST Council rationalised tax rate **on woven and non-woven bags to 18%**.
 4. **Levy of penalty relaxed** for non-filing of GSTR-1 from July 2017.
 5. GST Council **exempts long term lease on industrial plots** to facilitate setting up of **industrial parks**.
 6. To set up **grievance redressal committees at Zonal/state level**.
 7. Decides to **slash input tax credit to 10% from 20% presently**.

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARDS

Current context: The **annual Sahitya Akademi Awards** in 23 languages was announced by the Sahitya Akademi on 18th Dec 19.

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARDS

- The Awards were recommended by **distinguished Jury members** representing 23 Indian languages and was approved by **Dr Chandrashekhkar Kambar, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi (also the President of Sahitya Akademi)**.
- The award is given several categories and the recipients include:
 1. **Poetry:** Sri Kumar Manish Arvind (Maithili), Sri V. Madhusoodanan Nair (Malayalam), Dr Phukan Ch. Basumatary (Bodo), Smt. Anuradha Patil (Marathi), Prof. Penna Madhusudan(Sanskrit), Dr Nand Kishore Acharya (Hindi) and Sri Nilba A. Khandekar (Konkani).
 2. **Novel:** Sri Bandi Narayana Swamy (Telugu), Sri L. Birmangol Singh (Beryl Thanga) (Manipuri), Sri Cho. Dharman (Tamil) and Dr JoysreeGoswami Mahanta (Assamese).
 3. **Short Stories:** Sri Abdul Ahad Hajini (Kashmiri), Sri Tarun Kanti Mishra(Odia), Sri Kirpal Kazak (Punjabi), Sri Ram Swaroop Kisan (Rajasthani), Sri Kali Charan Hembram(Santali) and Sri Ishwar Moorjani (Sindhi).
 4. **Essays:** Dr Chinmoy Guha(Bengali), Sri Om Sharma Jandriari (Dogri) and Sri Ratilal Borisagar (Gujarati).
 5. **Non-fiction:** Dr Shashi Tharoor (English) for his book 'An Era of Darkness'.
 6. **Autobiography:** Dr Vijaya(Kannada).
 7. **Biography:** Prof. Shafey Kidwai (Urdu).
- The Awards were given to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of Award (**i.e. between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2017**).
- The award includes an engraved **copper-plaque, a shawl and an amount of Rs. 1 lakh** and will be on 25th February 2020 at New Delhi during the **Festival of Letters**.

GANDHI CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PRIZE

Current context: Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Costa has announced that Portuguese will organize Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize every year.

ABOUT GANDHI CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PRIZE

- Mr Antonio Costa announced the award while addressing the **2nd meeting of the National Committee for Commemoration of the 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi** at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The **Gandhi Citizenship Education Prize** is initiated in order to help perpetuate Mahatma Gandhi's ideals inspired by his different thoughts and quotes.
- **The first prize will be dedicated to animal welfare** on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi that the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.
- **Portugal Capital:** Lisbon
- **Portugal Currency:** Euro
- **Official Language:** Portuguese
- **President:** Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa
- **Prime Minister:** António Costa

6TH QATAR INTERNATIONAL CUP

Current context: Indian weightlifter **Saikhom Mirabai Chanu** clinched a **gold** medal at the 6th Qatar International Cup.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Saikhom Mirabai Chanu** opened India's account at the **6th Qatar International Cup** that is taking place at **Doha**.
- She has won the gold in the women's 49kg category.
- India's Jeremy Lalrinnunga won the silver medal with a total lift of 306kg.
- Chanu's performance was way below her personal best of 201kg which she lifted during this year's World Championships in Thailand.
- She has won the gold medal at the Commonwealth Games 2018 by lifting a total of 196 kg, 86 kg in Snatch and 110 kg in Clean and Jerk.
- She was awarded with Padma Shri and Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (2018) for her contribution to the sports by the Government of India.
- The Qatar Cup is organised by the **International Weightlifting Federation (IWF)**, and **Qatar Weightlifting Federation**.

ADB SIGNED \$490 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT WITH GOI

Current context: Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Government of India (GOI) have signed a **\$490 million loan** on 20th Dec 19, for a **public-private partnership project to upgrade Indian state's roads**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Under the project, about **1600 kilometres of state highways and major district roads** will be upgraded from **single-lane to two-lane widths in Madhya Pradesh**.
- An **additional investment of \$286 million** will be mobilised through private sector participation under the PPP modality.
- Through the **hybrid-annuity model**, a new partnership will be opened by introducing PPP for the sustainability of capital investments and leveraging government financing.
- **The Hybrid-Annuity Model** passes the responsibility of design, implementation, build-operate-transfer and maintenance obligations to the private sector while attracting some private sector financing.
- Under the model, **the government will release 60% of the total project cost** during construction, and the rest 40% is arranged by the concessionaire in the form of equity and commercial debt.
- The **concessionaire's financial investment will be returned by the government** over 10 years once the project is completed.

ETHIOPIA LAUNCHED ITS FIRST SATELLITE

Current context: Ethiopia launched its first satellite, **Ethiopian Remote Sensing Satellite (ETRSS)** on 20th Dec 19.

ABOUT ETHIOPIAN REMOTE SENSING SATELLITE (ETRSS)

- The **ETRSS-1** was launched from a space station in **China**.
- Ethiopia has now become the **eleventh African country** to put a satellite into space. **Egypt was the first in 1998**.
- The satellite will operate from space at about 700km above the Earth surface and will provide a fuller picture of the country's agriculture, forestry and mining resources and improve responses to flooding and other disasters.
- The ETRSS-1 will be the **99th satellite to travel in space in 2019**.
- The satellite was manufactured in collaboration between the **Ethiopian and Chinese government**.
- Ethiopia capital: **Addis Ababa**
- Currency: **Ethiopian Birr**
- Prime Minister: **Abiy Ahmed**

AFGHANISTAN: FIRST COUNTRY TO RECOGNISE INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA

Current context: The National Department of Regulation of Medicines and Health Products of the **Ministry of Public Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** has formally recognised the **Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)**.

INDIAN PHARMACOPOEIA (IP)

- With recognition, **Afghanistan has become the first country to recognize IP**.
- IP is an officially recognized book of standards as per the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945**.
- The IP specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India.
- The **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)** ensures the quality of medicinal products, the legal and scientific standards in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).

- The IP contains the regulations of standards for drugs imported and/or manufactured for sale, stock or exhibition for sale or distribution in India.

NAGPUR RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY GOI

Current context: The 'Nagpur Resolution- A holistic approach for empowering citizens' is adopted by the government of India during a two-day Regional Conference on 'Improving Public Service Delivery - Role of Governments', in Nagpur on 22nd Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The conference was organised by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)** in collaboration with the Government of Maharashtra and the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Public Services.
- In earlier occasions, the government of India has adopted the **Shillong Declaration and Jammu Resolution for Good Governance**.
- It was decided in the conference that the Government of India, the Government of Maharashtra, the Maharashtra State Commission for Right to Public Services shall collaborate to **empower the citizens by:**
 1. Policy interventions for better service delivery.
 2. Adopting a bottom-up approach to bring massive improvements in quality of grievance redressal.
 3. The holistic approach of systemic public grievance reforms.
 4. Creating web portals for improved service delivery through digital platforms.
 5. Exchange of technical expertise in the areas of Improved Service Delivery between the paired States under the Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat Program.
 6. Timely publication of Good Governance Index to identify the quality of governance in 10 sectors at the Union, State and District levels.

INDIA WON THE ODI SERIES

Current context: India has defeated West Indies by four wickets in the third and final ODI of the three-match series at Barabati Stadium in Cuttack on 22nd Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- India won the three match ODI series by **2-1**.
- This was the **10th consecutive win of India** over West Indies in the ODI series.
- **Virat Kohli** was declared the **Man of the Match** and **Rohit sharma** the **Man of the series** and cracked his 4rd ODI fifty.
- **Virat Kohli** looks set to be the **highest runscorer of 2019 (2455 runs)** in all formats (Tests, ODI and T20I) combined, for the **4th year in a row**.
- **Rohit Sharma** had broken the record for scoring the **most number of runs as an opening batsman (2442 runs)** in a calendar year, a 22 year long period of former Sri Lanka's batsman Sanath Jayasuria in 1997.
- **Mohd Shami** took 42 wickets in 21 ODIs in 2019 which is the highest by any bowler in the world.
- India will next face **Sri Lanka in a three-match T20I series** that will begin from 3rd Jan 2020.

NATIONAL MATHEMATICS DAY

Current context: The National Mathematics Day is celebrated on **22nd December every year** in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Indian Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan**.

ABOUT SRINIVASA RAMANUJAN

- The former Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh on 26th Feb 2012 announced to observe the day as the National Mathematics Day** to mark the 125th anniversary of the birth of Indian Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan.
- He also announced that 2012 would be celebrated as the **National Mathematics Year**.
- The **objective** behind observing this day is to raise awareness among people about the importance of mathematics for the development of humanity.
- **Ramanujan was born in 1887** in Erode, Tamil Nadu and discovered around 3,900 results of mathematics during his **short lifespan of 32 years**.
- Some of his **major discoveries** include Ramanujan prime, Ramanujan theta function, number theory, partition formula, infinite series and mock theta functions.
- **'The Man Who Knew Infinity' (2015)** was a biopic made on the mathematician with the starrer Dev Patel.

DR MONISHA GHOSH NAMED 1ST WOMAN CTO AT FCC

Current context: **Dr Monisha Ghosh, an Indian-American** has become the **first woman appointed as Chief Technology Officer** at the US government's powerful **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**.

ABOUT DR MONISHA GHOSH

- She has replaced **Dr Eric Burger** and will take charge on 13th January 2020.
- She is tasked to advise **Ajit Pai, an Indian-American Chairman of the FCC** and the agency on technology and engineering issues.
- Dr Monisha Ghosh has completed her **B.Tech from IIT Kharagpur in 1986** and received her PhD in Electrical Engineering from the University of Southern California in 1991.
- The **FCC regulates interstate and international communications** by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and US territories.
- The FCC is an **independent US government agency** responsible for implementing and enforcing America's communications law and regulations.

IMF CALLED FOR "URGENT ACTION" BY INDIA

Current context: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has called for **"urgent" policy action** amid the acute slowdown to the reverse the current downturn.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- IMF has released its **annual review report on 23rd Dec 19** and pointed out that India is now in the midst of a significant slowdown and only quick policy actions can reverse the slowdown.

- The **IMF also warned** that at the current debt situation and interest payments, the Government of India has limited space to boost spending for supporting the growth.
- The **factors listed for the brake** include Declining consumption and investment and falling tax revenue along with other factors.
- The IMF has slashed its **Real GDP forecast for 2019 by nearly a full point to 6.1%** in October along with cutting the outlook for **2020 to 7.0%**.
- India's economy grew at its slowest pace **at 4.5% in more than six years in the July-Sep period**.

QRSAM MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED

Current context: Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile, QRSAM system was successfully flight-tested from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the Odisha coast on 23rd Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF TEST

- The QRSAM missile system is **indigenously developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation, DRDO**.
- The **objective** of the missile is to operate in the deployment mode intercepting the target mid-air.
- The **features of the QASAM system** includes:
 1. It Comprises of fully automated Command and Control System
 2. Have Active Array Battery Surveillance Radar
 3. The radars are four-walled having 360-degree coverage with a search on move and track on move capability.
 4. It has a single-stage solid propelled system
- The missile system will be **inducted by 2021** once the developmental trials of the weapon system are successfully completed.
- Defence Minister: **Rajnath Singh**
- Chairman DRDO: **Dr G Satheesh Reddy**

GOVT NORMS FOR FIXATION OF MICRODOTS IDENTIFIERS

Current context: The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** has notified rules for **microdot identifiers on motor vehicles** and their parts on 23rd Dec 19.

KEY POINTS

- After consideration on the draft notification that was issued in July 2019, the government has issued the notification.
- The notified automotive industry standards are made through an amendment in **the Central Motor vehicles Rules 1989** and include the motor vehicles and their parts, components, assemblies and sub-assemblies.
- As per the notification, **"the manufacturers who are affixing microdot identifiers in the motor vehicles and their parts shall conform to Automotive Industry Standards (AIS)-155"**.
- The microdots will be now affixed on the motor vehicles by spraying on the body and parts with microscopic dots to give a **unique identification for enhancing the security of vehicles**.

SIKKIM IFFCO

Current context: Chief Minister of Sikkim Prem Singh Tamang laid down the foundation stone of two Integrated Processing Units of Sikkim Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Organics Limited, SIFFCO on 22nd Dec 19.

SIKKIM IFFCO

- SIFFCO is a joint venture between the Government of Sikkim and IFFCO (the world's biggest fertilizer Cooperative).
- The aim is to market and produce the organic produce of the country with its main focus on Sikkim and other north-eastern states of India.
- Sikkim IFFCO will mainly operate in commercial crops that are ginger, turmeric, large cardamom and buckwheat.
- The program will help take local produce of Sikkim in the international market and benefit farmers and local people of Sikkim.
- Sikkim was the first fully organic state of the country where all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides.

FIRST TRIPARTITE MOA SIGNED UNDER FIDF

Current context: The first tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed under the Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF) on 23rd Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The tripartite MoA was signed between i) The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) ii) The department of Fisheries, Government of India iii) Government of Tamil Nadu.
- The agreement was signed for the implementation of the Fisheries and Aquaculture Development Fund (FIDF).
- A dedicated fund with a total of Rs. 7522.48 crore has been created namely FIDF for addressing the infrastructure requirement for the fisheries sector.
- NABARD as one of the Nodal Loaning Entities (NLEs) will provide concessional finance for the development of fisheries infrastructure facilities under the FIDF, after the execution of the Tripartite MoA.
- The Tripartite MoA will allow the Government of Tamil Nadu for availing the initial concessional finance of Rs 420 crore from NABARD for development of three fishing harbours in the State:
 1. Tharangampadi in Nagapattinam District
 2. Thiruvottriyur Kuppam in Tiruvallur District
 3. Mudhunagar in Cuddalore District
- Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying: Giriraj Singh
- State Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying: Sanjeev Kumar Balyan.

ICC ODI RANKING

Current context: Official International Cricket Council ranking for One Day International (ODI) cricket has been updated.

ABOUT ICC ODI RANKING

- **Virat to top ICC ODI ranking** with a score of 887 points followed by Rohit Sharma with 873 points.
- Virat Kohli has become the **3rd Indian to top ICC ODI** list. 1st Indian to top ODI Ranking was Sachin (1996) and then Dhoni in 2006.
- **Rohit Sharma also broke Sanath Jayasuriya's**, a 22year old record of most scored run in a calendar year as an opener.
- **Other batsmen in the top 5 batsman ranking are Babar Azam (834), Faf du Plessis (820) and Ross Taylor.**
- **Batsman Lokesh Rahul** has been lifted by 17 ranks to 71st place while **Shreyas Iyer** jumped from 104 ranks to 81st rank.
- **Indian Women team** remains to hold **4th position in the Women T20 Team Ranking.**
- **New Zealand's Susie Bates** is still topping the ICC Ranking list in Batting while **Radha Yadav** is at 2nd position.

PAKISTAN AT RISK OF BEING BLACK LISTED BY FATF

Current context: Global Watchdog for terror financing **FATF (Financial Action Task Force)** has sent **150 questions to Pakistan** seeking more clarifications from Pakistan on **actions taken against madrassas.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The FATF has told Pakistan to take action against **madrassas belonging to proscribed outfits**, with report submitting **deadline by 8th January.**
- However, Pakistan has already submitted a report in past with detail step taken by the government to **curb terrorism and money laundering.**
- FATF warned Pakistan to comply **with 22 points in the list of 27 questions** or else it will be blacklisted. Of which, Pakistan on 6th Dec submitted a report comprising of 22 questions.
- If Pakistan is blacklisted then Capital inflow will freeze and Investments will decrease as per IMF. If Blacklisted, Pakistan will become a 3rd country to be blacklisted **after North Korea and Iran.**

SDG INDIA INDEX 2019-20

Current context: NITI Aayog will launch the **2nd edition** of the Sustainable Development Goals **(SDG) India Index** on 30th December 2019 in New Delhi.

ABOUT SDG INDIA INDEX

- **The SDG India Index** documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the **2030 SDG targets.**
- NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute has developed the **SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019-20.**
- The dashboard will rank **all states and UTs** and, analyse their progress on **100 indicators drawn from MoSPI's National Indicator Framework.**
- The **first edition** of the SDG India Index was launched in **December 2018.**

- The Index **covers 16 out of 17 SDGs** with qualitative assessment on Goal 17 that is an improvement over the 2018 Index, which covered only 13 goals.
- **Chairman**, NITI Aayog: Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- **Vice-Chairman**, NITI Aayog: Dr Rajiv Kumar
- **CEO**, NITI Aayog: Amitabh Kant
- **Headquarter**: New Delhi
- **Formed**: 1st January, 2015

CABINET APPROVED ORDINANCE TO FURTHER AMEND IBC

Current context: The Union Cabinet **chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has approved an ordinance to further amend the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (**IBC**) on 24th Dec 19.

KEY FACTS

- The ordinance has been approved to help remove certain ambiguities in **the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016**.
- The amendment passed would **ring-fence successful bidders from criminal proceedings** against offences committed by previous promoters.
- To ensure smooth implementation of the Code, the following changes have been made in the code:
 1. There would be **no liability on a corporate debtor for an offence committed prior to commencement of the insolvency resolution process**.
 2. The corporate debtor **would not be prosecuted** for any such offence from the date of resolution plan being approved by the adjudicating authority.
 3. The corporate debtor shall as required, extend **all assistance and co-operation** to any authority investigating an offence committed prior to the **commencement of the corporate insolvency resolution process**, Subject to relevant provisions.
- The bill with a proposed amendment in IBC was introduced in the Lok Sabha earlier on 12th December but it was not passed by the Parliament as the winter session ended on 13th December.

ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA

Current context: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the implementation of the **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)** on 24th Dec 19.

KEY FEATURES

- The **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)** is a **Central Sector Scheme** with a total outlay of **Rs.6000 crore**.
- The scheme will be implemented over a **period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25)**.
- It is a pioneering initiative of the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- The scheme **aims** to improve groundwater management through community participation in identified priority areas in seven states.
- The identified priority areas in **seven States** include **Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat and Karnataka**.
- The scheme will provide benefit to nearly 8350 Gram Panchayats in 78 districts in these States.

- **50% of the total outlay of Rs. 6000 crore**, shall be in the form of **World Bank loan**, and be repaid by the Central Govt and the remaining **50% shall be provided through Central Assistance** from regular budgetary support.

CENSUS OF INDIA 2021

Current context: The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for **conducting Census of India 2021** and updating **National Population Register (NPR)**.

ABOUT NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER (NPR)

- The approval has been made for conducting the census 2021 at a cost of **Rs. 8,754.23 crore** and NPR at a cost of **Rs. 3,941.35 crore**.
- The Census of India will cover the **entire population in the country** while NPR will also cover all the population **except in the state of Assam**.
- The Indian Census is the **largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world**.
- The census 2021 will be conducted into **2 phases**:
 1. House listing and Housing Census - April to September 2020.
 2. Population Enumeration - 9th February to 28th February 2021.
- Since **1872**, Decennial Population Census is being conducted in India synchronously without break.
- Census 2021 will be **16th Census** in the country and 8th after independence.
- The 15th Indian Census was taken in **2011**.
- The census is conducted under the legal framework of the **Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990**.

RBI INTRODUCED NEW PAYMENT INSTRUMENT

Current context: RBI has introduced a new **Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI)** to make daily payments for the purchase of **daily household goods and services** on 24th Dec 19.

FEATURES

- The instrument has been introduced to give increased impetus to small ticket digital payments to merchants, local shops and retail outlets.
- The **new semi-closed Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI)** can be used only for making retail payments and will come with a **monthly rechargeable limit of Rs 10,000**.
- The Rs 10,000 amount can only be uploaded only from a bank account linked with the customer's verified mobile number.
- **An annual limit of Rs 1.2 lakh** has also been fixed by the RBI, that can be recharged on these accounts.
- **The banks and existing non-bank PPI players** can issue the new payment instrument and would verify the credentials of customers.
- The verification process involves the **use of an OTP sent to the user's verified mobile number** and a digital **identification document** recognized by the **Department of Revenue**.
- The documents required for the verification are:
 1. A mobile number verified with One Time Pin (OTP)
 2. A self-declaration of name
 3. Unique identity/ identification number of any 'mandatory document' or 'officially valid document' (OVD) listed in the RBI's 'Master Direction - Know Your Customer (KYC) Direction'

PREPAID PAYMENT INSTRUMENT (PPI):

- PPIs are instruments that facilitate the purchase of goods and services, including financial services, remittance facilities, etc., against the value stored on such instruments.
- At present, RBI allows only three kinds of PPIs including **closed system, semi-closed and open PPIs**.
- **Closed System PPIs:** These PPIs are issued by an entity for facilitating the purchase of goods and services from that entity only and do not permit cash withdrawal. As these instruments cannot be used for payments or settlement for third party services, the issuance and operation of such instruments are not classified as a payment system requiring approval/authorisation by the RBI.
- **Semi-closed System PPIs:** These PPIs are issued by banks (approved by RBI) and non-banks (authorized by RBI) for purchase of goods and services, including financial services, remittance facilities, etc., at a group of clearly identified merchant locations/establishments which have a specific contract with the issuer (or contract through a payment aggregator/payment gateway) to accept the PPIs as payment instruments. These instruments do not permit cash withdrawal, irrespective of whether they are issued by banks or non-banks.
- **Open System PPIs:** These PPIs are issued only by banks (approved by RBI) and are used at any merchant for purchase of goods and services, including financial services, remittance facilities, etc. Cash withdrawal at ATMs / Points of Sale (PoS) terminals / Business Correspondents (BCs) are also allowed through such PPIs.

NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY

Current context: The **National Consumer Day** was observed across the country on **24th December 19**.

ABOUT NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY

- The day is observed to highlight the importance of the consumer movement and to make every consumer more aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- On this day, the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986** received the then President's approval and was enacted thereafter.
- The Act aims to **safeguard consumers from any type of exploitation** against deficiency in services, defective goods and unfair trade practices.
- The **theme** of this year is "**alternate consumer grievance/dispute redressal**".
- The **Consumer Protection Act, 2019** received the President's assent that entails setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority, CCPA to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers.
- The new Act has **replaced** the old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

GOOD GOVERNANCE INDEX

Current context: The **Good Governance Index** is launched by the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions** in New Delhi on 25th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Good Governance Index (GGI) has been launched on the occasion of **Good Governance Day, which is observed on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**.
- The States and UTs are divided into three groups:

1. **Big States: Tamil Nadu topped the list** followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh
 2. **North-East and Hill States: Himachal Pradesh was ranked first**, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim.
 3. **Union Territories: The list is topped by Puducherry** followed by Chandigarh and Delhi
- The ranking was launched by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances**, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
 - The GGI is a **uniform citizen-centric tool** to assess the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.
 - The **objectives** of GGI are to provide:
 1. Quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and UTs.
 2. Enable states and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance.
 3. Shift to result-oriented approaches and administration.
 - The GGI takes into consideration **10 sectors** and measures the sectors on total 50 indicators. The sectors include **Citizen-Centric Governance, Agriculture and Allied Sectors, Environment, Public Health, Judicial & Public Security, Commerce & Industries, Social Welfare & Development, Human Resource Development, Economic Governance and Public Infrastructure & Utilities.**
 - Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions: **PM Narendra Modi**
 - Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions: **Dr Jitendra Singh**

CBIC ISSUES SOP FOR GST NON-FILERS

Current context: Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), Ministry of Finance has issued Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) to deal with **non-filers of GST returns.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- As per the SOP, the non-billing of GST (Goods & Services Tax) returns may lead to **attachment of bank accounts and even cancellation of registrations.**
- After the due date of return, a system-generated message or mail will be immediately shared with GST defaulters.
- 5 days later a notice will be issued in **Form GSTR 3A asking the GST payer to file the return or make payment within 15 days.**
- After 15 days, if the return is not filed, the proper officer may proceed to **assess the tax liability of the person to the best of his judgment** and would issue an order under **Rule 100 of the CGST Rules in Form GST ASMT-13.**
- Form GST ASMT 13 will be deemed as withdrawn if the defaulter has filed the GST return
- The **process of cancellation of registration** may be initiated if the return is not filed within the time prescribed **under Section 29 of the CGST Act** that includes:
 1. A composition scheme assessed not filing returns for three consecutive tax periods.
 2. A non-composition assessed not furnishing returns for a continuous period of six months.
 3. Not commencing business within six months of the voluntary registration, obtaining registration by fraud, and willful misstatement or suppression of facts.

2ND EDITION OF EAT RIGHT MELA

Current context: Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare has inaugurated the second edition of the 'Eat Right Mela' at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi on 26th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The "Eat Right Mela" is an initiative of **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** to nudge citizens towards eating right and adopt safe, healthy and sustainable food practices and habits.
- The Union Minister launched '**The PURPLE Book**' a handbook on suitable diets for common medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, gut disorders etc.
- Dr Harsh Vardhan also launched **NetSCoFAN (Network for Scientific Co-operation for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition)** which is a network of research & academic institutions with heads/Directors and lead scientists of lead working in the area of food & nutrition.
- The **first National Eat Right Mela** was held during 14th-16th December **2018** in New Delhi.
- FSSAI is an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
- It was established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- Founded: **2011**
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**
- Chairperson: **Rita Teatia**

HRD MINISTRY LAUNCHED 5 DOCUMENTS OF QUALITY MANDATE

Current context: Human Resource Development Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank has launched the 5 documents covering the **5 verticals of Quality Mandate** in New Delhi on 26th Dec 19.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The five documents are developed by **University Grants Commission, UGC** and cover:
 1. Evaluation reforms
 2. Eco-friendly and sustainable university campuses
 3. Human values and professional ethics
 4. Faculty induction
 5. Academic research integrity
- **The Higher Education Quality Improvement Programme Mandate** has been adopted by UGC to improve the quality in Higher Educational Institutions and equip the country's next-generation with vital skills, knowledge and ethics.
- UGC has developed a policy framework- "**MulyaPravah - Guidelines for Inculcation of Human values and Professionals Ethics in Higher Educational Institutions**" to inculcate the culture of human values and ethics in educational institutions.
- UGC has set up a **Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE)** to continuously monitor and identify quality journals across disciplines.
- The University Grants Commission of India (UGC India) is a **statutory body under the Ministry of Human Resource Development**.
- It was set up by the Indian Union government in accordance with the **UGC Act 1956**.
- Headquarters: **New Delhi**
- Founded: **1956**

- Chairman: **D.P. Singh**

SEBI PENALISED RATING AGENCIES OVER LACK OF PROPER DUE DILIGENCE IN IL&FS

Current context: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has penalised rating agencies for lack of proper due diligence while rating non-convertible debentures of Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS).

KEY POINTS

- SEBI levied a penalty of Rs 25 lakh each on three rating agencies ICRA Ltd, India Ratings & Research and Credit Analysis and Research Limited (CARE) Ratings Ltd.
- The three rating agencies gave IL&FS the highest rating of AAA, even when IL&FS Transport Networks, defaulted in June and SEBI found them guilty of excessively relying on assertions of IL&FS management.
- The rating agencies were also found guilty for not noticing disparities in public disclosures made by IL&FS.
- In case of IL&FS ratings, SEBI has rejected the settlement applications on 3 July 2019 and didn't allow the CRAs to settle the lapses against a fee without admission of guilt.

RBI DIRECTION FOR LARGE CO-OP BANKS

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed **(Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs)** to report all **exposures of Rs 5 crore and more to the CRISIL.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The move has been taken by RBI with the aim of early detection of financial distress.
- The Co-operative Banks (UCBs) **having total assets of Rs 500 crore and above as on 31st March of the previous financial year** shall report credit information, including classification of an account as **Special Mention Account (SMA)**, on all borrowers having aggregate exposures of Rs 5 crore.
- **Special Mention Account (SMA)** is an account which is exhibiting signs of incipient stress resulting in the borrower defaulting in timely servicing of her debt obligations, though the account has not yet been classified as NPA as per the extant RBI guidelines.
- The RBI has created a **Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC)** of commercial banks, all India financial institutions and certain non-banking financial companies.
- CRISIL was formed with multiple objectives but primarily includes:
 1. Strengthening offsite supervision
 2. Early recognition of financial distress
- The RBI had announced to bring UCBs with assets of Rs 500 crore and above under the CRILC reporting framework in its **fifth Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement, 2019-20** announced on December 05, 2019.
- As per the direction, UCBs will be required to **submit CRILC report on a quarterly basis** with effect from **31st December 2019.**

CHINA'S LARGEST CARRIER ROCKET: LONG MARCH-5

Current context: China's largest carrier rocket, **Long March-5** was successfully launched from Wenchang Space Launch Center in south China's Hainan Province on 27th Dec 19.

ABOUT LONG MARCH-5

- It is the **country's third attempt** to launch the rocket, also known as **CZ-5**.
- **The first attempt was made in 2016**, failed to reach the speed required for the early phase of the flight and so was the **second attempt** that also failed when a turbopump that injected fuel into the combustion chamber malfunctioned.
- The rocket was launched carrying the **Shijian-20 technological experiment satellite** which is the heaviest and **most advanced communications satellite of the country**.
- **The Shijian-20 satellite** will be used to test:
 1. Key technologies of the DFH-5 platform
 2. China's new-generation large satellite platform
 3. Offer communication and broadcasting service
- The Long March-5 is a **two-stage rocket** that is capable of carrying a payload of **25 tonnes into the low Earth orbit**.
- The rocket is capable of sending probes to explore Jupiter and other planets in the solar system.

20TH FINANCIAL STABILITY REPORT: RBI

Current context: The Reserve Bank of India, RBI has released its **20th Financial Stability Report** on 27th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- The report depicts that the **country's financial system remains stable** despite slowing economic growth.
- As per the 20th Financial Stability Report:
 1. The resilience of the banking sector has improved following **recapitalization of Public Sector Banks (PSBs)**.
 2. **Persistence of the risks** arising out of global or domestic economic uncertainties and geopolitical developments like a delay in the Brexit deal, trade tensions, whiff of an impending recession, oil-market disruptions and geopolitical risks.
 3. India's financial system remains **stable** notwithstanding weakening domestic growth.
 4. **India's exports could face headwinds** in the event of sustained global slowdown.
 5. **Current account deficit** is likely to be **under control** reflecting muted energy price outlook.
 6. Scheduled commercial banks' (SCBs) gross non-performing assets (**GNPA**) **ratio remained unchanged at 9.3%** between March and September 2019 and predicted that **SCBs' GNPA ratio may increase from 9.3 % in September 2019 to 9.9 % by September 2020**.
 7. The size of the **inter-bank market continued to shrink** with inter-bank assets amounting to less than **4 % of the total banking sector assets** as at end-September 2019.

DEFEXPO INDIA- 2020

Current context: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has launched the mobile app of the forthcoming **DefExpo 2020**.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The **11th biennial edition of DefExpo India- 2020** is scheduled to be held in **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh** from 5th to 8th Feb 2020.
- The theme of the DefExpo is 'India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub' and focus will be on '**Digital Transformation of Defence**'.
- The mobile app for the DefExpo 2020 is focused on the '**inform, engage and feedback**' mechanism and provides detailed information about the day-to-day events, Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), participating exhibitors, maps and directions of the venues.
- The app has been developed by the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence (MoD).
- The DefExpo is organised for:
 1. Offering an excellent opportunity for the Indian defence industry to showcase its capabilities and promote its export potential.
 2. Facilitate Business-to-Business (B2B) interaction with senior foreign delegations and signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).
 3. Highlight the emergence of UP as an attractive destination for investment in the defence sector.
 4. Provide an opportunity to the major foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to collaborate with the Indian defence industry.

FINMIN ANNOUNCED NO MDR ON TRANSACTIONS THROUGH RUPAY AND UPI

Current context: Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has said that **no Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)** will be applicable on transactions through **RuPay and UPI platforms**.

HIGHLIGHTS

- She said that no MDR charge would be charged from **1st January 2020**.
- The step is taken to **promote digital payments** along with **indigenously developed digital payment medium** like RuPay and BHIM UPI over the payment gateway promoted by foreign companies.
- The **MDR** is the cost paid by a merchant to a bank for accepting payment from their customers via digital means.
- RuPay and UPI will soon be notified as to the prescribed mode of payment for digital transactions without any MDR by the Department of Revenue (DoR).
- Now, **all companies with a turnover of Rs 50 crore or more** will be **mandated** to provide the facility of payment through RuPay Debit card and UPI QR code to their customers.
- In the **Budget Speech 2019-20**, the Finance Minister has said that businesses should offer low-cost digital modes of payment such as BHIM UPI, UPI QR Code, NEFT, RTGS etc. to their customers to promote digital payment.
- A campaign would be started by all banks to popularise RuPay Debit card and UPI.
- **Income Tax Act and the Payments and Settlement Systems Act, 2007** have been amended to give effect to these provisions.

FINMIN LAUNCHED EBKRAY, A COMMON E-AUCTION PLATFORM

Current context: The Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman has launched **eBkray, a common e-auction platform** on 28th Dec 19, for online auction of assets attached by banks.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The step has been taken for **transparent and clean online auction by banks** of an attached asset, for the improved realisation of value.
- **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** have attached assets worth over **Rs. 2.3 lakh crore over the last three financial years**.
- The eBkray platform is equipped with:
 1. Property search features and navigational links to all PSB e-auction sites
 2. Provides single-window access to information on properties up for e-auction
 3. Facility for comparison of similar properties
 4. Contains photographs and videos of uploaded properties
- To strengthen banks, the Finance Ministry has also **approved infusion of Rs 8,855 crore** in addition to the recent infusion of over Rs 60,000 crore. The distribution of the infusion is like:
 1. Rs 4,360 crore will be released to Indian Overseas Bank
 2. Rs 2,153 crore to Allahabad Bank
 3. Rs 2,142 crore to UCO Bank
 4. Rs 200 crore to Andhra Bank

66TH DADASAHEB PHALKE AWARD

Current context: Actor **Amitabh Bachchan** was presented the **Dadasaheb Phalke award 2018** by President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhawan on 29th Dec 19.

ABOUT AMITABH BACHCHAN

- The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is named after **Dhundiraj Govind Phalke** who is revered as the **“father of Indian cinema”**.
- Dhundiraj Govind Phalke was an Indian filmmaker and directed **India's first full-length feature film, Raja Harishchandra (1913)**.
- The award was instituted in **1969** and is considered to be the highest honour for an artiste in Indian cinema.
- It is **presented annually by the Directorate of Film Festivals**, an organisation set up by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
- It is given to an individual for **"outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema"**.
- The award comprises a Swarna Kamal (**Golden Lotus**) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize of 10 lakh rupees.
- Amitabh Bachchan made his debut in Hindi film industry in 1969 with **"Saat Hindustani"**.

'WORLD ECONOMIC LEAGUE TABLE 2020' REPORT

Current context: The UK-based **Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR)** has released a report titled **'World Economic League Table 2020'**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF REPORT

- According to the report, **India** will overtake Germany to become the **4th largest economy** in the world by the year **2026**.
- Also, India is all set to **overtake Japan** to become the third-largest economy by **2034**.
- The report said that India is also set to become a **5 trillion dollar economy by 2026** (2 years later than the government's target of 2024).
- In **2019**, India has decisively overtaken **both France and the UK** to become the **world's fifth-largest economy**.
- Thus as per the report, India, Japan and Germany will battle for the third position over the next 15 years.
- **CEBR** in collaboration with **Global Construction Perspectives** publishes the World Economic League Table **annually**.
- The base data for 2019 is taken from the **IMF World Economic Outlook**.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS INDEX 2019-20

Current context: NITI Aayog released the **2nd edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index** on 30th Dec 19.

ABOUT SDG INDIA INDEX

- The SDG Index has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**), **the United Nations in India**, and the **Global Green Growth Institute**.
- The Index helps to track the progress across **all States and Union Territories on 100 indicators** to meet the SDGs target 2030.
- The highlights of the Sustainable Development Goals Index 2019-20 are:
 1. India's **composite score has improved** from 57 in 2018 to **60 in 2019**.
 2. The maximum gains been made in **SDG Goals 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy)**.
 3. States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, that were in the 'Aspirant' category (with score/s in the range of 0-49) have graduated to the 'Performer' category (50-64).
 4. Five states—Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Goa, and Sikkim—moved up from the 'Performer' category to the 'Front Runner' category (65-99).
 5. **Kerala topped the composite SDG Index with a score of 70**, followed by Himachal Pradesh at 69.
 6. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu ranked at the third position with the score of 67.
 7. States of UP (which has moved from the 29th position to the 23rd), Orissa (23rd to 15th), and Sikkim (15th to 7th) were the biggest improvers since 2018.
- SDG India Index score Classification criteria is :
 1. **Aspirant: 0-49**
 2. **Performer: 50-64**
 3. **Front Runner: 65-99**
 4. **Achiever: 100**
- NITI Aayog Chairman: **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**
- NITI Aayog Vice Chairman: **Dr Rajiv Kumar**

- NITI Aayog CEO: **Amitabh Kant**
- NITI Aayog SDG Adviser: **Sanyukta Samaddar**
- Formed: **1st Jan 2015**

GENERAL BIPIN RAWAT: INDIA'S FIRST CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF

Current context: General Bipin Rawat has been named **India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** on 30th Dec 19.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 31st December 2016, he was appointed as the **Chief of Army Staff** and was to retire on 31st December 2019.
- On 24th Dec 19, **the Cabinet committee on security** has approved the creation of the CDS.
- After that, the **Ministry of Defence** has recently amended the **Army Rules 1954** to allow the CDS to serve upto a **maximum age of limit of 65 years**.
- ABOUT CDS:
 1. The CDS will serve the **single point of contact for the different branches of the armed forces**.
 2. It will be a **4 star general** from **either the Indian Army, Navy or Air force** and would be paid up salary equivalent to that of a service chief.
 3. He has been described as "**first among equals**" among the service chief.
 4. He **will not be allowed to take up any private employment** without prior approval for a period of 5 years after demitting the office.
- Functions and responsibilities of CDS:
 1. To facilitate the **restructuring of military commands for optimum utilisation of resources**. However, the CDS will not exercise any military command over the 3 service chiefs.
 2. To perform **Jointness in operation logistics transport, training, support, services, communications, repairs and maintenance** of the three services **within 3 years**.
 3. The tri-service agencies organisations and **commands relating to cyber and space** will be under the command of the CDS.
 4. He will also function as the **military advisor to the nuclear command authority**.
 5. The CDS will also act as the **permanent chairman of the chief of staff committee**.
 6. He will serve as the **principal military advisor to the defence minister on tri-service matters**.
 7. He is tasked with **trimming the weapon procurement procedures** of the armed forces.

RBI BUYS RS 10,000 CRORE WORTH LONG-TERM GOVT SECURITIES IN 2ND SPECIAL OMO

Current context: In the **2nd Special Open Market Operation (OMO)**, the RBI bought **Rs 10,000 crore of long-term government securities** and sold **Rs 8,501 crore of three short-term bonds** on 30th Dec 19.

KEY FEATURES

- Last week, the RBI had announced to **purchase and sell simultaneously government securities under Open Market Operations (OMO) for Rs 10,000 crore each**.
- During the operation, **RBI sold four securities** in the auction but it **accepted bids for three securities only**.

- The RBI offered to sell four government securities through OMO sale that include:
 1. 6.65 per cent GS in 2020
 2. 7.80 per cent GS in 2020
 3. 8.27 per cent GS in 2020
 4. 8.12 per cent GS in 2020
- The RBI received Rs 25,698 crore worth of bids in the OMO purchase of 6.45 per cent GS 2029, the 10- year benchmark security but accepted Rs 10,000 crore of bids.
- It accepted **only Rs 8,501 crore worth of bids for the three securities as against Rs 38,551 crore bids it received in for four securities** in the OMO sale auction.
- The **cut-off yield** at which bids were accepted was **6.4874%**.
- These special OMO auctions are similar to the US Federal Reserves' '**Operation Twist**' aimed at the **faster transmission of policy rates**.

CBIC PAID RS 1.12 LAKH CRORE AS IGST REFUND TO EXPORTERS

Current context: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has paid **IGST refunds worth over Rs 1.12 lakh crore to exporters till date**.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The information was given in the release by CBIC and the refund was given to over 83,500 exporters.
- The release also said that refunds of **only Rs 3,604 crore are pending with Customs** and about **3.4% of total exporters including "Star exporters"** have been identified as **Risky i.e. Red flagged**.
- **Risky exporters** are those who suspected to claim excessive **input tax credit (ITC)** based on fake invoices.
- **Star exporters** are certified by the government on the basis of export performance and extended certain benefits including customs clearance on self-certification basis and exemption from furnishing bank guarantee under certain schemes.
- **Exporters can claim IGST refunds on exports in two ways:**
 1. On the basis of **issuance of a bond/letter of undertaking (LUT)** at the time of exports and claiming a refund of accumulated ITC.
 2. By **paying IGST in cash** at the time of exports and claiming refunds thereafter.
- As per the government, since advent of GST on 1st July 2017, **77% of India's exports have been under LUT**, which are unaffected by the verification exercise being done by the CBIC officials.

JIOMART LAUNCHED BY RELIANCE

Current context: **Reliance Retail Ltd, the retail arm of Reliance Industries Ltd**, has started its new commerce venture with **JioMart**, for online food and grocery shopping.

KEY FEATURES

- The web portal JioMart will initially cater to online shoppers in **Mumbai suburban** areas including **Navi Mumbai, Thane and Kalyan** with the **tagline "India ki nayi dukaan"**.
- It is Reliance Retail's initiative to connect offline to online and link producers, traders, brands and consumers through technology.
- The company is signing up local merchants to offer them an **online-to-offline (O2O) marketplace**.
- When a consumer searches for the product in an O2O model, he or she buys it from a physical store.

- In January 2019, **Reliance Industries chairman Mukesh Ambani** announced that group companies Reliance Retail and Jio would jointly launch a new ecommerce platform in the country.

2ND PREMIUM AHMEDABAD-MUMBAI TEJAS TRAIN

Current context: The Ministry of Railways has announced that the **second premium Ahmedabad-Mumbai Tejas train** is set to be flagged off from Ahmedabad on 17th January 2020.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The second Tejas Train is launched after the successful run of **Lucknow-Delhi Tejas Express, the first in the series.**
- The train will run on all days of the week except **Thursdays.**
- The train to be operated by **Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).**
- The train will have a total capacity of **736 passengers** and have halts at **Nadiad, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Vapi and Borivali.**
- All passengers travelling on IRCTC train will be provided with **rail travel insurance of up to Rs 25 lakh free of cost by IRCTC.**
- The travel insurance also includes **coverage of Rs 1 lakh against household theft and robbery during the travel period of the passengers.**
- **Rs 100 will be paid by the IRCTC** in case the train is delayed by more than one hour and **Rs 250 in case of delay of more than two hours** to every passenger.
- There will be **no tatkal quota or premium tatkal quota** in the train.

AMIT TALGERI APPOINTED AS THE CHIEF RISK OFFICER OF AXIS BANK

Current context: Axis Bank appointed **Amit Talgeri as the Chief Risk Officer (CRO)** of the bank on 31st Dec 19.

KEY POINTS

- **Amit Talgeri** will serve as the CRO for three years from **1st January 2020.**
- He has replaced **Cyril Anand, the incumbent CRO of the Bank,** who will retire on 31st Dec 19.
- Also, **Naveen Tahilyani** has been appointed as **Group Executive-Head Banking Operations and Transformation** and will join the office from **6th Jan 2020.**
- He will lead operations, technology, strategy and analytics (BIU).
- Axis Bank is the **third-largest private sector bank in India.**
- Managing Director and CEO of Axis Bank: **Amitabh Chaudhry**
- Headquarters: **Mumbai**
- Founded: **1993, Ahmedabad**