

MONTHLY GK DIGEST FEBRUARY 2019

BankExamsToday.com

CONTENTS

BARC India elects Punit Goenka as its new Chairman	16
About Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India):.....	16
2019 as the International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements.....	17
What is the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements?	17
Salient features of the periodic table:	17
Interesting to know:	17
Martyrs Day celebrated all over India on January 30	17
Why India celebrates January 30 as Martyrs Day?	17
How is Martyrs Day celebrated?	18
One must know:.....	18
PM Modi inaugurates National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi, Gujarat	18
Details about the Memorial:	18
About Salt Satyagraha:	18
Union Minister Piyush Goyal awarded the prestigious Carnot Prize	19
Details:	19
About the Carnot Prize:	19
RBI bring out three banks from the Prompt Corrective Action framework	20
Details:	20
About the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework:	20
Aim of the PCA Framework:	20
ISRO selects 10 companies for the Lithium-ion cell technology Transfer	20
Firms Selected by ISRO for Technology Transfer are:	20
About the Lithium-Ion Cell Technology:	21
International Conference on Guru Padmasambhava held in New Delhi	21
About Guru Padmasambhava:	21
About India-Bhutan Diplomatic Relations:	21
ISRO's Human Space Flight Centre inaugurated at its headquarters in Bengaluru	22
Details about the Centre:	22
About Gaganyaan:	22
Tax slab for Zero Tax increased to Five Lakh Rupees in Interim Budget 2019	22
What is Standard Deduction?	22

Other Details:.....	23
Startup India-WhatsApp Grand Challenge announced.....	23
Details about the challenge:.....	23
About Invest India:	23
DAC approves acquisition of 5000 'Milan-2T Anti-Tank' Missiles from France	24
One must know:.....	24
About the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):.....	24
Functions of the DAC:	24
About the Milan-2T Anti-Tank Missile:.....	24
Reason for this approval:	24
Aero India 2019 to be held at Air Force Station at Yelahanka in Bengaluru	25
About Aero India 2019:.....	25
Start-up Day	25
Womens' Day	25
Drone Olympics	25
Technology Day/Students Day	25
Photography contest.....	25
What is Aero India?	25
Britain, France and Germany to bypass US sanctions on Iran	26
More Details about INSTEX:	26
How would INSTEX provide protection against US Sanctions?.....	26
Cooperatives Department of Maharashtra takes steps to enhance Agribusiness	26
Maharashtra Government's Outlook:.....	26
How will the Maharashtra Government strengthen the Cooperatives in the state?	27
Benefits:	27
Interim Budget 2019.....	27
Announcements in the Interim Budget 2019:	27
About the earlier attempt for classification:	27
About the vulnerability of these Communities:	27
Government announces PM Kisan Samman Nidhi in the Interim Budget 2019	28
The salient features of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme are:	28
Detailed analysis of the Scheme:	28
Union Government unveils 10 dimensions of its Vision 2030	28

About the 10 dimensions of Vision 2030 listed in the Interim Budget 2019:.....	28
1. Physical & Social Infrastructure.....	28
2. Digital India	29
3. Clean & Green India	29
4. Rural Industrialization.....	29
5. Clean Rivers	29
6. Oceans & Coastline	29
7. Space.....	29
8. Self-sufficiency in Food Production	29
9. Health	29
10. Minimum Government, Maximum Governance.....	29
Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan Scheme announced.....	29
Details about the Scheme:	29
One must know:.....	30
Committee approves the appointment of Rishi Kumar Shukla as CBI Director.....	30
Details:	30
Supreme Court's observations in the matter:	30
World Wetlands Day celebrated on February 2nd.....	30
Details:	30
Significance of Wetlands:	31
One must know:.....	31
Reason for celebrating February 2nd as the World Wetland Day?	31
5 Indian Reserve Police battalions decided to be raised by Govt.	31
Details:	31
ICG commissions Interceptor Ship ICGS C 439 at Mumbai	32
About ICGS C 439:	32
5 Countries elected as non-permanent members of UNSC	32
Pattern followed for electing these members:.....	32
About the UN Security Council (UNSC):	32
Functions of the UNSC:.....	33
ODI captain Mithali Raj is now the First Woman Cricketer to Play 200 ODIs	33
One must know:.....	33
About Mithali Raj:.....	33

Fears of an arms race grow as US and Russia suspend INF Treaty	33
About the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty:	34
How did the INF treaty played a distinctly significant role in diffusing tensions of war?.....	34
How would things pan out now?	34
World Cancer Day observed on February 4th	34
A new 3-year campaign with the theme: "I Am and I Will":.....	34
Shocking Facts:.....	35
Aribam Syam Sharma decides to return his 2006 Padma Shri Award.....	35
Reasons for controversy around the Bill:	35
Why is the Bill facing so much heat in the North-East?	35
Measures taken by NTA to Acquaint Aspirants with Computer Based Examinations.....	36
About the measures:	36
About the National Testing Agency:	36
What are the functions of the National Testing Agency?	36
One must know:.....	36
Azim Premji awarded the Ernst & Young Lifetime Achievement Award	37
About Azim Premji:.....	37
CJI and Andhra Pradesh CM inaugurate Judicial Complex at Amaravati	37
Details:	37
About the Judicial Complex in Amravati:.....	38
One must know:.....	38
UK Home Secretary orders extradition of Fugitive Economic Offender -Vijay Mallya to India	38
Detail:	38
Negative Marking in Competitive Exams ruled out by Madras High Court	38
Observations that the Honourable Madras High Court made:	39
One must know:.....	39
Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposes Rs 2 crore penalty on UCO Bank.....	39
About RBI's directions on Fraud Classification and Reporting:.....	39
Classification of Fraud based on the provisions of the Indian Penal Code:.....	39
One must know:.....	40
SBI's UK head honoured with the 'Freedom of the City of London' Award	40
About Sanjiv Chadha's contributions:.....	40
About Freedom of the City:.....	40

Siamese Fighting Fish named the National Aquatic Animal of Thailand.....	40
Details:	41
About the Siamese Fighting Fish:	41
Threats to the Siamese Fighting Fish:	41
Know India Programme (KIP) for 'Diaspora Engagement'	41
Salient Features of the Programme:	41
Aspects that the programme incorporates to familiarise Youths about Indian Society and Culture:	42
To curb accidents Delhi Government launches Zero Fatality Corridor	42
Significant facts related to the Zero Fatality Corridor:	42
One must know:	42
Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) lowers Repo Rate by 25 basis points	43
Highlights of this policy meet:	43
Other interesting things that came out of this time:	43
One must know:	43
22nd AIIMS to be established in Rewari District in Haryana	43
About All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS):	43
What are the objectives of AIIMS?	44
What are the functions of AIIMS?	44
SC says linking of PAN with Aadhaar is mandatory for filing I.T. Returns	44
Details:	44
What is Section 139AA of the Income-Tax Act?	44
Macedonia signs accession papers with NATO	45
Details:	45
About Russia's Concerns:	45
About North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO):	45
92 years old Priest "Father Franois Laborde" conferred with Légion d'Honneur	45
About Father Laborde:	45
About Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honour):	46
India's GSAT-31 successfully launched from French Guiana	46
Salient features of the GSAT-31:	46
Interesting to know:	46
Defending Champions Vidarbha win 85th Ranji Trophy title	46
Score Card of the Ranji Trophy Final Match:	47

More Details:	47
About Ranji Trophy:.....	47
Trump nominates David Malpass for the post of President of the World Bank.....	47
About Davil Malpass:.....	47
What is required in a World Bank President?	47
Other Interesting Details:.....	48
Assam Government announces 'Arundhati Scheme'	48
Salient features of the Scheme:	48
One must know:.....	48
Air India One to get two missile defence systems from the US	49
Features of the two new defense systems:	49
Installation of these systems:.....	49
Helina 'Anti-tank Missile' successfully Flight Tested in Odisha	49
Salient features of Helina-Anti Tank Missile:	49
One must know:.....	49
Unified Authority to come up for regulating all financial services in IFSCs	50
Why IFSCs are set up?	50
Need for a Unified Financial Regulator for IFSCs:.....	50
One must know:.....	50
Ladakh would be the third administrative division of the state of J & K.....	50
About the Ladakh Administrative Division:	50
India and Bangladesh sign MoU for training 1800 Bangladesh Civil Servants	51
Details:	51
Election Commission launches Voter Verification and Information Programme (VVIP).....	51
About c-VIGIL App:	51
About the Voter Verification and Information Programme (VVIP):	52
About PwD App:	52
Great Indian Bustard as the Mascot for COP-13 on Migratory Species	52
One must know:.....	52
About the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS):.....	52
Foundation Stone for the Sela Tunnel Project in Arunachal Pradesh laid by PM Modi	53
About Sela Pass:.....	53
Facts about the Sela Tunnel Project:.....	53

Significance of this Project for the Defence Forces:	53
'World Pulses Day' celebrated for the first time	53
Interesting to know:	53
What are Pulses?	54
Why are Pulses important?	54
Nutrition	54
Food security	54
Climate change mitigation	54
Dikkibandi stadium to be remaned by Meghalaya Government after P.A. Sangma.....	54
Details:	54
About P A Sangma:	55
ASCEND 2019 organized to turn Kerala into a top investment hub	55
Interesting Details of ASCEND 2019:.....	55
Air Force to formally induct Boeing manufactured Chinook Military Helicopters	56
About Chinook Helicopter:	56
India's Defence Engagement with Boeing:	56
Seventh Annual World Government Summit 2019.....	56
Role of World Government Summit:	56
About The World Government Summit:.....	56
Abu Dhabi Includes Hindi as Third Official Court Language	57
Details:	57
Indian Community in the UAE:.....	57
Sarathi Sandesh Vahini Mission Initiated in U.P.	57
Details:	57
Another noteworthy development:.....	58
What is Encephalitis?.....	58
LoI signed by India and Norway	58
Details about the India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative:	58
Significance of the initiative:	58
Union Government to Develop National Gas Grid.....	58
Role of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB):	59
Objectives of the National Gas Grid:.....	59
One must know:.....	59

Sanjay Subrahmanyam Wins Dan David Prize of Israel for 2019	59
About the Dan David Prize:	59
Categories of Dan David Prize:	59
Categories from which 2019 awardees were chosen:.....	60
One must know:.....	60
PM Modi inaugurated the National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar, Haryana	60
Details:	60
About Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC):	60
What is the significance of ESIC Hospital?	60
Major reasons for Cancer in Haryana:	61
India takes part in Multi-Nation Cobra Gold Military Exercise in Thailand	61
About Cobra Gold Exercise:.....	61
About the city of Phitsanulok:.....	61
President Ram Nath Kovind unveiled life size portrait of Atal Bihari Vajpayee	62
Other Leaders that were in attendance:.....	62
About former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee:	62
One must know:.....	62
US considering withdrawal of its Generalised System of Preferences from India	63
Details:	63
About the Generalised System of Preferences:.....	63
What will be its impact on India?.....	63
Indian Army conducts annual 'Exercise Topchi' at Deolali Camp near Nashik	63
Details about Exercise Topchi 2019:	63
Ultra Light Howitzer M777	64
Swathi Weapon Locating Radar	64
Deolali	64
African Union gets President of Egypt Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi as New Chairman	64
About the African Union:	64
What is Africa Day?.....	64
Ghumot to be notified as a Heritage Musical Instrument of Goa	65
About Ghumot:	65
Why was Ghumot banned?	65
Akshaya Patra Foundation's 3 Billionth meal served by PM Modi in Vrindavan.....	65

Details:	65
About the Akshaya Patra Foundation:.....	65
One must know:.....	66
Rajasthan Govt. quashes minimum education criterion for Civic Polls	66
What was the law in the past?	66
Interesting to know:	66
Why has the current government scrapped the criterion?.....	66
February 11th 2019 celebrated as Unani Day	67
Activities organized on this Unani Day:	67
About the National Conference on Unani Medicine for Public Health:	67
Why February 11th is celebrated as Unani Day?.....	67
e-Aushadhi Portal launched for online licensing of Ayurveda & Homoeopathy drugs	67
Salient features of the e-Aushadhi Portal:	67
UNESCO celebrates World Radio Day.....	68
Details:	68
How the concept of World Radio Day came into existence?	68
Amaravati to have India's First District Cooling System	68
What are District Cooling Systems?	68
About the District Cooling System at Amaravati:.....	69
After Pulwama terror attack India withdraws MFN status given to Pakistan	69
About the MFN status:	69
History of trade & MFN Status Between India and Pakistan?	69
About the Pulwama Terror Attack:	70
Central Government increases Minimum Selling Price (MSP) of Sugar by Rs 2/kg	70
What is Minimum Selling Price?.....	70
Reason for the price increase:.....	70
Other steps taken by the Government to aid the ailing Sugar Mills:	70
NASA Concludes a 15-Year Mars Mission Opportunity Come to an End	71
Reason for losing contact with an opportunity:	71
Details about the mission:.....	71
Sushil Chandra Appointed as new Election Commissioner.....	71
Details:	71
About Clause (2) of Article 324:	71

Who is Sushil Chandra?	72
International Hockey Federation (FIH) annual Player of the Year awards.....	72
Details of the FIH Awards 2019:	72
Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal Becomes the First Woman Flight Engineer of IAF	72
Details:	72
Who is a Flight Engineer?	73
About Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal:.....	73
20% limit on investments by FPIs in Corporate Bonds lifted by RBI	73
Reason for imposing the limit and withdrawing it:.....	73
About Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI):.....	73
FPI vs FDI	73
FPI:	73
FDI:.....	74
Chandramouli Ramanathan Appointed by UN as Controller & ASG	74
About Chandramouli Ramanathan:	74
Aims of DMSPC:	74
India and Sweden sign Security Protection Agreement.....	74
Salient features of the agreement are:.....	74
One must know:.....	75
A look at recent India-Sweden Ties:.....	75
Raigarh Municipal Corporation of Chhattisgarh Wins the Swachhata Excellence Awards 2019	75
More Details:	75
A look at other winners:.....	75
About Shehri Samriddhi Utsav:	75
About Swachhata Excellence Awards:	76
NASA will Launch SPHEREx Mission	76
About the SPHEREx Mission:	76
US President Declares National Emergency to Fund US-Mexico Border Wall	76
About the provision of National Emergency in the USA:	77
History of emergencies in the USA:	77
Reasons for President Trump declaring National Emergency:.....	77
Consequence of the National Emergency:.....	77
Infosys launches InfyTQ App for engineering students	77

Details:	77
Salient features of InfyTQ:	78
Indian Airforce displays its might in Exercise Vayu Shakti- 2019	78
About Exercise Vayu Shakti-2019:	78
About exercises Vayu Shakti and Gagan Shakti:	78
West Indies' explosive batsman Chris Gayle Announces Retirement from ODIs	79
About Chris Gayle:	79
About ICC Cricket World Cup 2019:.....	79
Belgium's Elise Mertens Wins Qatar Open 2019	79
About Elise Mertens:	79
About the Qatar Open 2019:.....	79
Iran unveils new domestically produced 'Fateh' submarine	80
About the Fateh Submarine:	80
Rising Global Tensions:.....	80
About JCPOA:.....	80
India and Argentina sign MoU for Co-Operation in Nuclear Energy	81
Salient Features of the MoU:	81
About the Nuclear Ties between India and Argentina:.....	81
Dr. G. C Anupama becomes the first woman President of ASI.....	81
About Dr. G. C Anupama:	81
About the Astronomical Society of India:.....	82
79th Indian History Congress to be held at Barkatullah University, Bhopal	82
Details:	82
About the Indian History Congress:	82
One must know:.....	82
Government to get Rs 28,000 crore as Interim Dividend from RBI	82
Details:	83
Tussle over Dividend:	83
112 Helpline under the ERSS launched in 16 States and UTs	83
About the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS):.....	83
Odisha Govt. launched KALIA Chhatra Bruti scholarship.....	84
Eligibility for the Scholarship:.....	84
Features of Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation:.....	84

One must know:.....	84
Govt. clears Regional Rapid Transport System (RRTS) on Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut route.....	84
Details:	85
About the Regional Rapid Transport System (RRTS):.....	85
Benefits of RRTS:.....	85
One must know:.....	85
KUSUM scheme approved by CCEA	85
Three Components of the Scheme:.....	85
Salient Features of the Scheme:.....	86
Component-A	86
Component-B	86
Component-C	86
One must know:.....	86
Laureus World Sports Awards 2019.....	86
Awardees of Laureus World Sports Awards 2019:	86
About NGO Yuwa:.....	87
OFB receives clearance for producing 114 Long Range Artillery Gun 'Dhanush'	87
Salient Features of Dhanush Long Range Artillery Guns:.....	87
About the Ordnance Factory Board:.....	87
150 Sri Lankan students awarded Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships	88
Details:	88
About the Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships:.....	88
Other Initiatives of India to boost the Education in Sri Lanka:	88
One must know:.....	88
US President Trump signed a Directive to Create a Military Space Force.....	88
Details:	88
Salient Features of the Military Space Force are:.....	89
Other Details:.....	89
Operation Digital Board launched by Union HRD Minister	89
Details about Operation Digital Board:.....	89
One must know:.....	89
Union Defence Minister inaugurated Aero India 2019 at Bengaluru	89
Details:	90

About Aero India 2019:.....	90
Start-up Day	90
Women's Day	90
Drone Olympics	90
Technology Day/Students Day	90
Photography contest	90
About the Missing Man Formation:.....	90
Statehood Day celebrated by North-Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh	91
History related to the Statehood of Mizoram:	91
History related to the Statehood of Arunachal Pradesh:.....	91
Month long Festival of India begins in Nepal.....	91
About the Festival of India in Nepal:	92
About Swami Vivekananda Cultural Center:	92
New F-21 Fighter Jet unveiled by Lockheed Martin at Aero India 2019	92
About the F-21 Fighter Jet:.....	92
About India's RFI for 110 fighter jets:	92
Swasth Immunised India campaign gets Kareena Kapoor Khan as its ambassador	93
Aims of the Swasth Immunised India campaign:	93
What is the significance of immunisation and challenges faced?	93
South Korean Government honours PM Modi with Seoul Peace Prize	94
Details:	94
About the Seoul Peace Prize:	94
India signs MoU with Canadian University For Research on Environmental Issues	94
About the salient features of the MoU:.....	94
HAL Awarded French Company Thales.....	95
How the capabilities of Armed Forces will be enhanced by this?	95
Israeli Company SpacEL Creates History	95
Details about Israel's Mission to Moon:	95
About Landings on Moon:	96
About SpacEL:	96
Unused Water From India will not Flow into Pakistan	96
Details:	96
How will the unused water be utilized?	96

BEL Unveils Atmospheric Water Generator Aero India 2019	97
About the Atmospheric Water Generator:.....	97
One must know:.....	97
Dr. Divya Karnad Won Global Future for Nature Award 2019	97
Other Recipients of the award:	97
Details:	98
Aims of the Award:	98
MP Govt. Launches Mukhyamantri Yuva Swabhiman Yojana.....	98
Salient Features of the Scheme:.....	98
More Details:	98
FICCI CSR Award Awarded to JSPL	98
About FICCI CSR Award:.....	99
Categories of the FICCI CSR Award:.....	99
One must know:.....	99
Chennai Spartans Win "Inaugural Pro Volleyball League" Title	99
Details:	99
About Pro Volleyball League:	99
About Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship:	100
IOC suspended All discussions With India	100
Details of the IOC statement:	100
One must know:.....	100
NTCA States that Cheetahs Kept at Nauradehi Sanctuary.....	100
More Details:	100
Sad to know:	101
About the Cheetah Re-introduction Project:.....	101
HP Govt Declares Monkey as Vermin for One Year	101
Details:	101
Meaning of Vermin:	101
2nd Edition of Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan Launched	102
About Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan:	102
About the first edition:	102
WorldClass Initiative Launched by Deloitte in India	102
About the WorldClass initiative:	103

Interesting to know:	103
Afghanistan Creates History in T20 International Score	103
Details:	103
Why is India hosting Afghanistan's home series?	103
UAE Invites India as Guest of Honour for OIC Foreign Ministers Meet.....	104
About UAE's invitation to India:.....	104
Significance of the invitation:.....	104
About the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation:.....	104
One must know:.....	104
New Export Route to India Launched by Afghanistan	105
Details:	105
Significance of Chabahar Port:	105
About India-Afghanistan Trade:.....	105
Interesting to know:	105
Kelly Knight Craft Nominated as the New US Ambassador to the UN	105
Details:	105
What are the functions of the US ambassador to the UN?.....	106
About Kelly Knight Craft:.....	106
CIPET Inaugurated in Tripura	106
About the Central Institute of Plastic Engineering and Technology:.....	106
Functions of the CIPET:.....	106
More about the CIPET:.....	106
National War Memorial inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi.....	107
About the National War Memorial:	107
More Details:	107
Union Minister of Railways launches the 'Rail Drishti Dashboard'	107
About the Rail Drishti Dashboard:	108
Significance of the Rail Drishti Dashboard:.....	108
Govind Prasad Sharma Appointed as the Chairman of NBT	108
About Govind Prasad Sharma:	108
About the National Book Trust:	108
What are the objectives of NBT?	108
To pursue these objectives the NBT publishes:.....	108

More Details:	109
Mahesh Elkunchwar Chosen for META Lifetime Achievement Award	109
About Mahesh Elkunchwar:	109
About META Awards:	109
4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit Held	109
Details:	109
About the Global Digital Health Partnership:	110
MoU Signed Between India and Sweden	110
Details:	110
About the Alliance of Champions:	110
Interesting to know:	110
And The Oscar Goes to.....	110
The Oscar Award list for the year 2019 is listed below:	110
About the Oscar Awards:	111

MONTHLY GK DIGEST: FEBRUARY 2019

BARC INDIA ELECTS PUNIT GOENKA AS ITS NEW CHAIRMAN

- The Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India) has elected Punit Goenka, MD and CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL) as the Chairman.
- Punit Goenka as a founder Chairman of BARC had played a key role in institutionalizing BARC.

ABOUT BROADCAST AUDIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF INDIA (BARC INDIA):

- Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC India) is a collaborative Industry Company founded in 2010 by stakeholder bodies that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.
- The promoters of BARC India are Indian Broadcasting Foundation, Indian Society of Advertisers and Advertising Agencies Association of India.
- BARC India was set up as per guidelines of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.
- BARC India has evolved a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience measurement system on the foundation of robust and future-ready technology backbone.
- Together with the audience measurement system, BARC India provides a suite of Insight products designed for Broadcasters, Advertisers and Agencies.
- The data generated and the insights provided by BARC India aids in making efficient decision making by the stakeholders.

- BARC India analyses the viewership habits of over 197 million TV households (accounting for 836 million TV viewing individuals).
- This makes it the world's largest television audience measurement service.
- BARC India's measurement system is based on the sample of 44000-panel homes.

2019 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE PERIOD TABLE OF CHEMICAL ELEMENTS

- UNESCO has declared 2019 as the International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements to commemorate the 150th birthday of the periodic table of chemical elements.
- The Periodic Table of the Chemical Elements was first published by Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleev in the year 1869.

WHAT IS THE PERIODIC TABLE OF CHEMICAL ELEMENTS?

- The Periodic Table of Chemical Elements is the tabular arrangement of the chemical elements, arranged by atomic number, electron configuration, and recurring chemical properties.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PERIODIC TABLE:

- The seven rows of the table are called as periods and generally accommodate metals on the left and non-metals on the right.
- The columns of the table are called groups and contain elements with similar chemical behaviours.
- The elements from atomic numbers 1 (hydrogen) to 118 (oganesson) have been discovered in nature or synthesized in laboratories.
- The first 98 elements listed in the periodic table occur naturally, though some are found only in trace amounts and a few were discovered in nature only after having first been synthesized.
- Elements from 99 to 118 have only been synthesized in laboratories or nuclear reactors.
- Efforts are on to elements having higher atomic numbers as these elements would begin the eighth row, and theoretical work has been done to suggest possible candidates for this extension.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- To celebrate the International Year of the Period Table of Chemical Elements the UNESCO would be organizing events like online competition to test school students' knowledge of the table, and scientific experiments brought to schools around the world.

MARTYRS DAY CELEBRATED ALL OVER INDIA ON JANUARY 30

- January 30 is celebrated as Martyrs Day to honour the brave martyrs of India who have sacrificed their lives for the country.

WHY INDIA CELEBRATES JANUARY 30 AS MARTYRS DAY?

- January 30 marks the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- On January 30, 1948, at the age of 78, Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation was assassinated by Nathuram Godse.
- Godse held that Gandhiji favoured the political demands of India's Muslims during the partition of India.
- There were warnings about life threats to Gandhiji, Gandhiji refused to toe the government's stand that he required security.
- Gandhiji threatened to leave Delhi if protection was thrust upon him.
- His associates cite that had he accepted security his assassination could have been averted.

HOW IS MARTYRS DAY CELEBRATED?

- On the occasion of Martyrs Day, the President, the Vice President, the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, and the three Service Chiefs gather at Gandhiji's Samadhi at Raj Ghat memorial and lay wreaths.
- Bugles are blown sounding the Last Post.
- A two-minute silence in memory of Indian martyrs is observed across the country at 11 AM and participants hold all-religion prayers and sing tributes in the honour of Martyrs.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- March 23rd which is the death anniversary of Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru and Sukhdev Thapar, is also celebrated as Martyrs Day in the State of Punjab.

PM MODI INAUGURATES NATIONAL SALT SATYAGRAHA MEMORIAL AT DANDI, GUJARAT

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district, Gujarat.

DETAILS ABOUT THE MEMORIAL:

- The memorial is conceived as an experiential journey recreating the spirit and the energy of the 1930 Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi and 80 of his fellow Satyagrahis.
- The memorial takes the visitors step by step events through visualisation to aid them in understanding the methodology of Satyagraha, which finally led to India's Independence from the British colonial rule.
- The Memorial is the project of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and is advised by a High-Level Dandi Memorial Committee (HLDMC) with IIT Bombay as a Design Coordination Agency.

ABOUT SALT SATYAGRAHA:

- From the very beginning of British Rule in India, the salt tax was considered to be a good source of income.
- The beginning was made in the form of 'land rent' and 'transit charges', and in 1762, it was consolidated into duty.

- As a result of the duty, India and in particular Bengal and its surrounding provinces were rendered dependent upon imported salt from Liverpool and elsewhere.
- The indigenous industry oppressed with the burden of extravagant charges was unable to compete with its English rival.
- The salt tax/duties on the annual requirement of a family amounted at one time up to nearly two months' wages of a labourer.
- The Indian National Congress from the very inception opposed the salt tax.
- Nationalist leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji and GK Gokhale had particularly raised their voice against it.
- Gandhiji had begun raising opposition to oppressive duties on common salt right from his student days in London.
- All these culminated in Gandhiji selecting Satyagraha against salt taxes as the key issue in 1930 while leading the civil disobedience movement for India's freedom from the British colonial rule.
- The Salt tax was chosen by Gandhi during the civil disobedience movement because it not only appeared to be basically unjust in itself but also because it symbolised an unpopular, unrepresentative alien government.

UNION MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS CARNOT

PRIZE

- **The Union Minister of Railways and Coal, Piyush Goyal has been awarded the Carnot Prize 2018 for the transformational changes brought by him during his tenure as Union Minister of Power.**
- Accepting the award, Piyush Goyal announced that the Government has embarked on an ambitious programme to ensure 100 per cent electrification of Railway's grid in the next five years.

DETAILS:

- Piyush Goyal during his tenure as Union Minister of Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines, brought in transformational changes in the Power Sector.
- The changes include fast-track electrification of nearly 18,000 villages in some of the most remote and inaccessible parts of the country, rolling out a comprehensive power sector reform plan UDAY, the world's largest LED bulb distribution program, and the world's largest renewable energy expansion program.

ABOUT THE CARNOT PRIZE:

- The Carnot Prize is the annual recognition by the US-based Kleinman Center for Energy Policy for distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice.
- **The prize has been named after French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire, which became the basis for the second law of thermodynamics.**
- Carnot recognized that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development.
- The Carnot Prize is awarded to honour those who have revolutionized our understanding of energy policy.

RBI BRING OUT THREE BANKS FROM THE PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION

FRAMEWORK

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lifted the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework operational curbs on Bank of India (BoI), Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC).

DETAILS:

- These public sector banks are out of the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework.
- This will aid in making marked improvements in the capital positions and asset quality.
- The PCA restrictions were lifted after these banks provided a written commitment that they would comply with the norms of minimum regulatory capital, net NPAs (Non-performing Assets) and leverage ratio on an ongoing basis.
- These Banks have also apprised RBI of the structural and systemic improvements they have put in place.

ABOUT THE PROMPT CORRECTIVE ACTION (PCA) FRAMEWORK:

- Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework has been issued by the RBI to maintain sound financial health of banks.
- The RBI will initiate certain structured and discretionary actions for the bank under the PCA when the Banks breach any of the three key regulatory trigger points:
 - Capital to risk-weighted assets ratio
 - Net non-performing assets
 - Return on assets

AIM OF THE PCA FRAMEWORK:

- The PCA Framework is aimed at nudging the banks to take corrective measures in a timely manner, in order to restore their financial health.

ISRO SELECTS 10 COMPANIES FOR THE LITHIUM-ION CELL TECHNOLOGY

TRANSFER

- ISRO has selected 10 companies for the Lithium-Ion Cell Technology Transfer after the examination of Request for Qualification which contained a brief description of the qualification aspects, technology transfer process, timelines and other relevant details.

FIRMS SELECTED BY ISRO FOR TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ARE:

- Amara Raja Batteries Limited, Chittoor
- Bharat Electronics Limited, Pune
- Carborundum Universal Limited, Kochi
- Exicom Tele-Systems Limited, Gurgaon

- GOCL Corporation Limited, Hyderabad
- Jyoti CNC Automation Limited, Rajkot
- National Aluminium Co Limited, Bhubaneswar
- Sukhbir Agro Energy Limited, New Delhi
- Tata Chemicals Limited, Mumbai
- Thermax Limited, Pune

ABOUT THE LITHIUM-ION CELL TECHNOLOGY:

- **The Lithium-Ion cell technology has been developed by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC).**
- After the successful deployment of indigenous Lithium-Ion batteries in various missions of ISRO, the VSSC will now transfer the technology to the industries to establish production facilities for producing Lithium-Ion cells to cover the entire spectrum of power storage requirements of the country.
- The progress in Li-Ion battery technology research has made it the favourite power source for electric and hybrid electric vehicles owing to its high voltage, high energy density, long life cycle and high storage characteristics.
- **Li-Ion batteries find wide application in electronic gadgets, telecommunication and industrial applications as well as in aerospace.**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GURU PADMASAMBHAVA HELD IN NEW DELHI

- **An International Conference on 8th century Himalayan sage Guru Padmasambhava was held in New Delhi.**
- The conference was organised as part of events to commemorate 50-years of formalization of diplomatic ties between India and Bhutan.

ABOUT GURU PADMASAMBHAVA:

- **Guru Padmasambhava was born in India and travelled all across Himalayan region in the 8th century to spread Buddhism and Buddhist teachings.**
- Guru Padmasambhava is highly revered in Bhutan.
- There is an image or painting of the Guru Padmasambhava in every Bhutanese home or temple.
- **Guru Padmasambhava was also known as Guru Rinpoche is widely venerated as a "second Buddha" by adherents of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, the Himalayan states of India, and elsewhere.**
- Guru Padmasambhava is also considered to be the founder of Nyingma tradition, oldest of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

ABOUT INDIA-BHUTAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS:

- **The diplomatic relations between India and Bhutan were established in 1968.**
- India established a special office of India in Thimphu in 1968.
- Prior to this, Indian diplomatic relations with Bhutan were looked after by Indian Political Officer in Sikkim.
- **The India-Bhutan bilateral relations are governed by the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1949 between the two countries.**

- The treaty was revised in February 2007.
- The India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty together with reflecting the contemporary nature of the relationship between the two countries, lays the foundation for their future development in the 21st century.
- India and Bhutan are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries.

ISRO'S HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT CENTRE INAUGURATED AT ITS HEADQUARTERS IN BENGALURU

- The Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC) which would be the core of the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO's) future manned missions was inaugurated at the ISRO headquarters in Bengaluru.

DETAILS ABOUT THE CENTRE:

- The Human Space Flight Centre will implement the first development flight of Gaganyaan with the support of existing ISRO Centres.
- The Human Space Flight Centre would be responsible for end-to-end mission planning, development of engineering systems for crew survival in space, crew selection and training and also pursue activities for sustained human space flight missions.

ABOUT GAGANYAAN:

- Gaganyaan which is India's first manned space mission has been accorded highest priority by ISRO and the plan is to have the first unmanned mission in December 2020 and second for July 2021.
- The manned mission will happen in December 2021.
- The Gaganyaan project is headed by R. Hutton, who was the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) Director.
- The Gaganyaan project would take the Indian astronauts into space to a height of 350-400 km above the Earth and orbits around the planet for at least a week.
- The Indian astronauts would be conducting experiments in the space.

TAX SLAB FOR ZERO TAX INCREASED TO FIVE LAKH RUPEES IN INTERIM BUDGET 2019

- The Finance Minister has increased the tax slab for Zero Tax to Five Lakh Rupees and the standard deduction introduced in the 2018 budget has been increased to Fifty Thousand Rupees from current Forty Thousand Rupees.

WHAT IS STANDARD DEDUCTION?

- Standard Deduction refers to deduction allowed as per the Income Tax irrespective of the expenses met or the investment made by the individual.

- An individual is not required to disclose any investment proofs or expense bills for this purpose, the Standard Deduction is allowed at a standard rate.

OTHER DETAILS:

- **Additionally, those individuals with gross income up to 6.5 lakh rupees would be exempted from payment of tax if they make investments in provident funds and prescribed equities.**
- The TDS threshold for home rent has been increased to 2.4 lakh from Rs 1.8 lakh.
- Interest accruals up to Rs 40,000 in post offices and banks have been made tax free.
- **The budget also increased the Income-tax relief on notional rent from unsold houses and extended it to 2 years from 1 year.**
- The exemptions under the capital gain tax have been increased to two crores. Capital gains exemption to be available on 2 house properties.
- **IT returns would be processed within 24 hours and returns will be paid immediately.**
- The Minister also announced that within a span of two years all assessment and verification of IT returns will be done electronically by an anonymised.

STARTUP INDIA-WHATSAPP GRAND CHALLENGE ANNOUNCED

- **The Facebook-owned messaging app WhatsApp has announced Startup India-WhatsApp Grand Challenge to encourage entrepreneurs and small businesses in India.**

DETAILS ABOUT THE CHALLENGE:

- **The challenge is being hosted in association with Invest India.**
- **The top 5 winners would receive a cash prize worth \$250,000 (roughly Rs. 1.8 crores).**
- The challenge is aimed at encouraging the entrepreneurs who have innovative ideas, business models that solve for a local India problem, making a large scale socio-economic impact.
- The themes for this Start-up challenge are healthcare, rural economy, financial and digital inclusion, education and citizen safety.
- The applications will be evaluated by an independent evaluation committee and out of which the best 30 ideas will be shortlisted for the subsequent round and further 10 in the following round.
- The selected 10 ideas would participate at the live pitch day during the grand finale and the top 5 would be awarded grants worth \$250,000 (roughly Rs 1.8 crores).

ABOUT INVEST INDIA:

- **Invest India is a 'not for profit' entity established under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 2009.**
- It is a national investment promotion and facilitation agency focussing on sector-specific investor targeting and development of new partnerships to enable sustainable investments in India.

DAC APPROVES ACQUISITION OF 5000 'MILAN-2T ANTI-TANK' MISSILES FROM FRANCE

- The Defence Acquisition Council headed by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has approved the acquisition of the Rs 1,200 crore Milan-2T anti-tank guided missiles from France.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- While the requirement was of 70,000 different types of anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and 850 different launchers, the DAC has approved the purchase 5,000 Milan 2T anti-tank guided missiles from France.

ABOUT THE DEFENCE ACQUISITION COUNCIL (DAC):

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Union Minister of Defence was constituted to ensure a fair defence procurement planning process.
- The Council aims to ensure expeditious procurement of the requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought and time frame prescribed by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

FUNCTIONS OF THE DAC:

- Principle approval authority for 15 Years Long Terms Integrated Perspective Plan for Defence Forces.
- Categorization of the acquisition proposals relating to 'Buy', 'Buy & Make' and 'Make'.
- Addressing issues relating to Single vendor clearance.
- Decision regarding 'offset' provisions in respect of acquisition proposals above Rs. 300 crores.
- Decisions regarding Transfer of Technology under 'Buy & Make' category of acquisition proposals.
- Field Trial evaluation.

ABOUT THE MILAN-2T ANTI-TANK MISSILE:

- Milan is a portable medium-range, anti-tank missile produced by Euromissile, based in Fontenay-aux-Roses in France.
- The Milan ammunitions consist of the missile in a waterproof launch tube.
- While MILAN 2 has a single shaped charge warhead for use against very thick and composite armour, MILAN 2T is armed with a tandem charge for use against reactive armour.

REASON FOR THIS APPROVAL:

- The DAC has given approval for the procurement of Milan-2T Anti-Tank Missile to meet the urgent requirements since the indigenous anti-tank missile Nag being developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is still under development.

AERO INDIA 2019 TO BE HELD AT AIR FORCE STATION AT YELAHANKA IN BENGALURU

- The 12th edition of Aero India, Aero India 2019, will be held at Air Force Station at Yelahanka in Bengaluru from February 20 to 24.
- Aero India 2019 aims to provide a significant platform in bolstering business opportunities in the International aviation sector.
- The Aero India 2019 has a tagline "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities" and has a logo inspired by the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).

ABOUT AERO INDIA 2019:

START-UP DAY

- The Start-up day would witness a start-up showcase event on February 21 to tap into the highly motivated entrepreneurial talent pool of the country.
- The showcase event is aimed at providing the platform for interactions between the domestic and international start-up community, key policymakers in the Indian defence sector, and CEOs of leading Indian and global start-ups.

WOMENS' DAY

- Women's Day would be organised On February 23 to showcase achievements made by women in the aerospace sector on February 23.
- The Women's Day would witness felicitation of women achievers, unveiling of the brochure highlighting achievements of women, experience sharing by leading women in Aero-Space Sector and flying display by women pilots, paratroopers etc.

DRONE OLYMPICS

- Drone Olympics provides an opportunity for all the UAV manufacturing enthusiasts to showcase the capabilities of the Drones they are manufacturing.

TECHNOLOGY DAY/STUDENTS DAY

- Technology Day would be observed on February 22 to provide an opportunity for the students involved in the aerospace sector, both civil and defence to showcase their projects.

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

- A Photography contest would be held on the theme 'Flying Objects'.

WHAT IS AERO INDIA?

- Aero India Exhibition/Show is organised every two years.
- Aero India has carved a niche for itself globally as a premier aerospace exhibition, with eleven successful editions organised since 1996.

- The show aims at giving a fillip to the rapidly growing economy, defence production and participation of private players.

BRITAIN, FRANCE AND GERMANY TO BYPASS US SANCTIONS ON IRAN

- INSTEX- "Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges", is a project of the three governments of Britain, France and Germany to bypass US sanctions on Iran.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT INSTEX:

- INSTEX is a special payment system which will help to save the Iran nuclear deal by allowing Tehran to keep trading with EU companies despite Washington reimposing sanctions.
- INSTEX is registered at Paris with an initial 3,000 Euros in the capital and a supervisory board with members from France and Germany and chaired by Britain.
- INSTEX will support legitimate European trade with Iran, focusing initially on the sectors most essential to the Iranian population such as pharmaceutical, medical devices and agri-food goods.
- INSTEX is primarily aimed at small and medium-sized companies.
- In future, INSTEX will also be opened to other countries wanting to trade with Iran.
- INSTEX to be operational requires Iran to set up a parallel structure of its own.

HOW WOULD INSTEX PROVIDE PROTECTION AGAINST US SANCTIONS?

- INSTEX would receive payments from companies that want to trade with Iran, either by receiving waivers for oil imports or permissible trade in goods like food and medicine.
- As a result, there would be no direct transfer of funds between Iran and European companies.
- This would theoretically insulate firms from U.S. penalties.

COOPERATIVES DEPARTMENT OF MAHARASHTRA TAKES STEPS TO ENHANCE AGRIBUSINESS

- The Cooperatives Department of Maharashtra has decided to appoint managers at six major cities across the country to enhance agribusiness between cooperatives in Maharashtra and other States.

MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT'S OUTLOOK:

- Maharashtra has a surplus of products such as onion, tomato, grapes, pomegranate, mangoes and raisins.
- These are traded in other states and in the process the traders accumulate the huge profits while the farmers are paid low due to the surplus production in the state.
- To bridge the mismatch and ensure a better price for farmers and reduced burden on consumers, the Maharashtra Government would appoint Managers at the cities Guwahati, Kolkata, Chennai, New Delhi, Chandigarh and Jaipur to look for business opportunities in other States.

HOW WILL THE MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT STRENGTHEN THE COOPERATIVES IN THE STATE?

- The Maharashtra Government would strengthen the farmers cooperatives in the state to revive and enhance the collection and trading capabilities of cooperative institutions.
- **The strengthening of cooperatives would be through a two step prolonged strategy:**
 - Old cooperatives, which have been in the State since the 1950s, are being revived with the help of the new strategy and funding from institutions such as the World Bank.
 - Provide an air freight subsidy on a pilot basis to carry high-value agricultural produce to the North East, Sikkim and Jammu & Kashmir, which will build up the appetite and demand from local markets.

BENEFITS:

- **The cooperatives will sell supply fruits and vegetables directly to similar cooperatives institutions in other States.**
- The profits would be retained by the cooperatives owned by the farmers.

INTERIM BUDGET 2019

- **The interim Budget 2019 for the second time has set urged for the Classification of Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THE INTERIM BUDGET 2019:

- **Formation of a committee under the Niti Aayog, which would identify and classify these tribes.**
- **Constitution of a Welfare Board under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the purpose of implementing welfare and development programmes for denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities.**

ABOUT THE EARLIER ATTEMPT FOR CLASSIFICATION:

- **National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic And Semi-Nomadic Tribes headed by Dada Idate had prepared state-wise lists.**
- But this list drew a lot of criticisms including from the researchers who were working with the commission.
- **It was criticised that the Idate commission lacked the scientific data necessary to bring out a comprehensive classification of denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities.**

ABOUT THE VULNERABILITY OF THESE COMMUNITIES:

- **Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities are considered to be the most deprived sections of Indian society.**
- These communities are hard to reach and less visible.
- **The nomadic and semi-nomadic communities move from place to place in search of livelihood.**
- As a result, they are frequently left out.
- **Hence to address the issues related to these communities, there is a need for special attention.**

- The Renke Commission and the Idade Commission have done commendable work in studying the various problems faced by these communities and recommending measures to address the issues more comprehensively.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES PM KISAN SAMMAN NIDHI IN THE INTERIM BUDGET 2019

- The Interim Budget 2019 has announced a farm income support scheme PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PM KISAN SAMMAN NIDHI SCHEME ARE:

- The Centre will transfer Rs 6,000 every year to small and marginal farmers.
- The scheme will cost Rs 75,000-crore to the exchequer.
- The scheme aims to address unrest among cultivators who have suffered due to adverse weather and weak prices.
- Rs 6,000 will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiary farmers in three instalments of Rs 2,000 each.
- The scheme will benefit 120 million farmers with cultivable land of up to 2 hectares.

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE SCHEME:

- The promised transfer of Rs 6,000 every year amounts to an average of Rs 500 per month.
- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) in its rural financial inclusion survey 2015-16 had estimated farmer's average monthly income from cultivation at Rs 3,140 in its rural financial inclusion survey 2015-16.
- Therefore income support of an average of Rs 500 per month comes out to be 16% of a farmer's average monthly income from cultivation.
- For the most marginal farmer with 0.01 hectare, the cash transfer is comparable with the estimated monthly income of Rs 566 from cultivation, but it is relatively less attractive for those with more land.

UNION GOVERNMENT UNVEILS 10 DIMENSIONS OF ITS VISION 2030

- The Union Government in the Interim Budget 2019 unveiled its vision for 2030, listing 10 dimensions to create an India where poverty, malnutrition, littering and illiteracy would be a matter of the past.

ABOUT THE 10 DIMENSIONS OF VISION 2030 LISTED IN THE INTERIM BUDGET 2019:

1. PHYSICAL & SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Building next-generation infrastructure in all sectors comprising roads, railways, seaports, airports and inland waterways together with social infrastructure is the first dimension to provide ease of living.

2. DIGITAL INDIA

- Building a "Digital India" that reaches every corner of the economy and every citizen.

3. CLEAN & GREEN INDIA

- An India that drives electric vehicles, with renewables becoming a major source of energy, bringing down import dependence and increasing energy security for our people is the vision of Clean & Green India.

4. RURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION

- Expanding of rural industrialization using modern industrial technologies, based on the 'Make in India' approach, using grassroot MSMEs and startups across the country.

5. CLEAN RIVERS

- Clean Rivers with safe drinking water to all Indians using micro-irrigation techniques is the fifth dimension.

6. OCEANS & COASTLINE

- Exploitation of the Blue Economy, to ensure better standards and quality of life for a large number of people living in the coastal areas.
- Exploiting the potential of India's long coastline for becoming the strength of the economy.

7. SPACE

- India becoming the launch-pad of satellites for the World and placing an Indian astronaut into space by 2022 (Project Gaganyaan) is the seventh dimension.

8. SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD PRODUCTION

- Attaining self-sufficiency in food and improving agricultural productivity with an emphasis on organic food.

9. HEALTH

- A healthy India, with a distress-free and comprehensive wellness system for all, is the ninth dimension.

10. MINIMUM GOVERNMENT, MAXIMUM GOVERNANCE

- Minimum Government, Maximum Governance with proactive, responsible, friendly bureaucracy and electronic governance is the tenth dimension.

PRADHAN MANTRI SHRAM YOGI MANDHAN SCHEME ANNOUNCED

- The Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal announced the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Mandhan Scheme in the Interim Budget 2019 for workers in the unorganized sector.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SCHEME:

- Under the Scheme, an assured monthly pension of Rs 3,000 per month will be provided to workers in the unorganised sector after 60 years of age.

- To avail of the Scheme, workers will have to contribute a minimal Rs 100 month per month.
- The Scheme is expected to benefit 10 crore workers.
- This new pension Scheme will run alongside the existing Atal Pension Yojana, which guarantees returns post-retirement.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The scheme is touted as to become the world's biggest pension scheme for the unorganized sector in five years.
- The scheme is designed as a tribute to the workers in the unorganized sector who contribute around 50 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

COMMITTEE APPROVES THE APPOINTMENT OF RISHI KUMAR SHUKLA AS CBI DIRECTOR

- IPS officer Rishi Kumar Shukla has been appointed as the chief of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a fixed tenure of two years.
- Rishi Kumar Shukla is currently serving as the chairman of Madhya Pradesh Police Housing Corporation in Bhopal.

DETAILS:

- The appointment of the Rishi Kumar Shukla was approved by the Appointments Committee of the cabinet based on the recommendation of the selection committee headed by the Prime Minister.
- The CBI Director search committee headed by Prime Minister has the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition as members.

SUPREME COURT'S OBSERVATIONS IN THE MATTER:

- The appointment of the CBI director gains significance in the backdrop of comments made by the Supreme Court which had said that it was "averse" to the arrangement of an interim CBI Director and the Centre should "immediately" appoint a regular chief of the probe agency.
- The Supreme Court stated that the post of CBI Director is sensitive and important, and it is not good to keep an interim director of the agency for a longer period.
- Earlier the Supreme Court sought to know why the government has not made the appointment yet.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATED ON FEBRUARY 2ND

- World Wetlands Day was celebrated on February 2nd with the theme of "Wetlands and Climate Change".

DETAILS:

- The theme signifies the importance of healthy and intact wetlands to one of the most pressing challenges of our times, climate change.
- The theme has been chosen to initiate action against the drainage of wetlands.
- The theme "Wetlands and Climate Change" is aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of wetlands, such as swamps, marshes, mangroves or peatlands, to help us cope with and mitigate global warming.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WETLANDS:

- Almost 90% of disasters are water-related and affects 60% of humanity that lives along coastlines by flooding and tsunamis. Wetlands are key to climate change mitigation.
- Wetlands function as a natural and extremely efficient carbon sink. For Example, peatlands which cover only 3% of land mass, absorb and store twice the amount of carbon as all the world's forests combined.
- Wetlands act as a buffer for climate catastrophes that help communities be resilient against the immediate impacts of climate change.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The World Wetlands Day aims to bring attention towards the protection of the fragile wetlands which are threatened by human activity.
- The rate of disappearance of Wetlands is 1% which is at a higher rate than deforestation.
- Wetlands are also exposed to draining and burning for agricultural enterprise and rural development, as well as rising sea levels.

REASON FOR CELEBRATING FEBRUARY 2ND AS THE WORLD WETLAND DAY?

- World Wetlands Day was first celebrated on 2 February 1971 to commemorate the signing of the Convention on Wetlands, called the **Ramsar Convention** at the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- The two-fold objectives of the Ramsar Convention are "**Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Wetlands**" and "**Stop the Encroachment and Loss of Wetlands**".

5 INDIAN RESERVE POLICE BATTALIONS DECIDED TO BE RAISED BY GOVT.

- The Central Government has decided to raise five Indian Reserve Police (IRP) battalions in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) with an aim to provide jobs to local youths.
- These battalions will have 60% reservation to people from border areas of J&K.

DETAILS:

- The five IRP battalions in J&K will have over 5,000 personnel in which 60% reservation will be given to people living in zero to 10 km range from the border.
- Besides, two female battalions comprising 1,000 women personnel will also be created.
- The women battalion will primarily deal with incidents like stone pelting in Kashmir valley and other law and order duties.

- The cost of raising each battalion comes around Rs 61 crore and 75% of it will be provided by Central Government.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) deploys personnel of IRBs in their respective states but they can be deployed in other states too if there is a requirement.
- At present, there are 144 IRBs in various states.
- In addition, four IRBs each are being raised in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 12 in Maoist-hit states besides five battalions in J&K.

ICG COMMISSIONS INTERCEPTOR SHIP ICGS C 439 AT MUMBAI

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) recently commissioned interceptor ship ICGS C 439 at Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- Its induction will help to further enhance operational capabilities to undertake multifarious tasks such as surveillance, interdiction, search and rescue and medical evacuations along western coast.

ABOUT ICGS C 439:

- ICGS C 439 is designed by L&T Marine & Ship Design Division, an in-house facility of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Limited.
- It is 27.4 metres long and has 136 tonnes displacement capacity.
- It is powered by twin water-jet propulsion systems to enable quick response.
- It can achieve maximum speed of 45 knots.
- It has full aluminium-alloy hull for reduced weight.
- It is fitted with state-of-the-art navigation and communication equipment and medium-range armament.
- It is designed to perform coastal surveillance, search and rescue, anti-smuggling and anti-poaching operations in close coast low intensity maritime operations.
- It will be under operational and administrative control of Commander, Coast Guard District Headquarters No.2 (Maharashtra), Mumbai.

5 COUNTRIES ELECTED AS NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS OF UNSC

- United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) elected South Africa, Indonesia, Dominican Republic, Germany and Belgium as non-permanent members of UN Security Council (UNSC).
- They will have two-year term beginning January 1, 2019.

PATTERN FOLLOWED FOR ELECTING THESE MEMBERS:

- Two seats for Group of African states and Group of Asia-Pacific states.
- One for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean states.
- Two seats for Western European and other states.

ABOUT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC):

- UNSC is most powerful and one of the six principal organs of United Nations.
- Under UN Charter it has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

- It has 15 members, including five permanent ones with the power of veto.
- The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, UK and US.
- 10 non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms each.
- Its powers include establishment of peacekeeping operations, establishment of international sanctions, and authorization of military action through UNSC resolutions.
- It is the only UN body with authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

FUNCTIONS OF THE UNSC:

- UNSC is responsible for determining existence of threat against peace and to respond to an act of aggression.
- It is also responsible for finding peaceful means to settle conflict or dispute between states.
- In some cases, it resorts to sanctions or even authorise use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.
- It also recommends to UNGA appointment of UN Secretary General and admission of new members to the UN.

ODI CAPTAIN MITHALI RAJ IS NOW THE FIRST WOMAN CRICKETER TO PLAY 200 ODIs

- India's One-day International (ODI) captain Mithali Raj has become the first woman to play 200 ODI matches with her appearance in the match against New Zealand.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The record for largest number of games played by a Woman Cricketer was already in the name of Mithali Raj.
- Mithali Raj had achieved the milestone when she played her 192 ODI of the career, going past Charlotte Edwards' record of 191 appearances.
- The 36-year-old Mithali Raj is playing the game at the international circuit for almost twenty years and she is also the fourth-highest among the cricketers as a whole, as Mithali is just behind Sachin Tendulkar (463), Sanath Jayasuriya (445) and Javed Miandad (233).

ABOUT MITHALI RAJ:

- Mithali Raj made her ODI debut back on 25 June 1999 against Ireland in Milton Keynes.
- Mithali Raj is the leading run scorer in the ODIs among women with 6622 runs.
- Of the 213 matches India has played since her debut, she has played in all of them barring 13.
- Mithali Raj also holds the record for leading a country in ODIs most number of times with 123 matches.

FEARS OF AN ARMS RACE GROW AS US AND RUSSIA SUSPEND INF TREATY

- After the United States announced its withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, Russia has followed the suit and declared the suspension of the treaty.
- Defence analysts fear about the arms race due to the suspension of the treaty.

ABOUT THE INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY:

- **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty** was signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1987.
- The treaty prohibited the United States and the Soviet Union from possessing, testing and deploying ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles of ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres (300 to 3,400 miles).
- The treaty covered all types of ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles whether their payload is conventional or nuclear.
- The treaty exempted the air-launched and sea-based missile systems in the same range.
- **Under the treaty, both US and Russia had destroyed 846 and 1,846 missiles respectively.**

HOW DID THE INF TREATY PLAYED A DISTINCTLY SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN DIFFUSING TENSIONS OF WAR?

- Due to the limited range, short flight times and unpredictable flight patterns, it was difficult to detect the short and medium ranges missiles.
- As a result, there was a threat of nuclear war in Europe which is sandwiched between Russia and US.
- The missiles were designed chiefly to fight a theatre nuclear war in Europe.
- It exacerbated crisis instability and increased the chances of an accidental nuclear war.
- Hence the destruction of these missiles under the provisions of the INF treaty was highly beneficial towards enhancing both regional and global security.

HOW WOULD THINGS PAN OUT NOW?

- **Both Russia and US would indulge in the development of these short and medium ranges missiles.**
- There could be an arms race with EU joining the race as a third entity.
- **Since these missiles are mobile, hard to detect, nuclear-capable** and can reach European cities they have hardly any warning time at all so they reduce the threshold for any potential use of nuclear weapons in a conflict.
- This would lead to instability and trust deficit.

WORLD CANCER DAY OBSERVED ON FEBRUARY 4TH

- **World Cancer Day is observed every year on February 4th.**
- The day is observed to save millions of preventable deaths each year through education, raising awareness and by pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the deadly disease.

A NEW 3-YEAR CAMPAIGN WITH THE THEME: "I AM AND I WILL":

- **On the World Cancer Day, the Union for International Cancer Control launched a new 3-year campaign with the theme: "I Am and I Will".**
- The campaign is aimed to increase public-facing exposure and engagement to inspire the change that is required to build a cancer-free future for the world.

SHOCKING FACTS:

- The global burden of cancer is estimated to have increased to 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million deaths in 2018.
- Approximately one in five men and one in six women worldwide develop cancer in their lifetime, and one in eight men and one in 11 women die from the disease.
- In India around 2.25 million cases with over 1 lakh new cases being registered every year.
- The disease led to nearly 7 lakh deaths in 2018.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) estimates that India is likely to register over 17 lakh new cases and report over 8 lakh deaths by 2020.
- If some serious interventions are not made to alter the course of the disease, the global burden is expected to rise to close to 30 million new cases by 2040.

ARIBAM SYAM SHARMA DECIDES TO RETURN HIS 2006 PADMA SHRI

AWARD

- Aribam Syam Sharma, a film maker from Manipur has decided to return his 2006 Padma Shri Award in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

REASONS FOR CONTROVERSY AROUND THE BILL:

- The bill allows the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan to apply for Indian citizenship.
- The bill relaxes the 11-year cut off to 6 years, for immigrants of the six religions from the three countries.
- The bill is criticised for being communal as it grants citizenship on the basis of religion.
- It is also argued that the bill is against the basic structure of the constitution as the Supreme Court has upheld secularism as a basic structure of the constitution.
- It is said that the bill also violates Article 14 which promotes equality.

WHY IS THE BILL FACING SO MUCH HEAT IN THE NORTH-EAST?

- The issue of illegal immigrants is a sensitive issue in the North-East.
- Often the states have witnessed clashes and communal riots due to tensions between immigrants and the locals.
- The bill is aimed at providing citizenship to illegal immigrants.
- The North-Eastern states share borders with Bangladesh.
- It is said that due to porous borders between India and Bangladesh, lakhs of illegal immigrants have crossed over to India and are majorly concentrated in these North-Eastern states.
- The North-Eastern States have often witnessed protests seeking identification of these illegal immigrants and deporting them.

- Assam Accord and National Registry of Citizens were aimed at curbing the menace of the illegal immigrants.
- **The people of North East fear that if the bill is implemented their struggle for years would be undermined and there would be a heavy social, economical and political burden on the North-East.**

MEASURES TAKEN BY NTA TO ACQUAINT ASPIRANTS WITH COMPUTER BASED EXAMINATIONS

- **The National Testing Agency (NTA) which is vested with the responsibility of the conduction of competitive exams has taken measures to acquaint aspirants with Computer-Based Examinations.**
- These measures are aimed at ensuring the aspirants especially those from rural areas are not at disadvantage due to the mode of the exam.

ABOUT THE MEASURES:

- **A mobile application has been launched through which students can practice or take mock tests on their smartphones.**
- The National Testing Agency has also launched a network of more than 4,000 Test Practice Centres (TPCs).

ABOUT THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY:

- **National Testing Agency is a premier, specialist, autonomous and self-sustained testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for admission/fellowship in higher educational institutions.**
- The National Testing Agency is entrusted with the responsibility to address the challenge of assessing the competence of candidates through an efficient, transparent and error-free process.

WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY?

- **To identify partner institutions with the necessary infrastructure from the existing schools and higher education institutions to facilitate the conduct of online examinations without adversely impacting their academic routine.**
- **To set-up a question bank for all subjects using modern techniques.**
- To establish a strong R&D culture as well as a pool of experts in different aspects of testing.
- To help individual colleges and universities in the field of testing and to provide training and advisory services to institutions in India.
- To provide quality testing services to the academic institutions in India.
- To develop a state of the art culture of testing in India by using domestic and international expertise. To collaborate with international organizations like ETS to achieve the same.
- To undertake any other examination that is entrusted to it by the Ministries/Departments of Government of India/State Governments.
- To undertake the reforms and training of school boards as well as other bodies where the testing standards should be comparable with the entrance examinations.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The National Testing Agency will be chaired by an eminent educationist and the Governing Council of the National Testing agency is headed by the Secretary, Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Human Resource and Development.
- The National Testing agency is successfully conducting Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) main for undergraduate engineering admissions and National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical admissions.

AZIM PREMJI AWARDED THE ERNST & YOUNG LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

AWARD

- **Azim Premji, Chairman of Wipro Ltd, will be felicitated with the Ernst & Young Lifetime Achievement Award.**
- Ernst & Young, famously known as EY is a multinational professional services firm and is one of the "Big Four" accounting firms.

ABOUT AZIM PREMJI:

- **Azim Premji was born on July 24, 1945, to an affluent Gujarati entrepreneur.**
- **He inherited Wipro, a vegetable oil company at the age of 21 after the sudden demise of his father.**
- Azim Premji was pursuing Electrical Engineering from Stanford University, USA when he took over the reins of his family business in 1966.
- Under his able leadership, Wipro diversified from hydrogenated cooking fats to bakery fats, ethnic ingredient based toiletries, hair care soaps, baby toiletries, lighting products and hydraulic cylinders.
- He led Wipro from a hydrogenated cooking fats company to a pioneer in providing integrated business, technology and process solutions on a global delivery platform.
- **Wipro Technologies is the largest independent R&D service provider in the world and is ranked among the top 100 technology companies globally.**
- **In 2005 Premji was conferred the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan in 2011.**
- Premji has also pledged to donate USD 2 billion for improving school education in India, the first of its kind by any Indian billionaire.

CJI AND ANDHRA PRADESH CM INAUGURATE JUDICIAL COMPLEX AT

AMARAVATI

- **The Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu inaugurated the Judicial Complex in Amaravati.**

DETAILS:

- **The judicial complex will house the interim High Court for Andhra Pradesh.**
- **The Chief Justice of India also laid the foundation stone for the construction of a permanent High Court to be built in Nelapadu of Guntur district.**
- **The construction of new high court was necessitated after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014.**

- The High Court which was common for both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana till 2018 and recently the separate high courts were notified by the union government after the order from the Supreme Court.

ABOUT THE JUDICIAL COMPLEX IN AMRAVATI:

- The Judicial Complex in Amravati was built by Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority within a short span of eight months.
- The total construction cost is estimated around Rs 173 crores.
- As a temporary arrangement, the complex will house the High Court of Andhra Pradesh.
- Once the construction of the new high court at Nelapadu of Guntur district is completed, the complex will house the city civil court.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Originally the first High Court of Andhra Pradesh was inaugurated on July 5, 1954, in Guntur and was moved to Hyderabad only in October 1956.

UK HOME SECRETARY ORDERS EXTRADITION OF FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDER -VIJAY MALLYA TO INDIA

- The UK Home Secretary has ordered the extradition of Vijay Mallya over allegations of £1bn fraud.
- The UK Home Secretary noted that Vijay Mallya, the first to be declared a Fugitive Economic Offender is accused in India of conspiracy to defraud, making false representations and money laundering offences.
- The liquor baron is still defiant and he has said that he would appeal against the extradition.

DETAIL:

- The judge hearing Mallya's extradition request noted that Mallya had misrepresented how loans from Indian banks were used.
- The judge described Mallya as a glamorous, flashy, famous, bejewelled, bodyguarded, ostensibly billionaire playboy who charmed and cajoled these bankers into losing their common sense and persuading them to put their own rules and regulations to one side.
- The Indian investigation agencies allege that Mallya has misled Indian Banks about the fortunes of his failing Kingfisher airline, before laundering the cash to fund his Formula One team and other projects.
- The Enforcement Directorate is investigating the tycoon's £977m debts linked to the airline, which went bust in 2012.

NEGATIVE MARKING IN COMPETITIVE EXAMS RULED OUT BY MADRAS HIGH COURT

- The Madras High Court has ruled against negative marking in competitive examinations saying that they are "bad in law".

OBSERVATIONS THAT THE HONOURABLE MADRAS HIGH COURT MADE:

- The Madras High Court while hearing a petition filed by an IIT JEE aspirant who failed to clear the Mains due to negative marking has made the following observations:
- The Madras High Court has accepted the petitioner's argument that negative marking is not prevailing anywhere else in the world.
- The court said that negative marking acts only as "a bolt in the brain development" of students and prevents them from making intelligent guesses.
- Deducting marks for wrong answers would not in any way help in analysing the intelligence, aptitude or knowledge of the candidates.
- Every candidate could not be expected to know all answers for sure. In such circumstances, the practice of negative marking would hamper brain development and create a fear psychosis among students.
- The court rejected the CBSE counsel's argument that in Indian context the practice is necessary.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The judge stated that "Intelligent guessing is an art. It is very useful in our life. One cannot be sure about all things at all times. An individual will come across a situation where he/she has to decide an issue not merely based on his knowledge but with little guessing. While intelligent guessing requires an amount of prior knowledge on the subject, wild guessing is a decision taken just like that".
- The Madras High Court ruled not to give negative marks for wrong answers and directed the CBSE to communicate the order to the National testing Agency which conducts the JEE (Main) exam.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI) IMPOSES RS 2 CRORE PENALTY ON UCO

BANK

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed Rs 2 crore penalty on UCO Bank for non-compliance of instructions issued by RBI on the collection of account payee instruments and those on frauds-classification and reporting.

ABOUT RBI'S DIRECTIONS ON FRAUD CLASSIFICATION AND REPORTING:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) advises banks from time to time about the major fraud-prone areas and the safeguards necessary for the prevention of frauds.
- RBI also forwards the details of frauds of an ingenious nature not reported earlier so that banks could introduce necessary safeguards by way of appropriate procedures and internal checks.
- It is a continuous process that banks report to the Reserve Bank full information about frauds and the follow-up action taken thereon.

CLASSIFICATION OF FRAUD BASED ON THE PROVISIONS OF THE INDIAN PENAL CODE:

- Misappropriation and criminal breach of trust.

- Fraudulent encashment through forged instruments, manipulation of books of account or through fictitious accounts and conversion of property.
- Unauthorised credit facilities extended for reward or for illegal gratification.
- Negligence and cash shortages.
- Cheating and forgery.
- Irregularities in foreign exchange transactions.
- Any other type of fraud not coming under the specific heads as above.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The UCO Bank which is under the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework of RBI has reported a net loss of Rs 633.88 crore for the first quarter of this financial year.

SBI'S UK HEAD HONOURED WITH THE 'FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON'

AWARD

- The State Bank of India's UK head Sanjiv Chadha has been honoured with the 'Freedom of the City of London' award in recognition of his contribution to promoting the bilateral relations.
- Sanjiv Chadha was nominated for the honour by Lord Mayor of London Peter Estlin and Sheriff Vincent Keaveny.

ABOUT SANJIV CHADHA'S CONTRIBUTIONS:

- Sanjiv Chadha took up the position at the helm of the 98-year-old London office of the State Bank of India in 2014.
- He was instrumental in expanding the bank's presence across the UK, and in boosting wider bilateral ties in financial services.
- Sanjiv Chadha was an excellent voice leading the Indian banking community and overseeing significant investment into the city.

ABOUT FREEDOM OF THE CITY:

- 'Freedom of the City' is an honour bestowed by 'City of London Corporation' upon a valued member of the community, or upon a visiting celebrity or dignitary.
- The genesis of the 'Freedom of the City of London' is traced to the medieval time of around 1237.
- The previous Indian recipient of the honour is Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH NAMED THE NATIONAL AQUATIC ANIMAL OF

THAILAND

- The Government of Thailand has approved the proposal to name the Siamese fighting fish as the National Aquatic Animal.

DETAILS:

- The decision was based on the recommendation of the National Identity Committee of Thailand which promotes Thai cultural pride, forwarded its endorsement of the fighting fish.
- **The Government has approved the proposal owing to the cultural and historical significance of the Siamese fighting fish for Thailand.**
- The Siamese fighting fish was chosen as it's a native, unique species to the Kingdom's waters and an important animal for Thailand's economy.

ABOUT THE SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH:

- **The Siamese fighting fish commonly known as the Betta is a popular fish in the aquarium trade.**
- **The Siamese fighting fish is native to the Mekong basin of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and mostly found at Chao Phraya river in Thailand.**
- The Siamese fighting fish was registered as intangible cultural heritage by the Cultural Ministry in 2013.
- The designation of Siamese fighting fish as Thailand's National Aquatic Animal could help boost both conservation efforts and commercial breeding.
- The IUCN status of the Siamese fighting fish is Vulnerable.

THREATS TO THE SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH:

- Human Intrusions & Disturbances
- Natural System Modifications through the Construction of Dams,
- Presence of Invasive and Other Problematic Species
- Genes & Diseases
- Pollution due to Domestic & Urban Wastewater
- Industrial & Military Effluents and Agricultural & Forestry Effluents.

KNOW INDIA PROGRAMME (KIP) FOR 'DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT'

- **Know India Programme (KIP) is a flagship initiative for Diaspora engagement.**
- **The programme aims to familiarize Indian-origin youth (18-30 years) with their Indian roots and contemporary India.**

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PROGRAMME:

- **Know India Programme is a three-week orientation programme for diaspora youth.**
- **The programme aims to promote awareness on different facets of life in India and the progress made by the country in various fields e.g. economic, industrial, education, science & technology, communication & information Technology and culture.**
- The programme provides a unique forum for students & young professionals of Indian origin to visit India, share their views, expectations & experiences and to develop closer bonds with contemporary India.
- The programme has been in existence since 2003 and is open to PIO youth from all over the world.

- The programme is open to youth of Indian origin (excluding non-resident Indians) with preference to those from Girmitya countries (Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, T&T, Jamaica etc).
- **The programme mandates a minimum qualification of graduation or being enrolled for graduation to be a part of it.**

ASPECTS THAT THE PROGRAMME INCORPORATES TO FAMILIARISE YOUTHS ABOUT INDIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE:

- Understanding of India's political system, economy, society, and developments in various sectors etc.
- Visiting places of historical, cultural, religious importance.
- Familiarisation with art, music and culture of India.
- Visiting industrial sites.
- Visiting a village.
- Interaction with non-profit organizations.
- Meetings with senior leadership/officials in India.
- Visiting a select state in India for 10 days.

TO CURB ACCIDENTS DELHI GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES ZERO FATALITY CORRIDOR

- Delhi Government has launched Zero Fatality Corridor with an aim to curb the number of accidents.
- The announcement was made by the Minister of Transport, Delhi during the opening ceremony of the Road Safety Week.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS RELATED TO THE ZERO FATALITY CORRIDOR:

- A 3 km stretch between Bhalswa chowk and Burari chowk on the outer ring road has been chosen as a case study in this regard.
- The selected stretch has four blackspots namely Burari chowk, Bhalswa chowk, Mukundpur chowk, and Jahangirpuri bus stand.
- This 3 km stretch will be observed for scientific assessment of accidents, road engineering, road-user engagement.
- Experts will also ensure that safety and security measures such as police enforcement and rapid emergency care are made available on this stretch.
- The initiative is a collaborative approach of the transport, health, education, public works department, together with Delhi traffic police to ensure that road fatalities in Delhi are reduced.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Data shows that around 67 fatal road accidents occurred on this road over a span of two years starting 2016.
- The Zero Fatality Corridor project's aim is to reduce the fatalities to near zero levels on this particular stretch.

- After evaluating the impact of the initiative, the government aims to replicate this model in other parts of the city.
- The initiative is part of the plan of action to reduce fatalities due to road crashes by 30 per cent by 2020.

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC) LOWERS REPO RATE BY 25 BASIS

POINTS

- Displaying a major shift in policy, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has lowered the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent in a 4-2 vote.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS POLICY MEET:

- Together with lowering the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent, the policy stance has been changed to neutral from calibrated tightening.
- The shift in stance to neutral provides flexibility to meet growth challenges.
- The change in stance also signals higher chances of more cuts in the coming months if inflation persisted within tolerable limits.
- A large part of the current investment recovery has been driven by government spending and it was necessary to broad base the revival with a private sector boost.

OTHER INTERESTING THINGS THAT CAME OUT OF THIS TIME:

- The limit of collateral free bank loans for farmers increased to Rs 1.6 lakh from Rs 1 lakh.
- Greater operational freedom for banks to offer interest rates to bulk deposits.
- The definition of "bulk deposits" has been increased to Rs 2 crore from Rs 1 crore currently.
- The headline inflation is likely to persist within the RBI's tolerable level of 4 per cent.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- While the decision to change the monetary policy stance was unanimous, Deputy Governor Viral Acharya and another MPC member, Chetan Ghate, voted for status quo in interest rates, while Das and three others voted for a cut in interest rates.

22ND AIIMS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN REWARI DISTRICT IN HARYANA

- The 22nd AIIMS would come up in Manethi village in Rewari district of Haryana.
- The announcement regarding this was made in the Interim Budget 2019.

ABOUT ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS):

- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is an autonomous institution set up under the act of Parliament.
- The All India Institute Of Medical Sciences Act, 1956 provides for the establishment of AIIMS as an Institute of National Importance.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF AIIMS?

- To develop a pattern of teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education in all its branches so as to demonstrate a high standard of medical education to all medical colleges and other allied institutions in India.
- To bring together in one place educational facilities of the highest order for the training of the personnel in all important branches of the health activity.
- To attain self-sufficiency in postgraduate medical education.

WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF AIIMS?

- Undergraduate and postgraduate teaching in medical and related physical biological sciences.
- Nursing and Dental education.
- Innovations in education.
- Producing medical teachers for the country.
- Research in medical and related sciences.
- **Health care:**
 - Preventive, Promotive and Curative
 - Primary, Secondary & Tertiary
- Community-based teaching and research

SC SAYS LINKING OF PAN WITH AADHAAR IS MANDATORY FOR FILING I.T.

RETURNS

- The Supreme Court has upheld section 139AA of the Income Tax Act and said that linking of PAN with Aadhaar is mandatory for the filing of Income Tax returns.

DETAILS:

- The Supreme Court made these observations while hearing an appeal filed by the Centre against a Delhi High Court order allowing two people, Shreya Sen and Jayshree Satpute, to file Income Tax returns for 2018-19 without linking their Aadhaar and PAN numbers.
- Noting that with regard to Assessment Year 2018-19 the two petitioners had filed the Income Tax returns in terms of the orders of the High Court and the assessment has also been completed, Supreme Court said that for the assessment year 2019-20, the income tax return shall be filed in terms of the judgment passed by this court.

WHAT IS SECTION 139AA OF THE INCOME-TAX ACT?

- Section 139AA of the Income-Tax Act 1961 was introduced by the Finance Act, 2017.
- The section makes it mandatory to quote Aadhaar/Enrolment ID of Aadhaar application form, for the filing of return of income as well as in the application form to enrol for PAN.
- The section also specifies that those already in possession of the PAN numbers must mandatorily link their PAN numbers with Aadhaar.

- Failure to do so would result in PAN number becoming invalid.

MACEDONIA SIGNS ACCESSION PAPERS WITH NATO

- Macedonia takes a major step on road to NATO membership.

DETAILS:

- The conflict over the name with Greece had become a damper in its membership to NATO.
- With the conflict with Greece taken to logical end with the conclusion of Prespa Agreement, Macedonia has signed accession papers with NATO.
- **The signing of accession papers allows Macedonia take part in NATO ministerial meetings as an invitee.**
- **To acquire full membership, all 29 current members must ratify the accession protocol.**

ABOUT RUSSIA'S CONCERNS:

- Russia has raised concerns against Macedonia becoming part of NATO.
- Russia has accused NATO of destabilising the Balkans by pushing Macedonia and Montenegro to join NATO.
- Russia sees Balkan nations as its sphere of influence and is against NATO or any other body led by US or EU making inroads to these Balkan countries.
- **NATO's membership provides a guarantee of mutual defence, provides a welcome insurance policy against possible incursions.**
- Russia perceives this as an attempt by the west to contain it by making inroads to the areas which Russia considers its sphere of influence.

ABOUT NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO):

- **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military and political alliance established through the Washington Treaty.**
- NATO aims to promote democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
- Article 5 of the Washington Treaty states that an armed attack against one of the member states would be considered as an attack against all members, and other members would assist the attacked member, with armed forces if necessary.

92 YEARS OLD PRIEST "FATHER FRANOIS LABORDE" CONFERRED WITH LÉGION D'HONNEUR

- **Father Franois Laborde a 92-year-old priest from Bengal was conferred with Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honour) in recognition of his work for specially-abled and destitute children.**

ABOUT FATHER LABORDE:

- Father Laborde has his roots in France and is the citizen of India now.
- Father Laborde has set up an organisation called Howrah South Point which works for the development of specially-abled children, the destitute and the most deprived sections of the society.
- Father Franois Laborde is the third person from the state of West Bengal to have been awarded the Legion of Honor.
- The honour has already been bestowed upon film maestro Satyajit Ray and actor Soumitra Chatterjee.
- Both of them also hail from the state of West Bengal.

ABOUT LÉGION D'HONNEUR (LEGION OF HONOUR):

- Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honour) officially National Order of the Legion of Honour was instituted by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802 as a general military and civil order of merit conferred without regard to birth or religion provided that anyone admitted swears to uphold liberty and equality.
- The honour has been retained by all later French Governments and Regimes.
- It is the highest civilian award given by the French Government for outstanding service and excellence in any field regardless of the nationality of the recipients.

INDIA'S GSAT-31 SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED FROM FRENCH GUIANA

- India's communication satellite GSAT-31 was successfully launched from the spaceport in French Guiana.
- GSAT-31 was launched from the launch vehicle Ariane 5 VA-247.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE GSAT-31:

- GSAT-31 would be placed at Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit.
- GSAT-31 will augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit.
- GSAT-31 derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series and will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites.
- GSAT-31 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, Stock-exchange, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications.
- GSAT-31 will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- After separation from the upper stage of Ariane-5, the two solar arrays of GSAT-31 were automatically deployed in quick succession and ISRO's Master Control Facility at Hassan in Karnataka took over the command and control of GSAT-31.
- ISRO scientists will now undertake phase-wise orbit-raising manoeuvres to place the satellite in Geostationary Orbit (36,000 km above the equator) using its onboard propulsion system.
- The satellite would be then placed in its final orbital configuration.

DEFENDING CHAMPIONS VIDARBHA WIN 85TH RANJI TROPHY TITLE

- Defending champions Vidarbha have won the 85th Ranji Trophy title by defeating Saurashtra by 78 runs in the final.

SCORE CARD OF THE RANJI TROPHY FINAL MATCH:

- Vidarbha:** 312 and 200
- Saurashtra:** 307 and 127

MORE DETAILS:

- Aditya Sarwate of Vidarbha was declared 'Man of the Match'** for his **11 wickets** in the match and 49 runs in Vidarbha's second innings which helped Vidarbha clinching the title for the second time.

ABOUT RANJI TROPHY:

- Ranji Trophy is the Indian domestic first-class cricket championship between teams representing regional and state cricket associations.**
- The championship is named after Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja, who was famously referred to as 'Ranji'.**
- The cricket championship was conceived in July 1934 and the first fixture was held between Madras and Mysore at the Chepauk ground in Madras.
- The Ranji Trophy was also donated by Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji Jadeja.
- Mumbai(Bombay) have won the tournament the most number of times with 41 wins.**
- Vidarbha became the sixth team to successfully defend their title.
- The other sides to win the consecutive titles are Bombay/Mumbai, Maharashtra, Delhi, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

TRUMP NOMINATES DAVID MALPASS FOR THE POST OF PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD BANK

- U.S. President Donald Trump has nominated David Malpass for the post of the President of the World Bank.**

ABOUT DAVIL MALPASS:

- David Malpass had held senior roles in the US Treasury during the Ronald Reagan and George HW Bush administrations.**
- He has also served as the Chief Economist at Bear Stearns Bank.**
- Later he founded research group Encima Global and held a number of directorships at finance firms.
- After the ascent of Trump to the U.S. Presidency, Mr Malpass took up a senior role at the U.S. Treasury and was the undersecretary for international affairs.

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN A WORLD BANK PRESIDENT?

- A proven track record of leadership.

- Experience managing large organizations with international exposure, and a familiarity with the public sector.
- Ability to articulate a clear vision of the Bank's development mission.
- A firm commitment to and appreciation for multilateral cooperation.
- Effective and diplomatic communication skills, impartiality, and objectivity.

OTHER INTERESTING DETAILS:

- **Executive directors of the World Bank can nominate candidates for the post.**
- **The candidate must be citizens of one of the bank's member countries and cannot be a bank governor or executive director.**
- Executive directors are expected to clearly communicate and define the nomination period.
- If there are more than three candidates, there will be a shortlisting process to narrow the field through an informal straw poll.
- The shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by the board and then the board will make a final selection through a majority vote.
- **To win the presidency of the World Bank, a candidate must win approval from the institution's executive board, which has 25 members.**
- The U.S. holds a 16% share of board voting power hence more often it is the U.S.-backed candidate gets elected for the post of the president.

ASSAM GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES 'ARUNDHATI SCHEME'

- The Government of Assam has announced a new scheme called 'Arundhati' to provide gold at free of cost to the brides.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- Under the scheme, the Government of Assam aims to provide 1 Tola Gold, at about Rs 38K as on today, to brides belonging to all such communities of Assam where it is customary to provide gold at the time of the wedding.
- The Government has set aside Rs 300 cr has been for the implementation of the Arundhati Scheme.
- The scheme is named after Arundhati, wife of the great sage Basistha.
- Arundhati is considered as an epitome of chastity and conjugal bliss and the Government to wants to wish the bride with joy and happiness of that of Arundhati.
- **The benefit under Arundhati scheme can be availed upon formal registration of marriages under Special Marriage (Assam) Rules, 1954 & the gold will reach the beneficiaries right in time for the social marriage.**
- **The scheme is limited for economically weaker sections, whose annual income is below Rs 5 lakh.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Gold forms an inherent part of Indian weddings.
- **With the introduction of the Arundhati Scheme, the Government** wants to stand with those fathers who cannot afford to gift a set of gold ornaments to their daughters and would to resort to borrowings and put themselves in the vicious cycle of debt.

AIR INDIA ONE TO GET TWO MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEMS FROM THE US

- The US President has approved the sale of two missile defence systems for Air India One.
- The two missile defence systems- Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCAM) and Self-Protection Suites (SPS) will enhance the security of planes flying the Prime Minister and the President of India.

FEATURES OF THE TWO NEW DEFENSE SYSTEMS:

- LAIRCAM protects large aircrafts from man-portable missiles.
- LAIRCAM system increases crew-warning time, decreases false alarm rates and automatically counters advanced intermediate range missile systems.
- The missile warning subsystem will use multiple sensors to provide full spatial coverage and the counter-measures subsystem will use lasers mounted in pointer-tracker turret assemblies.
- The countermeasure systems will also automatically counter advance intermediate range missile systems with no action required by the crew.
- SPS will also facilitate a more robust capability into areas of increased missile threats.

INSTALLATION OF THESE SYSTEMS:

- These defence systems would be installed on two Boeing 777 Head-of-State aircrafts which carries the President and the Prime Minister.

HELINA 'ANTI-TANK MISSILE' SUCCESSFULLY FLIGHT TESTED IN ODISHA

- The Helicopter-launched anti-tank missile Helina was successfully test fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur in Balasore district of Odisha.

SALIENT FEATURES OF HELINA-ANTI TANK MISSILE:

- Helina is a indigenously designed and built missile system.
- Helina is the air-launched variant of the Nag, a fire-and-forget ATGM with an estimated range of 4 kilometers.
- Helina's range is estimated at between 7 to 8 kilometres.
- Helina is guided by an infrared imaging seeker (IIR) operating in the lock-on before-launch mode and helps in further strengthening the defence capabilities of the country.
- The infrared imaging seeker (IIR) technology is also indigenously developed and has been demonstrated in the NAG anti-tank guided missile system.
- Helina is launched from twin-tube stub wing-mounted launchers on board Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's (HAL) Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) and Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH).

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Helina is one of the most advanced anti-tank weapons in the world.
- The production and induction of the Helina missiles are likely to happen in 2019.

UNIFIED AUTHORITY TO COME UP FOR REGULATING ALL FINANCIAL SERVICES IN IFSCs

- The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved setting up of a Unified Authority for regulating all financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in the country.
- For the setting up of a Unified Regulator, the Union Cabinet has approved the International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019.

WHY IFSCs ARE SET UP?

- IFSCs are set-up to bring back the financial services and transactions that are currently carried out in offshore financial centres by Indian corporate entities and overseas branches or subsidiaries of financial institutions (FIs) to India.
- In order to ensure this, the business and regulatory environment must be comparable to other leading international financial centres in the world like London and Singapore.
- Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSCs are regulated by multiple regulators like the RBI, SEBI and IRDAI respectively.

NEED FOR A UNIFIED FINANCIAL REGULATOR FOR IFSCs:

- For IFSCs to attain its objectives there is a need for inter-regulatory coordination.
- The establishment of a unified financial regulator for IFSCs will result in providing a world-class regulatory environment to market participants from the ease of doing business perspective.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The first IFSC in India was set up at the GIFT City in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

LADAKH WOULD BE THE THIRD ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION OF THE STATE OF J & K

- The Jammu and Kashmir Government ordered the creation of a separate administrative division for Ladakh region.
- It is hailed as a landmark decision by the governor ruled state under President Rule.

ABOUT THE LADAKH ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION:

- The Ladakh Administrative Division would comprise of Leh and Kargil districts and would be headquartered in Leh.
- The Ladakh region was earlier part of the Kashmir division.
- To facilitate the functioning of the Ladakh Administrative Division a divisional commissioner and an inspector general of police would be appointed.

- A committee under the chairmanship of Principal Secretary to government has been formed to identify the posts of divisional level heads of various departments that may be required for the new division; particularly their staffing pattern, roles and responsibilities and proposed location of these offices.
- The local governance in Kargil and Leh was taken care of by the hill development councils.
- The remoteness and geographical isolation of Leh had resulted in the region remained cut off for the developmental activities.
- The administrative division is expected to fasten the pace of the development.

INDIA AND BANGLADESH SIGN MOU FOR TRAINING 1800 BANGLADESH

CIVIL SERVANTS

- During the ongoing visit of the Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, India and Bangladesh signed a MoU for training 1800 Bangladesh Civil Servants.

DETAILS:

- The MoU was signed between India's National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) and the Ministry of Public Administration of Bangladesh.
- The NCGG would be training the Bangladesh Civil Servants for the second time.
- 1500 Bangladesh Civil Servants have already been trained in NCGG under the first MOU signed 5 years ago.
- The civil servants from Bangladesh would be trained at the NCGG an institute under the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG).
- Officers of the rank Additional Deputy Commissioners/ Additional District Magistrates, Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Deputy Director Local Government, Senior Assistant Secretaries, Senior Assistant Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners (Land) and Officers of equivalent rank in the Ministries from Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) cadre would be trained in India.
- The Civil Servants from Bangladesh will be trained in e-Governance and service delivery, public policy and implementation, information technology, decentralization, urban development and planning, Ethics in Administration and challenges in the implementation of SDGs.

ELECTION COMMISSION LAUNCHES VOTER VERIFICATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMME (VVIP)

- The Voter Verification and Information Programme (VVIP) was launched by the Election Commission during the two-day intensive training-cum-workshop on the use of information & communication technology for the conduct of General Elections.

ABOUT C-VIGIL APP:

- During the workshop, training was imparted on the c-VIGIL mobile application.
- The c-VIGIL app provides time-stamped, evidence-based proof of complaints relating to violation of model code of conduct or expenditure limit, complete with live photo/video with auto location data.

ABOUT THE VOTER VERIFICATION AND INFORMATION PROGRAMME (VVIP):

- **The Voter Verification and Information Programme (VVIP) has been launched by the Election Commission to help citizens verify their names in the electoral rolls,** register as new voters, update voter details and make corrections in their voter identity cards ahead of the General Election due in April-May.
- The VVIP service can be availed by the voters through various channels including voter helpline application, voter helpline number 1950 and contact centres in all districts across India.

ABOUT PwD APP:

- During the workshop, the PwD App was also launched.
- **The App is aimed at enabling Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)** to request for new registration, change in address, change in particulars and mark themselves as PwD through the use of the mobile application was also launched.
- **By simply entering their contact details, the booth level officer is assigned to provide them doorstep facility.**
- PwDs can also request for a wheelchair during polling.

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD AS THE MASCOT FOR COP-13 ON MIGRATORY

SPECIES

- **The Union Government has announced the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) as the mascot for the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Convention on the conservation of migratory species (CMS) to be held in Gujarat next year.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The logo, mascot and the website for the 13th Conference of Parties (COP) was launched by the Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Harsh Vardhan.
- **The mascot for the event, Great Indian Bustard has been fondly named as 'Gibi'.**

ABOUT THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF

WILD ANIMALS (CMS):

- **CMS is an international treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).**
- **It is also known as the Bonn Convention.**
- CMS aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- **CMS is only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization** established exclusively for conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- The convention provides a global platform for deliberations on the conservation and sustainable use of migratory wild animals and their habitat.
- The convention was signed in 1979 at Bonn (hence the name Bonn Convention), Germany and entered into force in 1983.

- Its headquarters are in Bonn, Germany.
- Since its entry into force, the membership has grown steadily to include over 120 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

FOUNDATION STONE FOR THE SELA TUNNEL PROJECT IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH LAID BY PM MODI

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the "Sela Tunnel Project" in Arunachal Pradesh across the Sela Pass.

ABOUT SELA PASS:

- Sela Pass is a high-altitude mountain pass located on the border between the Tawang and West Kameng Districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The pass connects Tawang to the rest of India.

FACTS ABOUT THE SELA TUNNEL PROJECT:

- The Sela pass tunnel will be constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- The announcement of the project was done in the Union Budget 2018 by then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.
- Project costs Rs. 687 crore and is expected to be completed in the three years.
- The project involves the construction of a road for a total distance of 12.04 km which consist of two tunnels of 1790 and 475 meters.
- The project once completed will reduce the travelling time from Tezpur to Tawang by more than one hour.
- The project will also aid travellers in by-passing the dangerous snow-covered Sela top at a height of 13,700 feet.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT FOR THE DEFENCE FORCES:

- The Sela tunnel project will provide all-weather connectivity and reduce travelling time.
- This aids the swift and fast movement of army troops in Tawang which is a strategically-located district near the border of China.
- The tunnel will reduce the travel time between the Indian Army's 4 Corps headquarters at Tezpur in Assam and Tawang.
- The tunnel project will also boost the tourism industry and economic activities in the region as well as North-Eastern states.

'WORLD PULSES DAY' CELEBRATED FOR THE FIRST TIME

- February 10th, 2019, was celebrated as the first World Pulses Day.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **The Year 2016 was celebrated as International Year of Pulses** to highlight the contribution of Pulses to sustainable food production and towards food security and nutrition.
- Building on the positive momentum of the International Year of Pulses, the UN General Assembly passed the resolution to celebrate 10 February as World Pulses Day to keep the positive momentum surrounding these healthy, nutritious, protein-rich, nitrogen-fixing legumes alive after the FAO's successful 2016 International Year of Pulses Campaign.

WHAT ARE PULSES?

- **Pulses are a type of leguminous crops that are harvested solely for the dry seed** and does not include crops that are harvested green (e.g. green peas, green beans).
- **Dried beans, lentils and peas are the most commonly known and consumed types of pulses.**
- Pulses include all varieties of dried beans, such as kidney beans, lima beans, butter beans and broad beans.
- **Chickpeas, cowpeas, black-eyed peas and pigeon peas are also pulses, and are all varieties of lentils.**

WHY ARE PULSES IMPORTANT?

NUTRITION

- **Pulses are packed with nutrients and have a high protein content, making them an ideal source** of protein particularly in regions where meat and dairy are not physically or economically accessible.
- Pulses are also low in fat and rich in soluble fibre, which can lower cholesterol and help in the control of blood sugar.
- Pulses also aid in combating obesity.

FOOD SECURITY

- The nitrogen-fixing properties of pulses improve soil fertility, which increases and extends the productivity of the farmland.
- **Pulses, when used for intercropping and as cover crops, promote farm biodiversity and soil biodiversity, while keeping harmful pests and diseases at bay.**
- This enhances food security.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

- Pulses contribute to climate change mitigation by reducing dependence on the synthetic fertilizers used to introduce nitrogen artificially into the soil.
- This reduced use of synthetic fertilizers will reduce greenhouse gas emissions during their production.

DIKKIBANDI STADIUM TO BE REMANED BY MEGHALAYA GOVERNMENT AFTER P.A. SANGMA

- The Government of Meghalaya has decided to rename the Dikkibandi stadium after P.A. Sangma.

DETAILS:

- The decision was made by the state cabinet as per the recommendations made by state naming authority tasked with the job to name roads, and institutions after personalities.
- **Along with the Dikkibandi stadium, a junction leading to AMPT road in Tura have been renamed after P.A. Sangma.**

ABOUT P A SANGMA:

- **Purno Agitok Sangma has served as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chief Minister of Meghalaya.**
- He began his political journey with the Congress party and represented the Tura constituency of Meghalaya in Lok Sabha multiple times.
- P A Sangma served as the Chief Minister of Meghalaya from 1988 to 1990.
- **He formed the Nationalist Congress Party in 1999 along with Sharad Pawar and Tariq Anwar.**
- **He contested the elections for the post of President of India in 2012 and lost the elections to Pranab Mukherjee.**
- **P A Sangma died from cardiac arrest in New Delhi on 4 March 2016 at the age of 68.**

ASCEND 2019 ORGANIZED TO TURN KERALA INTO A TOP INVESTMENT HUB

- **ASCEND 2019 is an ambitious initiative of the Kerala government to position the state as an investment hotspot.**
- Union Minister of Commerce & Industries and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu was the chief guest at the opening ceremony of the day-long conclave, ASCEND 2019.

INTERESTING DETAILS OF ASCEND 2019:

- **ASCEND 2019 aims to make Kerala a top investment destination** and empower entrepreneurs to launch their enterprises in a speedy and hassle-free manner.
- **'Invest Kerala Guide'** - a compendium of administrative and policy reforms was released by the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.
- **Invest Kerala Guide provides a ready reckoner on the immense business opportunities in the state and simplified procedures and protocol in making the investment.**
- The two-day conclave aims to bring into focus governance that is simplified, efficient and transparent and facilitates business and investments by clipping a plethora of irksome bureaucratic procedures.
- **Invest Kerala Portal would be launched to improve the investment ecosystem of the state and help entrepreneurs** from India and abroad to set up a wide array of enterprises and conduct business in a congenial environment.
- The two-day initiative will also display the landmark administrative and policy reforms that have considerably improved Ease of Doing Business in Kerala and raised its profile among both industry leaders and young entrepreneurs for setting up their shops.
- **K-SWIFT (Kerala Single Window Interface for Fast, Transparent Clearances)** and IBPMS (Intelligent Building Plan Management System) will be displayed on the two-day conclave.
- **KSWIFT is an online clearance mechanism designed by the Kerala government** to simplify and speed up the issuance of clearances from Departments/ Agency for launching enterprises in the state.

- The two-day conclave would be attended by the leading lights from industry and businesses.

AIR FORCE TO FORMALLY INDUCT BOEING MANUFACTURED CHINOOK MILITARY HELICOPTERS

- The first batch of four Chinook military helicopters manufactured by the American aerospace major Boeing has arrived at the Mundra port in Gujarat.
- This first batch consignment will be ferried to Chandigarh, where they will be formally inducted into the Indian Air Force in 2019.

ABOUT CHINOOK HELICOPTER:

- Chinook is a multi-role helicopter with vertical-lift platform, which is used for transporting troops, artillery, equipment and fuel.
- Chinook would be deployed for humanitarian and disaster relief operations and in missions such as transportation of relief supplies and mass evacuation of refugees.
- The advanced multi-mission helicopter Chinook will provide the Indian armed forces with unmatched strategic airlift capability across the full spectrum of combat and humanitarian missions.

INDIA'S DEFENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH BOEING:

- India had placed a mega contract to Boeing for the procurement of 22 Apache helicopters and 15 Chinooks for the Indian Air Force in September 2015.
- To deliver on the order, Boeing has strengthened its supply chain with over 160 partners in India.
- Boeing has also planned a joint venture to manufacture fuselages for Apache helicopters and the annual sourcing from India stands at \$1 billion.

SEVENTH ANNUAL WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2019

- The seventh annual World Government Summit is being held in Dubai (UAE).
- The Summit is being attended by 4,000 decision-makers from 140 countries including heads of state, ministers and business leaders.

ROLE OF WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT:

- The World Government Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide.
- It sets the agenda each year for the next generation of governments, focusing on how they can harness innovation and technology to solve universal challenges facing humanity.
- It provides a unique platform to showcase and exchange best practices and smart solutions to the challenges that nations face.

ABOUT THE WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT:

- The World Government Summit is a neutral, non-profit organization at the intersection of governments and innovation.
- The World Government Summit functions as a knowledge exchange platform for leaders in the public and private sectors to convene and collaborate with world-renowned experts to create a positive impact for citizens worldwide.
- The Organisation comprises a wide network of leaders of the public and private sectors and inspires them to think collectively and creatively about disruptive intersections between governments and innovation, with the ultimate goal of promoting development and prosperity.

ABU DHABI INCLUDES HINDI AS THIRD OFFICIAL COURT LANGUAGE

- Abu Dhabi has included Hindi as the third official language to be used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English.
- It is part of the efforts of Abu Dhabi to improve access to justice.

DETAILS:

- The Abu Dhabi Judicial Department (ADJD) has announced that it has extended the adoption of interactive forms of statement of claims filed before courts by including the Hindi language alongside Arabic and English in labour cases.
- The inclusion of Hindi language is aimed at helping Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier, in addition to facilitating registration procedures via unified forms available through the ADJD website.
- The adoption of multilingual interactive forms for claim sheets, grievances and requests aim to promote judicial services in line with the plan Tomorrow 2021 and increase the transparency of litigation procedure.

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UAE:

- The population of UAE is estimated to be around nine million of which 2/3rd are immigrants from foreign countries and the Indian community in the UAE, numbering 2.6 million, constitutes 30 per cent of the total population and is the largest expatriate community in the country.

SARTHI SANDESH VAHINI MISSION INITIATED IN U.P.

- The Sarthi Sandesh Vahini vehicles were flagged off by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- The Uttar Pradesh State Family Welfare Department has initiated the Sarthi Sandesh Vahini mission to spread awareness regarding family planning in urban and rural areas.

DETAILS:

- The Sarthi Sandesh Vahini vehicles will provide family planning information to the viewers through various documentaries and films.

- To ensure the objectives of the mission are accomplished the Uttar Pradesh government will appoint the nodal officers to supervise the campaign and ensure that several targets set by the department including women and child development and education for all, are being fulfilled.

ANOTHER NOTEWORTHY DEVELOPMENT:

- **The Uttar Pradesh Government has also launched the new initiative to eradicate Encephalitis.**
- The mission aims to spread awareness about the disease and provide medical assistance to the needy.

WHAT IS ENCEPHALITIS?

- **Encephalitis is an uncommon but serious condition in which the brain becomes inflamed (swollen).**
- Encephalitis can be life-threatening and requires urgent treatment in hospital.
- The very young and very old are most at risk of Encephalitis.

LOI SIGNED BY INDIA AND NORWAY

- **India and Norway signed a Letter of Intent for establishing the India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative.**
- The letter of intent was signed by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India together with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

DETAILS ABOUT THE INDIA-NORWAY MARINE POLLUTION INITIATIVE:

- **During the visit of the Norwegian Prime Minister's visit to India in January, India and Norway had agreed to work more closely on oceans by signing a MoU and establishing the India-Norway Ocean Dialogue.**
- Both the governments had agreed to share experiences and competence, and collaborate on efforts to develop clean and healthy oceans, sustainable use of ocean resources and growth in the blue economy.
- **The India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative is the first Joint initiative and it takes forward the commitments made under the MoU.**
- The Joint initiative aims to combat marine pollution, which is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INITIATIVE:

- The India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative will support local governments in implementing sustainable waste management practices, develop systems for collecting and analyzing information about sources and scope of marine pollution and improve private sector investment.
- **The initiative will also support beach clean-up efforts, awareness-raising campaigns and pilot project using plastic waste as fuel substitution for coal in cement production and developing frameworks for deposit schemes.**

UNION GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP NATIONAL GAS GRID

- The Union Government has envisaged the development of the National Gas Grid. The government is implementing various projects of about 14,239 Km gas pipelines which would add to the existing 16,788 Km natural gas pipeline.

ROLE OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS REGULATORY BOARD (PNGRB):

- Under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006 Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has been recognised as the authority to grant authorization to the entities for the development of City Gas Distribution (CGD) network in Geographical Areas.
- Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board identifies the geographical areas for authorizing the development of the CGD network in synchronization with the development of natural gas pipeline connectivity/natural gas availability.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL GAS GRID:

- To remove regional imbalance within the country with regard to access for natural gas and provide clean and green fuel throughout the country.
- To connect gas sources to major demand centres and ensure availability of gas to consumers in various sectors.
- Development of City Gas Distribution Networks in various cities for the supply of CNG and PNG.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The National Gas Grid together with providing gas connections to households will provide better infrastructure for automobiles using gas.
- The National Gas Grid will also aid in renewal of the fertilizer sector and also give a boost to the Power and Automotive sector.

SANJAY SUBRAHMANYAM WINS DAN DAVID PRIZE OF ISRAEL FOR 2019

- Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam has won the prestigious Dan David Prize of Israel for the year 2019 for his work on inter-cultural encounters between Asians, Europeans and people of North and South America during the early modern era.
- Sanjay Subrahmanyam shares the award in the category of 'Past Time Dimension' with Prof Kenneth Pomeranz of the University of Chicago.

ABOUT THE DAN DAVID PRIZE:

- The Dan David Prize is a joint international award given by the Dan David Foundation headquartered at Tel Aviv University.
- The award was instituted by late Dan David, an international businessman and philanthropist who envisioned a project that would extend beyond traditional academic categorisations.

CATEGORIES OF DAN DAVID PRIZE:

- Past category is generally drawn from the fields of history, archaeology, palaeontology and biography.
- Present category from arts, media, policy and economics.
- Future category from one of the exact or natural sciences.

CATEGORIES FROM WHICH 2019 AWARDEES WERE CHOSEN:

- **Macrohistory: Past category**
- **Defending Democracy: Present category**
- **Combating Climate Change: Future category**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The award in the "Present" category for "Defending Democracy" has been won by 'Reporters without Borders' and Prof Michael Ignatieff.
- The prize in the "Future" category for "Combating Climate Change" has been won by Christina Figueres, a Costa Rican diplomat.
- **To encourage and foster new generations of scholars, the awardees are required to donate 10 per cent of their prize money towards scholarships for graduate or post-graduate researchers in their respective fields.**

PM MODI INAUGURATED THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE IN JHAJJAR, HARYANA

- Prime Minister, Narendra Modi inaugurated the National Cancer Institute (NIC) at Badhsa in Jhajjar district of Haryana.

DETAILS:

- **It is the first Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Medical College and hospital in North India.**
- It has 510 beds and includes the facilities of surgical oncology, radiation oncology, medical oncology, anaesthesia, palliative care, and nuclear medicine.
- There are 6 existing ESIC medical colleges at Kolkata, Faridabad, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Gulbarga.

ABOUT EMPLOYEES' STATE INSURANCE CORPORATION (ESIC):

- It was established by the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 (ESI Act), Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- It is an autonomous organization.
- **It manages the funds of all employees earning ₹21,000 or less per month.**
- Employees' State Insurance includes self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers.
- ESIC is operating many medical, dental, nursing and paramedical schools in India.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ESIC HOSPITAL?

- **Workers are generally exposed to sickness related to their occupation** and they may even suffer from temporary or permanent disablement etc., which results in loss of their wages.
- **Institutions like this negate the resulting physical or financial distress in such contingencies** and uphold human dignity in times of crises.

MAJOR REASONS FOR CANCER IN HARYANA:

- Rapid Industrialization
- Improper Sanitation
- Excessive use of Fertilizers

INDIA TAKES PART IN MULTI-NATION COBRA GOLD MILITARY EXERCISE IN THAILAND

- **The United States and Thailand are hosting the Multi-Nation Cobra Gold Military Exercise which is taking place in the northern Thai province of Phitsanulok.**
- 10000 personnel, 29 nations are taking part as participants or observers.

ABOUT COBRA GOLD EXERCISE:

- **It is one of the Asia-Pacific region's largest multinational military exercises that is held in Thailand every year.**
- It was first held in 1982 and its headquarters is in Bangkok, Thailand.
- This is a Thai-American initiative with an aim to improve coordination between the armed forces.
- **India joined this exercise for the first time in 2016 while China was admitted for the first time in 2015** but was only allowed to participate in humanitarian assistance training.
- This exercise improved coordination among the military in response to natural disaster. Some of the examples are the Indian Ocean tsunami 2004, 2011 Tōhoku tsunami, Typhoon Haiya etc.
- **This year it is the 38th edition of this exercise** and it will see active participation from Singapore, Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and the United States.
- **The exercise will include three components:**
 - Military field Training
 - Humanitarian Assistance
 - Disaster Relief Training
- **India is participating in this exercise with a 14 member contingent.**

ABOUT THE CITY OF PHITSANULOK:

- It is the capital of Phitsanulok Province and is located in the north of Thailand is on the banks of the Nan river and is one of the oldest cities of Thailand.

PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND UNVEILED LIFE SIZE PORTRAIT OF ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

- President Ram Nath Kovind has unveiled the life size portrait of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the Central Hall of Parliament.

OTHER LEADERS THAT WERE IN ATTENDANCE:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu
- Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan
- Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha- Ghulam Nabi Azad
- Many other Union Ministers

ABOUT FORMER PRIME MINISTER ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:

- Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born on December 25, 1924, in Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.
- He passed away on August 16, 2018.
- He was a member of the Indian Parliament for over four decades.
- He was one of the founding members of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.
- He became the first President of the BJP in 1980.
- He served as the Minister of External Affairs in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Morarji Desai from 26 March 1977 to 28 July 1979.
- He served three terms as the Prime Minister of India:
 - The First term was for a period of 13 days in 1996
 - The Second term was for a period of 13 months from 1998 to 1999
 - The Third one was a full term from 1999 to 2004
- He was the first non-Indian National Congress leader to serve a full-term as the Indian Prime Minister.
- Under his tenure, India had conducted the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998.
- The Kargil War was also fought during his tenure.
- He was awarded the Bharat Ratna Award by then Indian President Pranab Mukherjee in 2015.
- His birthday is observed as the Good Governance Day.
- He is also known for his poetry.
- PM Modi had released a commemorative coin in memory of Mr. Vajpayee on December 24, 2018 on the occasion of his 94th Birthday.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Parliament's Portrait Committee chaired by Sumitra Mahajan decided to install the portrait in a meeting on December 18.
- Portraits of former PMs Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi also adorn the walls of the Central Hall of Parliament.

US CONSIDERING WITHDRAWAL OF ITS GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES FROM INDIA

- The United States is reportedly considering withdrawal of benefits to India under its Generalised System of Preferences amid a widening dispute over trade and investment policies.

DETAILS:

- The US Trade Representative (USTR) is in the process of completing the review of India's status as a GSP beneficiary and an announcement was expected over the next two weeks.
- The withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preferences from India could be the strongest punitive action since President Donald Trump took office in 2017 vowing to reduce the US deficit with large economies.
- The Trump administration has repeatedly called out India for its high tariffs.

ABOUT THE GENERALISED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES:

- Generalised System of Preferences instituted in 1976 under the Trade Act of 1974, is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.

WHAT WILL BE ITS IMPACT ON INDIA?

- The withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preferences from India would result in the elimination of duty-free access for about 2,000 Indian product lines.
- This will hurt small businesses such as jewellery.
- This will adversely affect Indian exports to the US.
- After the withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preferences number of goods qualifying for preferential treatment could be reduced, or the whole programme could be withdrawn

INDIAN ARMY CONDUCTS ANNUAL 'EXERCISE TOPCHI' AT DEOLALI CAMP NEAR NASHIK

- Indian Army proudly showcased its artillery firepower by using Ultra Light Howitzers and indigenous Swathi Weapon Locating Radar at the annual "Exercise Topchi".
- The exercise was held at Deolali Camp near Nashik.
- The aviation and surveillance capabilities were also showcased.

DETAILS ABOUT EXERCISE TOPCHI 2019:

- There were a showcase of display of rockets, missiles, surveillance and target acquisition radars, remotely piloted aircraft and hi-tech equipments in addition to gun fire.
- The precision displayed while delivering the explosives in the target area stunned all those present.

ULTRA LIGHT HOWITZER M777

- It is a towed 155 mm artillery piece that is used by the ground forces of Australia, Canada, India and Saudi Arabia.
- It is manufactured by BAE Systems' Global Combat Systems division (London, England).
- It was inducted in the Indian Army on November 9, 2018.

SWATHI WEAPON LOCATING RADAR

- **Swathi Weapon Locating Radar is a mobile artillery locating phased array radar developed by India.**
- It is a counter-battery radar designed to detect and track incoming artillery and rocket fire to determine the point of origin for Counter-battery fire.
- **It has been developed by DRDO's Bangalore based laboratory, LRDE and the Government owned Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).**

DEOLALI

- **Deolali is a small hill-station in the Nashik district of Maharashtra.**
- It has one of the oldest military centres in India.
- **It was established in 1869 and is situated on the banks of the River Darna.**
- **The prestigious 'School of Artillery' is located in Deolali.**

AFRICAN UNION GETS PRESIDENT OF EGYPT ABDEL-FATTAH EL-SISSI AS NEW CHAIRMAN

- **The President of Egypt Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi took over the chairmanship of African Union from Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.**
- African Union chairman set agendas of issues to be addressed during their tenure of one-year.
- El-Sissi is expected to concentrate on security and financial reform.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN UNION:

- The Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity issued a Declaration, Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of an African Union on 9.9.1999
- The Union was launched on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and was launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa and the African Union replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963.
- The African Union was established for accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalisation.
- **All UN member states based in Africa and on African waters are members of the AU.**

WHAT IS AFRICA DAY?

- Africa Day (formerly African Freedom Day and African Liberation Day) is the annual commemoration of the foundation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now known as the African Union) on 25 May 1963.

GHUMOT TO BE NOTIFIED AS A HERITAGE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF GOA

- The Art and Culture Minister of Goa, Govind Gaude has announced that Ghumot, an indigenous earthen drum will soon be notified as a Heritage Musical Instrument of Goa.

ABOUT GHUMOT:

- Ghumot is an indigenous earthen drum fashioned as a designed clay pot, with the skin of the monitor lizard stretched taut across the pot's mouth, forming a drumhead.
- Ghumot is a percussion instrument widely played during 'Ganesh Chaturthi Aarties'.

WHY WAS GHUMOT BANNED?

- The skin of monitor lizard is one of the key components of the Ghumot.
- Since the monitor lizard was classified as an endangered wildlife species and was listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, Ghumot was banned by the Forest Department of Goa.
- In recent years attempts were made to revive the heritage instrument of Goa by replacing monitor lizard skin with the skin of a she-goat.
- This revival had spiked the interests about the instrument.

AKSHAYA PATRA FOUNDATION'S 3 BILLIONTH MEAL SERVED BY PM MODI IN VRINDAVAN

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi served the three billionth meal of Akshaya Patra Foundation, an NGO that works with the government on Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

DETAILS:

- The Prime Minister served the food to about 20 school children who are the beneficiaries of the mid-day meal scheme at the Vrindavan Chandrodya Mandir campus in the holy city of Vrindavan.
- Prime Minister also unveiled a ceremonial plaque to mark the serving of "3rd Billionth Meal" by Akshaya Patra Foundation.

ABOUT THE AKSHAYA PATRA FOUNDATION:

- Akshaya Patra Foundation is a Bengaluru-based not-for-profit organisation, funded by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).
- Akshaya Patra Foundation is an implementation partner for the government's Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

- Akshaya Patra Foundation has served meals to more than 1.76 million children in twelve states covering 14,702 schools since its inception.
- In the year 2016, Akshaya Patra commemorated the serving of 2 billion cumulative meals in the presence of the then President of India Pranab Mukherjee.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Akshaya Patra Foundation is the world's largest not-for-profit run organisation serving wholesome food to over 1.76 million children every school day from over 14,000 schools across 12 states in India.

RAJASTHAN GOVT. QUASHES MINIMUM EDUCATION CRITERION FOR CIVIC POLLS

- The Legislative Assembly of Rajasthan passed the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2019 and the Rajasthan Municipality (Amendment) Bill, 2019 to end the minimum education criterion for Panchayat and Civic polls candidates.

WHAT WAS THE LAW IN THE PAST?

- As per the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Amendment Bill 2015, candidates were:
 - Required to have passed Class X for contesting municipal elections, Class VIII for contesting Panchayat polls for the post of a Sarpanch, and Class X for contesting Zila Parishad or Panchayat Samiti elections.
 - Construction of toilets in their homes as mandatory for contesting polls to the Panchayati Raj institutions in the state.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Even the Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of a similar law in Haryana which mandated education qualification for candidacy in local polls.
- The Supreme Court had said that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong & good and bad".

WHY HAS THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT SCRAPPED THE CRITERION?

- In the run-up to the assembly elections in 2018, the Congress Party had included in its manifesto that it would abolish the minimum education criterion for Panchayat and Civic polls candidates if it comes to power.
- Defending the bill the government stated in assembly that Sarpanches awarded by President, Vice President were declared ineligible due to the provisions in the previous Act.
- The Act was against the basic tenants of the Constitution and society cannot be divided on the basis of education.
- The government even stated that several cases had come up where people contested the election on the basis of fake certificates.

- The minimum education qualification created two sections in the society and the illiterate people had started feeling inferior.

FEBRUARY 11TH 2019 CELEBRATED AS UNANI DAY

- February 11th every year is observed as the Unani Day.

ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED ON THIS UNANI DAY:

- As part of the Unani Day celebrations, various activities including marathons, writathon, quiz competitions, public health talks, daily health tips for the general public and workshops were organised across the country.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON UNANI MEDICINE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH:

- To commemorate the Unani Day 2019, a two day National Conference on Unani Medicine for Public Health was held in New Delhi.
- The two-day conference had dedicated sessions on lifestyle disorders and their management, regiment therapy, mother and child care, geriatric care, integration and mainstreaming of Unani Medicine in public health and globalisation of Unani Medicine.
- Also, a ceremony was held for the distribution of AYUSH Awards for Unani Medicine during the conference.
- The conference shed light on the important role played by Unani Medicine in public health especially in combating NCDs, lifestyle disorders and various chronic diseases by providing cost-effective Unani treatment and quality products for patient healthcare.

WHY FEBRUARY 11TH IS CELEBRATED AS UNANI DAY?

- February 11th marks the birth anniversary of Hakim Ajmal Khan.
- Hakim Ajmal Khan took great interest in the expansion and development of the native system of Unani medicine and to that end, he built three important three important institutions, the Central College in Delhi, the Hindustani Dawakhana and the Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College Delhi, which expanded research and practice in the field and saved the Unani System of Medicine from extinction in India.
- His efforts infused a new force and life into an otherwise decaying Unani medical system under the British rule.
- In recognition of the contribution of Hakim Ajmal Khan, the Ministry of AYUSH adopted 11th February as Unani Day in 2017.

E-AUSHADHI PORTAL LAUNCHED FOR ONLINE LICENSING OF AYURVEDA & HOMOEOPATHY DRUGS

- Minister of State for AYUSH, Shri Shripad Yesso Naik launched the e-Aushadhi portal for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE E-AUSHADHI PORTAL:

- The new e-portal, e-Aushadhi is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative.
- The portal is intended to bring increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability in the licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs.
- The timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process.
- The portal will aid the licensing authority, manufactures and consumers, as it will provide real-time information of the licensed manufacturers and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances.

UNESCO CELEBRATES WORLD RADIO DAY

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates February 13th as the World Radio Day every year.

DETAILS:

- World Radio Day 2019 was celebrated to highlight the importance of the radio in its search for a more peaceful and tolerant world.
- The World Radio Day 2019 was celebrated with the theme- Dialogue, Tolerance and Peace.
- The theme is selected to provide a platform for dialogue and democratic debate over issues like migration or violence against women which can help to raise awareness among listeners and inspire understanding for new perspectives in paving the way for positive action.

HOW THE CONCEPT OF WORLD RADIO DAY CAME INTO EXISTENCE?

- Spain's Radio Academy in the year 2010, proposed the idea of World Radio Day.
- In the following year, UNESCO declared February 13 as the World Radio day and the first World Radio Day was celebrated in 2012.
- February 13 was chosen because the United Nations Radio, the United Nation's international broadcasting service was established on February 13, 1946.
- Therefore, the World Radio Day commemorates the anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Radio.

AMARAVATI TO HAVE INDIA'S FIRST DISTRICT COOLING SYSTEM

- India's First District cooling system will come up in Amravati, capital of Andhra Pradesh.
- The government of Andhra Pradesh has entered into a 30-year concession with a UAE-based international cooling provider.

WHAT ARE DISTRICT COOLING SYSTEMS?

- **District Cooling Systems produce chilled water, steam or hot water at a central plant and then pipe that energy out (either underground or over rooftops) to buildings for air conditioning, space heating and water heating.**
- As a result, these buildings don't require their own chillers, air conditioners, boilers or furnaces.
- **They are considered to be highly efficient to address each of the challenges like high capital and operating costs, reliability, flexibility and environmental sustainability while meeting their comfort and process cooling and heating needs.**
- District Cooling uses only 50 per cent of primary energy consumption for cooling urban building n compared to other cooling systems.
- This also reduces carbon emissions.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT COOLING SYSTEM AT AMARAVATI:

- District Cooling System at Amaravati is part of Andhra Pradesh Government's vision to create jobs and homes along with a world-class infrastructure at Amaravati.
- **The District Cooling System will meet the cooling requirements for the State's Assembly, High Court, Secretariat and other government buildings that are currently under construction, for which cooling services will commence from early 2021.**

AFTER PULWAMA TERROR ATTACK INDIA WITHDRAWS MFN STATUS GIVEN TO PAKISTAN

- **One day after the Pulwama terror attack on 14th February 2019, India has taken a stern step of withdrawing the Most Favoured Nation or MFN Status of Pakistan.**
- This move would enable India to increase customs duty on goods coming from Pakistan.
- The decision was taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) that took place on 15th February 2019.

ABOUT THE MFN STATUS:

- **The MFN status is given under WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). It is given to an international trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade amongst all the members of WTO.**
- As per the first clause in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a country providing MFN status to another country has to provide concessions, privileges, and immunity in trade agreements.
- **WTO states that if a special status is granted to one trade partner, the country is required to extend it to all members of the WTO without discrimination or any special treatment.**
- An MFN status helps reduce trade barriers and results in a reduction in tariffs especially in customs duty. This in turn strengthens trade-ties between the two countries.
- As India and Pakistan both are members of the WTO, both are required to grant MFN status to each other and other partner countries.

HISTORY OF TRADE & MFN STATUS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN?

- India had granted MFN status to Pakistan in 1996, a year after the formation of WTO but Pakistan hasn't accorded MFN status to India till now.
- The total India-Pakistan trade has increased marginally to \$2.41 billion in 2017-18 as compared to \$ 2.27 billion in 2016-17.
- India had imported goods worth \$488.5 million in 2017-18 and exported goods worth \$ 1.92 billion in that fiscal.
- India's exports mostly include cotton, dyes, chemicals, vegetables and iron and steel; while its imports include fruits, cement, leather, chemicals while its imports include fruits, cement, leather, chemicals and spices.

ABOUT THE PULWAMA TERROR ATTACK:

- 44 CRPF personnel were martyred in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district on 14th February 2019 when a terrorist attacked with an explosive-laden vehicle into one of the buses of the convoy of the security forces.
- Terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed has taken responsibility for the attack.
- There were more than 78 vehicles in the convoy in which 2500 personnels were present.
- This is the worst terror attack since the Uri attack in 2016.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INCREASES MINIMUM SELLING PRICE (MSP) OF SUGAR BY RS 2/KG

- The Central Government has increased the Minimum Selling Price (MSP) of sugar by Rs. 2 per kg to Rs. 31.

WHAT IS MINIMUM SELLING PRICE?

- Minimum Selling Price is the rate below which the mills cannot sell sugar in the open market to wholesalers and bulk consumers like beverage and biscuit makers.

REASON FOR THE PRICE INCREASE:

- The decision to increase the minimum selling price has been taken keeping in mind the debt burden of the industry.
- As per the data provided by the Indian Sugar Mills Association, arrears of sugarcane farmers stood at around Rs. 20,000 crore as of January-end.
- The increase in the Minimum Selling Price is expected to help millers to make the payment to sugarcane farmers.
- The Government is also putting in place a mechanism to ensure the benefit due to the increase in the minimum selling price is passed on to the sugarcane farmers.

OTHER STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO AID THE AILING SUGAR MILLS:

- The Government has taken several other steps to help cash-starved mills clear cane dues like:
 - Increase in import duty on sugar to 100 per cent
 - Scrapping of export duty
 - Creation of buffer stock

- Subsidy for mandatory export of 5 million tonnes in the 2018-19 marketing year

NASA CONCLUDES A 15-YEAR MARS MISSION OPPORTUNITY COME TO AN END

- **The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that its Mars Mission- Opportunity has come to an end as they are unable to restore contact with Mars Rover Opportunity.**
- This marked the conclusion of the 15-year long mission.
- The decision to end the mission was made after all the efforts to restore contact with the Opportunity Mars rover didn't yield desired results.

REASON FOR LOSING CONTACT WITH AN OPPORTUNITY:

- A historic global dust storm reached the location of the Opportunity rover on Mars.
- The storm darkened the skies and cut off of the rover's solar power.
- All the efforts of NASA to restore the rover did not yield positive results.
- Things worsened with the onset of the winter at the location of the Opportunity rover.
- The reduced sunlight and colder temperatures during winter made it unlikely for the recovery of the Opportunity rover.

DETAILS ABOUT THE MISSION:

- **Opportunity was the second of the twin Mars Exploration Rovers to land on Mars in January 2004.**
- **Opportunity landed 90 days after its twin rover Spirit landed.**
- Spirit landed at Gusev Crater and Opportunity landed on the opposite side of Mars at Meridiani Planum.
- NASA expected 90-day lifetimes for the rovers.
- Both Opportunity and Spirit far exceeded their expected lifetime.
- Spirit's mission ended in May 2011 after travelling eight kilometres and Opportunity had logged 45 kilometres before losing contact in June 2018.

SUSHIL CHANDRA APPOINTED AS NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONER

- **President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed Sushil Chandra as the new Election Commissioner.**

DETAILS:

- Sushil Chandra's appointment fills the vacancy caused after the retirement of O.P. Rawat, as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC).
- Sushil Chandra will join other two members of the Commission, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora and Election Commissioner (EC) Ashok Lavasa.
- The appointment was made under the clause (2) of Article 324 of the constitution.

ABOUT CLAUSE (2) OF ARTICLE 324:

- The Election Commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may from time to time fix.
- The appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament be made by the President.
- The President appoints the Election Commissioner based on the recommendations of the cabinet under the Transaction of Business Rules of 1961.

WHO IS SUSHIL CHANDRA?

- Sushil Chandra is currently serving as the chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).
- He is the second Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer to be appointed as the Commission after T.S. Krishnamurthy, who went on to become the CEC in 2004.
- Sushil Chandra is a B. Tech from IIT Roorkee and who also holds a law degree.
- He joined the Revenue Service in 1980.
- He has served as Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals) International Taxation in Delhi, Director of Investigation, Mumbai and Director General Investigation, Gujarat.

INTERNATIONAL HOCKEY FEDERATION (FIH) ANNUAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR

AWARDS

- The International Hockey Federation (FIH) Player of the Year Awards are the annual awards for the best Men's and Women's player in international hockey in a given calendar year as determined by a peer and public vote.
- FIH Player of the Year Awards was established in 1998 and have been awarded annually ever since.

DETAILS OF THE FIH AWARDS 2019:

- **FIH Player of the Year, Men:** Arthur van Doren (Belgium)
- **FIH Player of the Year, Women:** Eva de Goede (Netherlands)
- **FIH Goalkeeper of the Year, Men:** Vincent Vanasch (Belgium)
- **FIH Goalkeeper of the Year, Women:** Maddie Hinch (Great Britain)
- **FIH Rising Star of the Year, Men:** Arthur de Sloover (Belgium).
- **FIH Rising Star of the Year, Women:** Lucina von der Heyde (Argentina)

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HINA JAISWAL BECOMES THE FIRST WOMAN FLIGHT

ENGINEER OF IAF

- Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal made history by breaking the glass ceiling and becoming the first woman flight engineer of IAF which was till now an exclusive man's club.
- The Flight Engineer branch was opened to women officers in 2018.

DETAILS:

- **Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal Commissioned into the IAF's engineering branch in January 2015.**
- She had created history by becoming the first woman candidate to pursue the elite course.
- **Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal will serve at IAF's operational helicopter units and serve in demanding and stressful conditions from the icy heights of the Siachen glacier to the seas of the Andamans.**

WHO IS A FLIGHT ENGINEER?

- A flight engineer is a member of an aircraft's flight crew and requires special skills for constantly monitoring and operating its complex systems.

ABOUT FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HINA JAISWAL:

- **Flight Lieutenant Hina Jaiswal hails from Chandigarh** and has completed her Bachelors of Engineering degree from University Institute of Engineering and Technology (UIET) Panjab University.

20% LIMIT ON INVESTMENTS BY FPIs IN CORPORATE BONDS LIFTED BY RBI

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has withdrawn the earlier order which stipulated a 20% limit on investments by FPIs in Corporate Bonds.**

REASON FOR IMPOSING THE LIMIT AND WITHDRAWING IT:

- During the review of the FPI investment in corporate debt in April 2018, the limit was introduced to incentivize the FPIs to maintain a portfolio of assets.
- However, the market feedback suggested that foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have been constrained by this stipulation.
- As a result, to encourage a wider spectrum of investors to access the Indian corporate debt market, RBI has decided to withdraw the 20% limit on investments by FPIs in Corporate Bonds.

ABOUT FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTMENT (FPI):

- FPI consists of securities and other financial assets passively held by foreign investors.
- FPI does not provide the investor with direct ownership of financial assets.
- In India, FPIs are allowed to invest in various debt market instruments such as government bonds, treasury bills, state development loans (SDLs) and corporate bonds, but with certain restrictions and limits.
- FPI is part of a country's capital account and is listed on its balance of payments (BOP).

FPI vs FDI

FPI:

- FPI allows the investor to purchase stocks, bonds or other financial assets in a foreign country and the investor does not actively manage investments or companies that issue investment.
- Also, the investor does not have control over securities or business.
- FPI is more liquid and less risky than FDI.

FDI:

- In FDI, the investor has a direct business interest in the entity into which the investment is made.
- The investor controls his monetary investments and actively manages the company into which the investments are made.

CHANDRAMOULI RAMANATHAN APPOINTED BY UN AS CONTROLLER &

ASG

- **The United Nations has appointed Indian official Chandramouli Ramanathan to one of the topmost positions in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC).**
- Chandramouli Ramanathan will take over as the Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance in the Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance department from Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas of Uruguay.

ABOUT CHANDRAMOULI RAMANATHAN:

- **Ramanathan has served as the Assistant Auditor General, India (1993-1995), and Director of Accounts for the Auditor General of India (1989-1993).**
- He has also held the post of Deputy Controller, Director of Accounts Division, and Chief of Service, IT Services Division.
- **Since September 2018 he was serving as the Acting Controller along with the post of Assistant Secretary-General for Enterprise Resource Planning which he held since 2016.**
- He has nearly 40 years of executive international experience in diverse organizational settings in finance and budget, management and information technology.

AIMS OF DMSPC:

- The Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC) launched on 1 January 2019 aims to provide strategic policy leadership in all areas of management through a clear, integrated global management strategy and policy framework.
- The Department will represent the Secretary-General in the relevant intergovernmental/interagency bodies and staff-management mechanisms.
- Budgetary and financial reporting, as well as human resources policy and strategy, including conduct and discipline, will be consolidated in DMSPC.

INDIA AND SWEDEN SIGN SECURITY PROTECTION AGREEMENT

- **India and Sweden signed a Security Protection Agreement that will enable the two countries to share classified information with each other.**
- The agreement was signed during the visit of the Indian Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to Sweden.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE AGREEMENT ARE:

- The agreement will regulate how sensitive information is to be handled, processed and protected.
- The pact will provide a framework for greater cooperation on the high end and cutting edge technology and manufacturing.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Indian has proposed a dialogue to enable a greater understanding of the successful model of collaboration between government, industry and academia in building technologically advance ecosystem.
- **India also thanked Swedish PM Lofven for his support to India's bid for the permanent seat in the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) and the multilateral export control regime- Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).**

A LOOK AT RECENT INDIA-SWEDEN TIES:

- In April 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Stockholm and had held a meeting with his Swedish counterpart Stefan Lofven.
- Both the leaders agreed to enhance the cooperation in the field of defence, cyber-security and innovation.
- PM Lofven with his delegation had participated in the 'Make in India' programme in 2016.

RAIGARH MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF CHHATTISGARH WINS THE SWACHHATA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2019

- **The Raigarh Municipal Corporation of Chhattisgarh has won the "Swachhata Excellence awards 2019".**
- The Municipal Corporations of Ambikapur of Chhattisgarh and Kumbakonam of Tamil Nadu have bagged the second and third prizes respectively.

MORE DETAILS:

- A total of 40 awards were distributed to the Area Level Federations (ALFs), City Livelihoods Federations (CLFs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- **These Awards were given by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) as part of the Shehri Samriddhi Utsav.**

A LOOK AT OTHER WINNERS:

- Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has been awarded the first prize for the Million Plus Cities.
- Nagar Palika Parishad of Jashpur Nagar (Chhattisgarh), Malappuram Municipality (Kerala), and Nagar Palika Parishad Surajpur (Chhattisgarh) claimed the prizes in the "Statutory Towns" category.
- From Aspirational Districts, Chas Municipal Corporation (Bokaro district of Jharkhand) has been awarded a consolation prize.

ABOUT SHEHRI SAMRIDDHI UTSAV:

- The Shehri Samridhi Utsav was organised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) from 1st - 15th February 2019.
- A number of activities and events were organized at the City, State and National level as part of the initiative which aimed at extending the outreach of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) to the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable by showcasing its initiatives and facilitating access of SHG members to the other government schemes.

ABOUT SWACHHATA EXCELLENCE AWARDS:

- Swachhata Excellence Awards were instituted by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in 2017, to encourage Area Level Federations (ALFs) of SHGs formed under DAY-NULM, for their initiatives to make their communities Swachh and help their cities achieve the outcomes of Swachha Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U).
- The City Swachhata Livelihoods Awards for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) was introduced this year for the ULBs for creating an enabling environment for dignified livelihoods in the sanitation sector.

NASA WILL LAUNCH SPHEREx MISSION

- NASA is launching an ambitious new mission SPHEREx to map the entire sky in order to understand the origins of the universe.
- The Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx) mission will launch in 2023 and is planned to last for two years, surveying hundreds of millions of galaxies both close to us and far away.

ABOUT THE SPHEREx MISSION:

- SPHEREx will use optical and near-infrared light to survey the sky, capturing data on over 300 million galaxies and the more than 100 million stars within our own galaxy.
- Its primary goal is to learn about how our universe evolved and how common the essential ingredients for life are in planetary systems in our galaxy.
- It will map the entire sky every six months to create a map in 96 color bands, and will be searching for water and organic molecules like methanol or acetone in regions where stars and being born and new planets are forming.
- A further function of SPHEREx will be to identify targets which can be studied in more detail by future missions such as the long-awaited James Webb Space Telescope, which will be the world's most powerful telescope when it launches - 100 times as powerful as Hubble.
- The cost of the SPHEREx project is a hefty \$242 million, which does not include launch costs.

US PRESIDENT DECLARES NATIONAL EMERGENCY TO FUND US-MEXICO

BORDER WALL

- US President Donald Trump has declared a National Emergency to fund the US-Mexico border wall without Congressional approval.
- This step has been described by the Democrats as unconstitutional and they have vowed to challenge it legally.

ABOUT THE PROVISION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY IN THE USA:

- The United States can be subjected to more than 30 National Emergencies and can be declared for various reasons.
- The National Emergencies Act (NEA) 1976 formalizes the emergencies powers of the President.
- The Act empowers the President to activate special powers during a crisis but imposes certain procedural formalities when invoking such powers.

HISTORY OF EMERGENCIES IN THE USA:

- Since 1976, Presidents have declared at least 58 states of emergency.
- Most of them were under the International Economic Emergency Powers Act which allows the President to impose economic sanctions.

REASONS FOR PRESIDENT TRUMP DECLARING NATIONAL EMERGENCY:

- President Trump had promised to construct a wall along the USA-Mexico border to stop illegal migration if voted to power.
- This requires fencing of 322 km which costs about \$ 5.7 billion.
- The proposal was rejected by the US Congress and the country went into a 35-day partial government shutdown.
- However, Congress passed a compromise bill providing President Trump with a mere \$1.4 billion for a barrier along 90 kilometres of the border.
- The declaration of the National emergency by President Trump would enable him to divert money from elsewhere from the federal budget, including funds for the U.S. military for the purpose of the construction of the wall along the border.

CONSEQUENCE OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY:

- President Trump is expected to face many legal and political challenges.
- Two lawsuits have already been filed against the National Emergency.
- US Congress can also terminate a declared emergency by passing a joint resolution which is a difficult task.
- The Democrats in power at the House of Representatives will have to convince the Republicans who control the Senate to join them in blocking the National Emergency.
- Then they would have to get a signature from the President himself who has declared the emergency.

INFOSYS LAUNCHES INFYTQ APP FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

- IT giant, Infosys has launched the app InfyTQ to offer learning and engagement experiences for engineering students.

DETAILS:

- The online free platform InfyTQ is open to all engineering students in their third and fourth year.

- InfyTQ encourages holistic development by imparting technical as well as professional skills and helps them become industry ready.

SALIENT FEATURES OF INFYTQ:

- **InfyTQ which is available on both mobile and desktop is equipped with a plethora of content, courses and news to establish talent readiness at an industry level through online assessments and certification.**
- InfyTQ will benefit students by enabling a process of continuous learning through a continuous transfer of digital skills and expertise from the Infosys innovation ecosystem.
- Through courses centred around conceptual and practical aspects of technology, InfyTQ will help students receive a thorough understanding of the fundamental building blocks which includes extensive hands-on learning to aid the intelligent application of concepts in the real world.
- **InfyTQ will offer advanced learning materials and enable virtual programming environments for certain sets of students to further hone their technical skills.**
- **The courses will also help students in navigating the art of effective contextual response, inter-personal relationships, communication and email, etiquette among others.**
- InfyTQ will also assist students to stay connected with the organization, keep up with the latest happenings and familiarize themselves with Infosys culture and value system.
- The employability of the Indian Engineering students has always put into question. The InfyTQ is a step forward in building the employability skills the Indian Engineering students.

INDIAN AIRFORCE DISPLAYS ITS MIGHT IN EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI- 2019

- **A mega exercise, EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019 involving 140 fighter jets and attack helicopters, in a firepower demonstration was held close to the border with Pakistan at Pokhran in Rajasthan.**

ABOUT EXERCISE VAYU SHAKTI-2019:

- The IAF showcased firepower capability of indigenously-developed platforms like Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and efficacy of Akash surface-to-air missile and Astra air-to-air missile.
- **For the first time, the ALH and the Akash were deployed in a military exercise.**
- A total of 137 aircraft including Sukhoi-30s, Mirage 2000s, Jaguars, Mig-21 Bison, Mig-27, Mig-29, IL78, Hercules and AN-32 aircraft participated in this mega exercise.

ABOUT EXERCISES VAYU SHAKTI AND GAGAN SHAKTI:

- Vayu Shakti and Gagan Shakti are two important exercises held by Indian Airforce.
- Exercise Vayu Shakti demonstrates the IAF's ability to strike targets on the ground such as enemy convoys and tanks, radar stations, railway yards and military headquarters.
- **The other important dimension of air power, air-to-air combat is out into display at another exercise of IAF called Gagan Shakti.**

WEST INDIES' EXPLOSIVE BATSMAN CHRIS GAYLE ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM ODIs

- West Indies star batsman Chris Gayle has announced his retirement from the ODI format after the 2019 World Cup.

ABOUT CHRIS GAYLE:

- Chris Gayle has played 284 ODIs in his 19-year long career.
- He has scored 9,727 runs at an average of 37.12
- He has scored 49 fifties and 23 centuries at a strike rate of 85.52.
- The explosive batsman is the second-leading ODI run scorer just behind the legendary Brian Lara.
- He holds the record for most centuries (23) by a West Indian in the ODI format.
- He is the only West Indian player to score a double ton and the first to score at a World Cup.
- Gayle has been included in the team for the up-coming ODI Series against England. Last time he featured in the national team was in July 2018 against Bangladesh.

ABOUT ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP 2019:

- The ICC Cricket World Cup is the international championship of One Day International cricket.
- The tournament is held every four years and is organized by the International Cricket Council or the ICC.
- The 2019 Cricket World Cup will be the 12th edition and is scheduled to be held in England and Wales from 30th May to 14th July 2019.
- The last World Cup was held in 2015 in Australia and New Zealand.
- Australia is the defending Champion of the trophy.

BELGIUM'S ELISE MERTENS WINS QATAR OPEN 2019

- Belgium's Elise Mertens has claimed the biggest title of her career by beating top seed Simona Halep of Romania 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 to win the Qatar Open.
- The final was played on 16th February 2019 in Doha.

ABOUT ELISE MERTENS:

- Currently ranked 21 in the world rankings, Ms. Mertens has won five singles and six doubles WTA titles as well as 24 ITF titles to date.
- This is her biggest tour title.
- She overcame a lengthy medical time-out for a back issue in the first set; lost 18 points in a row at one stage in the second set, but then came back strong to finally win the title.

ABOUT THE QATAR OPEN 2019:

- The Qatar Open is a professional tennis tournament played on outdoor hard courts and is part of the ATP World Tour 250 series of the Association of Tennis Professionals World Tour.
- It is held annually at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Complex in Doha, Qatar, since 1993.
- In the 2019 edition, the Men's Singles was won by R. Bautista Agut of Spain by beating T. Berdych of Czechoslovakia.

IRAN UNVEILS NEW DOMESTICALLY PRODUCED 'FATEH' SUBMARINE

- The Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has unveiled a state-of-the-art domestically produced submarine called 'Fateh' which is capable of firing cruise missiles.
- The launch has gained significance due to the skewed relations with the USA.

ABOUT THE FATEH SUBMARINE:

- The launch was held in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas.
- Fateh, which means 'Conqueror' in Farsi (Persian language) is Iran's first submarine in the semi-heavy category.
- It fills a gap between the light Ghadir-class and the heavy Kilo-class submarines that Iran possesses.
- The underwater-vessel weighs nearly 600 tonnes and is equipped with torpedoes and naval mines in addition to cruise missiles.
- The submarine can operate more than 200 metres below sea level for up to 35 days.
- It has subsurface-to-surface missiles with a range of about 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles), making it capable in reaching Israel and U.S. military bases in the region.
- The launch is one of the most important projects Iran's military have undertaken in the last 40 years mostly because of its vertical launching system.

RISING GLOBAL TENSIONS:

- Iran has been aggressively launching new weapons in the recent few months.
- On 2nd February 2019, the day of the 40th Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, they successfully test-fired the Hoveizeh cruise missile, with a range of up to 1,350km.
- Again on 7th February, they test-fired a new surface-to-surface ballistic missile with a range of 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) called the Dezful.
- This aggressive weaponisation by Iran and the withdrawal of the USA from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA on May 8, 2018, is fuelling the global tensions.

ABOUT JCPOA:

- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal or Iran deal, is an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program reached in Vienna on 14 July 2015 between Iran, the P5+1 (USA, UK, China, Russia, France and Germany), and the European Union.
- Under this agreement, Iran agreed to reduce its medium-enriched Uranium stockpile and reduce the number of Uranium centrifuges in the coming 13 years.
- Iran also agreed to give regular access to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to their nuclear facilities.
- In return, the economic and nuclear sanctions on Iran were lifted by the USA, EU and the United Nations.

INDIA AND ARGENTINA SIGN MoU FOR CO-OPERATION IN NUCLEAR ENERGY

- During the visit of Argentine President Mauricio Macri, Argentina has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation in the sector of nuclear energy.
- The MoU signed was signed between the Department of Atomic Energy, India and National Atomic Energy Commission, Argentina.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE MoU:

- Argentina has expertise in building small-capacity reactors and it is looking to work with India in some third country in tripartite projects.
- The MoU for cooperation within the framework of Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership would bolster institutional linkages in civil nuclear research, development and capacity building.
- The MoU will aid in enhancing and exploring cooperative ventures in the area of nuclear power and its societal uses in health, agriculture, industrial application, training and capacity building.

ABOUT THE NUCLEAR TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND ARGENTINA:

- In the year 2010 India and Argentina had signed an agreement for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- INVAP which is an Argentinean Company is working on the Fission Molly Project to build a molybdenum plant in Mumbai.
- The plant would primarily focus on creating isotopes.
- Argentina is also an exporter of some nuclear components used in Indian power reactors.

DR. G. C ANUPAMA BECOMES THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF ASI

- Dr. G. C Anupama has been elected President of the Astronomical Society of India (ASI).
- Dr G C Anupama was elected to the post in the ASI Executive Council elections for triennium 2019-22.
- She has become the first woman to head the prime association of professional astronomers in the country.

ABOUT DR. G. C ANUPAMA:

- Dr. G. C Anupama at present is the Dean and Senior Professor at the Bengaluru based Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA).
- She did her PhD from IIA Bangalore and her post-doctoral work at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) at Pune.
- She has been serving as a faculty at IIA Bangalore since 1994.
- She is also the recipient of the Sir C V Raman award for young scientists in 2000.
- Dr. G. C Anupama was the Project in Charge for the design and establishment of the Himalayan Telescope at Leh in Ladakh and she is also part of the Indian core team which is part of the international team engaged in establishing the thirty meter telescope (TMT) at cost of over USD 1 billion in the USA (Hawaii).

ABOUT THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF INDIA:

- Astronomical Society of India is the prime association of professional astronomers in India and has close to 1,000 members.
- **The objectives of the Astronomical Society of India include the promotion of Astronomy and related branches of science in India.**
- It organizes scientific meetings and supports the popularisation of Astronomy and other similar activities.

79TH INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS TO BE HELD AT BARKATULLAH

UNIVERSITY, BHOPAL

- The 79th Indian History Congress (IHC) will be held at Barkatullah University in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh from February 26.

DETAILS:

- Earlier the 79th Indian History Congress was supposed to be held at Pune but was cancelled citing financial constraints to host the congress.
- The Indian History Congress will be held at Madhya Pradesh for the second time.
- Earlier it was held at 2011.
- Over 1,000 delegates including prominent historians are expected to participate in the IHC in Bhopal.

ABOUT THE INDIAN HISTORY CONGRESS:

- Indian History Congress was established in 1935 and it is the largest professional and academic body of Indian historians with over 10,000 members.
- The primary objective of Indian History Congress is the "Promotion and Encouragement of the Scientific Study of Indian history".
- **The Indian History Congress holds annual sessions on five sections namely:**
 - Ancient India
 - Medieval India
 - Modern India
 - History of Countries other than India
 - Archaeology

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Indian History Congress stands for collaboration with historians throughout the world and promotes the study in India of the history of other countries.

GOVERNMENT TO GET Rs 28,000 CRORE AS INTERIM DIVIDEND FROM RBI

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will transfer Rs 28,000 crore as Interim Dividend to the Government.**

DETAILS:

- **RBI had already transferred Rs 40,000 crore to the Government in August 2018 and with the additional 28,000 the Government would receive a total of Rs 68,000 crore from the Central Bank in the current fiscal.**
- This dividend of Rs 68000 will be the highest receipt for the Government from RBI in a single financial year.
- It exceeds the Rs 65,896 crore the Government received in FY16 and Rs 40,659 crore in FY18.
- RBI follows a July-June financial year and usually distributes the dividend in August after annual accounts are finalised.
- RBI is providing the interim dividend for the second consecutive year.
- The RBI had paid Rs 10,000 crore interim dividend in March last year taking the total dividend to Rs 40,659 crore for the year.
- **The interim dividend by RBI will help the Government to meet its revised budget estimates** that include an allocation for the first-ever income transfer to farmers and to improve the fiscal position ahead of the general elections in 2019.

TUSSLE OVER DIVIDEND:

- **The RBI and the Central Government were at loggerheads over the issue of payment of dividends.**
- The Government had calculated the profit retained by RBI toward risks and reserves in FY17 and FY18 amounting to Rs 27,380 crore and had wanted this transferred to it.
- The Government had asked for an interim surplus transfer as well as the amount retained by the RBI from surpluses of the previous two years.
- **To address the issues related to the transfer of dividend comprehensively a committee had been set up RBI under former Reserve Bank of India Governor Bimal Jalan.**

112 HELPLINE UNDER THE ERSS LAUNCHED IN 16 STATES AND UTs

- **The 112 helpline which was earlier launched in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland was launched in 16 states and UTs by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh under the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS).**
- The 16 states and Union Territories where the helpline was launched were Andhra Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, Andaman, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Jammu & Kashmir.

ABOUT THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE SUPPORT SYSTEM (ERSS):

- **The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) integrates police (100), fire (101) and women (1090) helpline numbers into a single 112 helpline number and the process is on to integrate the health emergency number (108) soon.**
- To access the ERSS, a person can dial 112 on a phone.
- **The person can also press the power button of a smartphone three times quickly to send a panic call to the Emergency Response Centre or long press the '5' or '9' key to activate the panic call from the normal phone.**

- The ERSS can also be accessed through '112' India mobile app, which is available free on Google Play Store and Apple Store or log onto the ERSS website for the respective state and send an emergency email or SOS alert to State Emergency Response Centre.

ODISHA GOVT. LAUNCHED KALIA CHHATRA BRUTI SCHOLARSHIP

- The Government of Odisha has launched the KALIA Chhatra Bruti scholarship for the children of farmers.
- The scholarship is under the KALIA, Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation, a scheme for financing farmers in Odisha.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP:

- Students should be the children of KALIA beneficiaries.
- They should be studying in government professional colleges on merit.

FEATURES OF KRUSHAK ASSISTANCE FOR LIVELIHOOD AND INCOME

AUGMENTATION:

- Under the Scheme, Odisha would spend Rs 10,180 crore over three years until 2020-21 in providing financial assistance to cultivators and landless agricultural labourers benefitting 92% of the cultivators in the state and including every category from big farmers to landless cultivators.
- The Government would provide Rs 10,000 per family as assistance for cultivation, Rs 5,000 each in the Kharif and Rabi seasons, for five cropping seasons between 2018-19 and 2021-22.
- The financial assistance under the scheme is not linked to the quantum of land owned.
- The scheme also targets landless households, specifically SC and ST families; they will be supported with a unit cost of Rs 12,500 for activities like goat rearing, mushroom cultivation, beekeeping, poultry farming and fishery.
- The Scheme also provides a life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh and additional personal accident coverage of the same amount for 57 lakh households.
- The Scheme also proposes interest-free crop loans up to Rs 50,000.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- KALIA scheme was introduced by the Government of Odisha as an alternative to the demand of farm loan waiver.
- KALIA scheme strives to target rural activities as a whole by supporting farming on a small scale, sharecropping, fishing and animal herding which doesn't get covered under loan waiver schemes.

GOVT. CLEARS REGIONAL RAPID TRANSPORT SYSTEM (RRTS) ON DELHI-GHAZIABAD-MEERUT ROUTE

- The Union Government has cleared the construction of Rs 30,274 crore Regional Rapid Transport System (RRTS) to connect Delhi with Meerut through Ghaziabad.

DETAILS:

- The RRTS would enable to cover the 82 kilometre-stretch in less than 60 minutes by high-speed and green public transit.
- The project would be undertaken by a Special Purpose Vehicle of the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) as joint ownership of the Centre and State Governments with equal contribution.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL RAPID TRANSPORT SYSTEM (RRTS):

- Regional Rapid Transport System (RRTS) is a rail-based high-speed regional transit system.
- RRTS will be implemented for the first time in India in the New Delhi-Meerut stretch.
- It aims to provide the fastest, comfortable and safest mode of commuter transport in the National Capital Region (NCR).
- Of the total 82.15 Kms stretch 68.03 kilometers would be elevated and 14.12 km would be underground.

BENEFITS OF RRTS:

- The RRTS trains will reduce pollution and road congestion taking more than one lakh private vehicles off-road.
- Provides efficient regional connectivity.
- High speed mobility will also drive balanced socio-economic growth with increased economic activities and will improve the quality of life of citizens.
- 18 kilometers stretch between Modipuram and Meerut South stations on the RRTS infrastructure will meet the local mobility needs of citizens of Meerut.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor is first of the three prioritized corridors planned for implementation in Phase-1 and other two are Delhi-Gurugram-Alwar and Delhi-Panipat Corridors.

KUSUM SCHEME APPROVED BY CCEA

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the launch of KUSUM, Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan scheme.
- The scheme aims to provide financial and water security to farmers through harnessing solar energy capacities of 25.75 gigawatts (GW) by 2022.

THREE COMPONENTS OF THE SCHEME:

- 10,000 megawatt (MW) of decentralised ground mounted grid-connected renewable power plants (Component-A).
- Installation of 17.50 lakh standalone solar powered agriculture pumps (Component-B).
- Solarisation of 10 lakh grid-connected solar powered agriculture pumps (Component-C).

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

COMPONENT-A

- Renewable power plants of capacity 500 kilowatts (kW) to 2 MW will be set up by individual farmers, cooperatives, panchayats, or farmer producer organisations (FPO) on their barren or cultivable lands.
- The power generated will be purchased by the distribution companies (Discoms) at tariffs determined by respective state electricity regulatory commissions (SERC).
- The scheme will open a stable and continuous source of income to the rural landowners.
- Performance-based incentives at Rs 0.40 per unit for five years will be provided to Discoms.

COMPONENT-B

- Individual farmers will be supported in installing standalone solar pumps of capacity up to 7.5 horsepower (HP).
- Solar PV capacity in kW equal to the pump capacity in HP is allowed under the scheme.

COMPONENT-C

- Individual farmers will be supported to solarise pumps of capacity up to 7.5 HP.
- The farmer will be able to use the generated energy to meet the irrigation needs and the excess available energy will be sold to Discom.
- This creates an avenue for extra income to the farmers, and for the states to meet their renewable purchase obligation (RPO) targets.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **The scheme will have a substantial environmental impact in terms of savings of CO2 emissions.**
- It is estimated that three components of the scheme combined together would result in savings of about 27 million tonnes of CO2 emission per annum.

LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS AWARDS 2019

- The Laureus World Sports Awards 2019 were presented on 18 February 2019 to honour the greatest sporting achievements of 2018 and celebrate the power of sport to change the world.

AWARDEES OF LAUREUS WORLD SPORTS AWARDS 2019:

- **Sportsman of the Year:** Novak Djokovic, (Serbia) Tennis
- **Sportswoman of the Year:** Simone Biles (USA) Gymnastics
- **Comeback of the Year:** Tiger Woods (USA) Golf
- **Breakthrough of the Year:** Naomi Osaka (Japan) Tennis
- **Sportsperson of the Year With A Disability:** Henrieta Farkkašová (Slovakia) Skiing
- **Action Sportsperson of the Year:** Chloe Kim (USA) Snowboarding.
- **Team of the Year:** France World Cup Team (France) Football
- **Laureus Sporting Moment of the Year:** Xia Boyu, China (Climbing Mount Everest)
- **Academy Exceptional Achievement Award:** Eliud Kipchoge, Kenya

- **Lifetime Achievement Award:** Arsène Wenger, France
- **Spirit for Sport Award:** Lindsey Vonn, (USA)
- **Sport For Good Award:** Yuwa (India)

ABOUT NGO YUWA:

- **NGO Yuwa works specifically with girls from impoverished families in rural Jharkhand.**
- **The NGO uses team sports and education to build character, confidence and courage.**
- NGO Yuwa was founded in 2009 when American Franz Gastler moved to Jharkhand from Delhi.
- **The NGO Yuwa has been awarded the Laureus Sport for Good Award for the year 2019.**
- The Laureus Sport for Good Award honours the achievements of those who have demonstrated a tremendous contribution to the sport or to society through sport.

OFB RECEIVES CLEARANCE FOR PRODUCING 114 LONG RANGE ARTILLERY GUN 'DHANUSH'

- **The Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) has received clearance from the Indian Army and the Ministry of Defence for production of 114 'Dhanush' long-range artillery guns.**

SALIENT FEATURES OF DHANUSH LONG RANGE ARTILLERY GUNS:

- Dhanush Long Range Artillery Guns are the first ever indigenous 155 mm x 45 calibre long-range artillery gun.
- Dhanush Long Range Artillery Guns are equipped with inertial navigation-based sighting system, auto-laying facility, onboard ballistic computation and an advanced day and night direct firing system.
- The self-propulsion unit on Dhanush allows the gun to negotiate and deploy itself in mountainous terrains with ease.
- Dhanush is also electronically upgraded to enhance firing accuracies, laying speeds of the existing gun and to provide compatibility with various kinds of ammunition as well.
- Dhanush howitzer is an improved version of Bofors guns acquired by India between 1987 and 1991.
- Dhanush howitzer is a reverse-engineered upgraded variant of the original Bofors design.
- Dhanush reportedly has a new maximum effective range of 38 kilometres in salvo mode.
- Dhanush howitzer is capable of firing eight rounds per minutes and needs a crew of six to eight artillerymen.

ABOUT THE ORDNANCE FACTORY BOARD:

- **Indian Ordnance Factories organisation is a family of 41 Ordnance Factories under the aegis of its corporate headquarters Ordnance Factory Board, Kolkata.**
- It works under the aegis of Ministry of Defence.
- The ordnance factories form an integrated base for the indigenous production of defence hardware and equipment.
- The primary objective of the ordnance factories is achieving self-reliance in equipping the armed forces with state of the art battlefield equipment.

150 SRI LANKAN STUDENTS AWARDED MAHATMA GANDHI SCHOLARSHIPS

- 150 students of Sri Lanka from all 25 districts were awarded the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships for study in India.

DETAILS:

- The Scholarships were awarded by Sri Lankan Education Minister Akila Viraj Kariyawasam and Indian High Commissioner Taranjit Singh Sandhu at a special ceremony in Colombo.

ABOUT THE MAHATMA GANDHI SCHOLARSHIPS:

- The Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships are merit-cum-means based scholarships instituted in 2006-07 for Sri Lankan students and is awarded annually by the High Commission of India in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka.
- Recipients of the Mahatma Gandhi Scholarships receive cash assistance during their two years of 'Advanced Level' studies.
- The High Commission of India has increased the scholarship amount from Rs 2,000 to 2,500 per month from 2015-16 onwards and accordingly; this year's awardees will receive Rs 30,000 annually during their two years of Advanced Level studies.
- The Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship has benefitted more than 1,100 meritorious students since its inception in the year 2006.

OTHER INITIATIVES OF INDIA TO BOOST THE EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA:

- India is constructing new classrooms in 27 schools in the North.
- India handed over the largest University Auditorium in Sri Lanka in the University of Ruhuna, in the South.
- India has provided assistance for the new trilingual school in Polonnaruwa and Saraswathy College Kandy.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Government of India is also providing opportunities to young Sri Lankans to study in reputed Indian Institutions of higher education through more than 270 scholarships per year, besides providing 370 short-term training slots every year to working professionals from Sri Lanka under ITEC programme.

US PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNED A DIRECTIVE TO CREATE A MILITARY SPACE FORCE

- US President Trump has ordered the Pentagon through a directive to create a Military Space Force.

DETAILS:

- The directive orders the Pentagon to establish the Space Force as the sixth branch of the United States military, to go along with the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

- The main goal of the Space Force is to secure and extend American dominance of the space domain.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE MILITARY SPACE FORCE ARE:

- Rather than deploying soldiers in space, the Space Force will focus on national security and preserving the satellites and vehicles that are dedicated to international communications and observation.
- Space could be a new warfighting domain and the US aims to be combat ready with Military Space Force.
- The Space force will be responsible to deter and defeat threats in space and will organize, train, and equip military space forces.
- The Space force will ensure unfettered access to, and freedom to operate in space, and to provide vital capabilities to joint and coalition forces.

OTHER DETAILS:

- Details about the Space Force like exactly how much it might cost remains unclear.
- The creation of Military Space Force requires approval from the US Congress.

OPERATION DIGITAL BOARD LAUNCHED BY UNION HRD MINISTER

- Union Human Resource Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar launched Operation Digital Board to leverage technology to boost the quality of education in the country.

DETAILS ABOUT OPERATION DIGITAL BOARD:

- Operation Digital Board has been launched on the lines of Operation Blackboard to provide better digital education in schools.
- Under Operation Digital Board seven lakh classrooms of 9th, 10th and 11th standards and two lakh classrooms of colleges and Universities will be equipped with digital boards in the next three years.
- The initiative is aimed at improving the quality of education and offer new opportunities and new ways of teaching and learning.
- Together with converting classrooms into digital classrooms and providing e-resources to students, the Operation Digital Board will aid in the provisioning of personalised adaptive learning as well as Intelligent Tutoring by exploiting emerging technologies like Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence & Data Analytics.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- UGC will be the implementing agency for ODB in Higher Education institutions.
- The Central Government will implement the scheme in the schools in association with State Governments.

UNION DEFENCE MINISTER INAUGURATED AERO INDIA 2019 AT BENGALURU

- The Aero India 2019 was inaugurated by Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru.

DETAILS:

- The Aero India 2019 will be held for 5 days from February 20 to 24 and each day of the five day air show would have a special theme.
- Day one would be Inaugural Day, the theme for day two and three is Start-Up Day and Technology Day respectively, Day four would be Women's Day and Day five would be Public Day.

ABOUT AERO INDIA 2019:

- The Aero India 2019 has a tagline "The Runway to a Billion Opportunities" and has a logo inspired by the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).
- The Ministry of Defence has planned following events as per the theme of the day during the Aero India 2019:

START-UP DAY

- The Start-up day would witness a start-up showcase event on February 21 to tap into the highly motivated entrepreneurial talent pool of the country.
- The showcase event is aimed at providing the platform for interactions between the domestic and international start-up community, key policymakers in the Indian defence sector, and CEOs of leading Indian and global start-ups.

WOMEN'S DAY

- Women's Day would be organised On February 23 to showcase achievements made by women in the aerospace sector on February 23.
- The Women's Day would witness felicitation of women achievers, unveiling of the brochure highlighting achievements of women, experience sharing by leading women in Aero-Space Sector and flying display by women pilots, paratroopers etc.

DRONE OLYMPICS

- Drone Olympics provides an opportunity for all the UAV manufacturing enthusiasts to showcase the capabilities of the Drones they are manufacturing.

TECHNOLOGY DAY/STUDENTS DAY

- Technology Day would be observed on February 22 to provide an opportunity for the students involved in the aerospace sector, both civil and defence to showcase their projects.

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

- A Photography contest would be held on the theme 'Flying Objects' for the general public during the closing day.

ABOUT THE MISSING MAN FORMATION:

- Three aircrafts Jaguar, Tejas and Su-30 MKI flew past in the missing man formation to pay tribute to the Wing Commander Sahil Gandhi who lost his life while carrying out a practice sortie for the Aero India 2019.

STATEHOOD DAY CELEBRATED BY NORTH-EASTERN STATES OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

- **The North-Eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram celebrate Statehood Day on February 20.**
- This year Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh celebrated the 32nd and 47th Statehood Day respectively.

HISTORY RELATED TO THE STATEHOOD OF MIZORAM:

- The Statehood to Mizoram was the culmination of the struggle led by Mizo National Front (MNF), a political organisation born in 1961.
- MNF took to armed insurrection and raised uprising against the Government, attacking the government installations at Aizawl, Lunglei, Chawngte, Chhimluang and other places demanding sovereign independence of Greater Mizoram.
- In 1967 MNF was banned by the Government of India and this further fuelled the armed agitation led by the MNF.
- But it did not satisfy the protestors demanding separate statehood.
- The Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the Mizo National Front and the Indian Government on June 30, 1986, where the Mizo National Front surrendered arms and immediate arrangements were made to solidify Mizoram as a full-fledged state in India.
- **Consequently, the Indian Constitution was amended through the Mizoram State Act, 1986 and the Mizoram state came into existence.**

HISTORY RELATED TO THE STATEHOOD OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH:

- **Initially, Arunachal Pradesh was directly under the Governor of the Provincial Government of Assam.**
- After the constitution came into being the Government of Assam was relieved of its responsibilities of the North East Frontier Agency and the powers were vested in the Governor of Assam, a constitutional post and an agent of the President of India.
- **NEFA was re-named as Arunachal Pradesh and subsequently, in 1972 Arunachal Pradesh became the Union Territory of the Republic of India.**
- In the year 1975 Arunachal Pradesh Council was converted into a Provisional Legislative Assembly and a council of ministers was appointed for Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Arunachal Pradesh attained full statehood on 20 February 1987 after the passing of the Constitution 55th Amendment Act.**

MONTH LONG FESTIVAL OF INDIA BEGINS IN NEPAL

- **A month-long Festival of India has begun in Nepal.** Nepal's Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Rabindra Adhikari was the Chief Guest of the opening ceremony.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL OF INDIA IN NEPAL:

- **The Festival of India in Nepal is organised by the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Center at the Indian embassy in Kathmandu** with support from India's Ministry of Culture.
- The Festival of India in Nepal is aimed at consolidating and strengthening the existing age-old relations, reinforcing sensibilities, affinities and shared cultural bonds between the people of the two countries.
- The Festival aims to contribute towards sustaining and enhancing mutual understanding between India and Nepal.
- On the opening day, the Sumit Roy Group depicted the life-span of the Buddha through melody and drama.
- The month-long festival will host cultural performances which include Mridangam instrumental performance by Pandit Yella Venkateshwara, Punjabi folk dance by Harinder Pal and group; Theatre art by Su-Samannaya group; Kathakali dance by Haripriya and group and Maithali Songs and Dances by Prangan Group.
- **Together with cultural events the Festival also hosts an exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi** together with a speech competition on the Mahatma Gandhi besides a seminar on Sanskrit.

ABOUT SWAMI VIVEKANANDA CULTURAL CENTER:

- **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) aims to promote awareness of India's composite cultural heritage and to strengthen the existing cultural ties across the world.**
- The centres are run by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

NEW F-21 FIGHTER JET UNVEILED BY LOCKHEED MARTIN AT AERO INDIA 2019

- **US defence giant Lockheed Martin unveiled the F-21 multi-role fighter jet at Asia's biggest air show Aero India-2019.**
- Lockheed Martin will manufacture the plane in collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems under India's flagship programme Make in India.

ABOUT THE F-21 FIGHTER JET:

- **The company states that the F-21 fighter jet is specifically configured for the Indian Air Force and will strengthen India's path to an advanced airpower in the future.**
- F-21 would fulfil the Indian Air Force's unique requirements and integrates India into the world's largest fighter aircraft ecosystem with the world's pre-eminent defence company.
- The F-21 provides "unmatched" Make in India opportunities and strengthens India's path to an advanced airpower future together with unrivalled industrial opportunities and accelerates closer India-US cooperation on advanced technologies.

ABOUT INDIA'S RFI FOR 110 FIGHTER JETS:

- **India had floated a 'Request for Information' for procuring 110 fighter aircraft for its air force.**

- Six global aviation majors which have responded to the RFI are Boeing's F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, Lockheed Martin's F-21 Fighting Falcon, Dassault Aviation's Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon, Saab's Gripen and Russian United Aircraft Corporation's MiG-35.
- The RFI mandates that the procurement of the 110 aircraft should have 15 per cent aircraft in flyaway condition and the remaining 85 per cent to be made in India by a Strategic Partner.
- **Lockheed has teamed up with Tata Advanced Systems for the F-21, and Boeing has teamed up** with Hindustan Aeronautics, India's state-run aerospace company, as well as Mahindra Defense Systems for the local manufacture of the Super Hornet.

SWASTH IMMUNISED INDIA CAMPAIGN GETS KAREENA KAPOOR KHAN AS ITS AMBASSADOR

- **Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan has been appointed as the ambassador of Swasth Immunised India campaign.**
- The Swasth Immunised India campaign has been launched by Serum Institute of India (SII) and Network 18.

AIMS OF THE SWASTH IMMUNISED INDIA CAMPAIGN:

- The Swasth Immunised India campaign aims to build a robust campaign aimed at spreading awareness on the importance and benefits of immunisation among the masses.
- The campaign is aimed at dispelling myths and misconceptions pertaining to the administration of vaccination among Indians.
- The campaign aims to raise awareness about the importance and benefits of vaccine administration, advocating its acceptance and building a strong immunization outreach in the country.
- The Swasth Immunised India campaign aims to complement the efforts of the government to reach full immunisation coverage through continuous education and awareness.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IMMUNISATION AND CHALLENGES FACED?

- **India's commitment towards vaccination or immunisation has aided in successfully eradicated deadly diseases like Polio and Smallpox.**
- WHO states that immunisation prevents 2-3 million deaths every year.
- But still, 5 lakh kids die every year in India because of diseases that could have otherwise been prevented by vaccines.
- **India is still home to the highest number of unvaccinated (56%) and incompletely vaccinated children (32%).**
- Prevalence of myths and misconceptions, lack of information and misinformation has hindered the government's efforts to achieve full immunisation.
- This is resulting in outbreaks of various kinds of illnesses, leading to a growing fatality rate among infants, children and expectant mothers in India.
- The Swasth Immunised India campaign aims to address these gaps.

SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT HONOURS PM MODI WITH SEOUL PEACE PRIZE

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been honoured with the Seoul Peace Prize.**
- The South Korean government has awarded the Seoul Peace Prize for PM Modi in recognition of his service to international cooperation, global growth and human development.

DETAILS:

- **PM Modi dedicated the award to the people of India.**
- He stated that the award belongs to the success India has seen in less than five years, powered by 1.5 billion people.
- **PM Modi is the 14th recipient of the award.**
- Past winners of the Seoul Peace Prize include former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and international relief organisations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

ABOUT THE SEOUL PEACE PRIZE:

- The Seoul Peace Prize is sponsored by the Seoul Peace Prize Foundation.
- **The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul.**
- The Seoul Peace Prize reflects the wishes of the Korean people and to crystallize their desire for everlasting peace on earth.
- **The awardee receives a diploma, a plaque and honorarium of US\$ 200,000.**
- The Seoul Peace Prize is awarded to Individuals or institutions which have made great contributions to the harmony of mankind and world peace in each field of endeavour around the world regardless of nation, race, religion, or ideology.

INDIA SIGNS MoU WITH CANADIAN UNIVERSITY FOR RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Government of India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada to work on various environmental issues including climate change, forest resource management and wildlife.**

ABOUT THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE MoU:

- **The MoU was signed by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for the next 10 years to explore opportunities for collaborations in the field of forestry science.**
- The opportunities for collaboration will be explored through organizations like Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Forest Survey of India (FSI), Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy and Directorate of Forest Education, Uttarakhand, and UBC.

- The MoU will assist in the exchange of students, researchers and faculty, developing research projects, livelihood opportunities and augment the income of the forest-based communities.
- **The MoU will also assist industries to optimise the utilisation of forest-based resources with access to technology to different stakeholders by the respective organisations.**
- The areas to be explored for collaboration under the MoU include collaborative research on wood sciences, forest resource management, adaptation and mitigation to climate change, forest genetics and breeding, wildlife, ecology, remote sensing, insect and disease pests, extension, conservation of flora and fauna, biotechnology, bio-energy and bio-economy.
- Also, joint conferences, seminars, workshops and exhibitions will be arranged as part of the MoU to take the collaboration forward.

HAL AWARDED FRENCH COMPANY THALES

- **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has awarded French aerospace and defence company Thales a contract to supply 2.75-inch (70-mm) rocket launchers.**
- These certified, field-proven, competitive rocket launchers are suitable for use on both light and combat helicopters.
- The order is aimed to boost the tactical capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces.

HOW THE CAPABILITIES OF ARMED FORCES WILL BE ENHANCED BY THIS?

- The Armed Forces of India are involved in a wide range of deployments in remote theatres, conducting operations beyond the scope of traditional homeland defence.
- This requires to round out their available resources with a view to boosting their tactical capability.
- **This 2.75-inch (70-mm) rocket launchers are produced using composite material, as a result, they are 50 per cent lighter than metal launchers, and this also eliminates corrosion issues.**
- The solution which would be supplied by Thales includes 2.75-inch (70-mm) 12-tube rocket launchers, plus fire control capability and the T100 sighting system.
- With these rocket launchers, helicopter crews will see a significant improvement in their tactical capabilities during missions.

ISRAELI COMPANY SPACEIL CREATES HISTORY

- SpaceIL creates history by sending the **world's first 'Privately Funded Mission to Moon'. SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying Israeli company SpaceIL's lunar lander blasted off from Florida.**
- If successful Israel will join the club of countries which includes Russia, the US and China who have made successful controlled landing on the surface of earth's nearest neighbour.

DETAILS ABOUT ISRAEL'S MISSION TO MOON:

- **Funded almost entirely by donations, the project is the first privately backed lunar lander mission.**
- The project cost \$100 million.
- Named Beresheet, the spacecraft weights 585kg.

- Beresheet will make a seven-week journey to the moon, from where it will send back images of the rocky surface and conduct experiments on the lunar magnetic field.
- **The spacecraft is named Beresheet as a reference to the first words of the Bible in Hebrew: "In the beginning".**

ABOUT LANDINGS ON MOON:

- The first landing on the Moon was made by Soviet Union with Luna 2 in 1959.
- Three years later, the United States landed Ranger 4 on the Moon.
- **Both Luna 2 and Ranger 4 were hard landings where the craft crashed into the Moon.**
- **The first "soft landings" wherein the spacecraft made controlled descents to the lunar surface for both US and Russia came in 1966.**
- **The third country to do a soft landing on the Moon was China in the year 2013 with its Chang'e 3.**

ABOUT SPACEIL:

- SpaceIL is a non-profit company founded eight years ago to compete in the Google Lunar X Prize, an international competition to see whether a private enterprise could land a spacecraft on the Moon and move 500 meters in any direction and transmit live high-definition video from the lunar surface.
- But the competition got cancelled in the year 2018 when none of the five teams left in the competition was able to meet the March deadline for launch.

UNUSED WATER FROM INDIA WILL NOT FLOW INTO PAKISTAN

- **The Minister of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari has said that India would fully utilise its share of unused water from rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej that has been flowing into Pakistan.**

DETAILS:

- **The comment was made by the Minister in the backdrop of the Pulwama Terror attack which took the life of 40 CRPF soldiers.**
- The step towards utilising the share of India under the Indus water treaty is in the line of the steps taken by the government to corner and pressurise Pakistan to act against the perpetrators of terrorism operating from Pakistan.
- **Earlier India has taken steps like withdrawal of MNF status to Pakistan and had increased the customs duties on imports from Pakistan.**

HOW WILL THE UNUSED WATER BE UTILIZED?

- **To utilise its full share of water, India would divert the water from the eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) to the border states of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.**
- **India has initiated the construction of a dam on the Ravi river, the Shahpur-Kandi project in Punjab.**

- The Ujh Multipurpose Project in Kathua district would store water for use in Jammu and Kashmir.
- River Ujh is the main tributary of river Ravi.
- The balance water would flow through 2nd Ravi-BEAS Link to provide water to other basin states.
- The Government would also fast-track these dam constructions to block the unutilised water through three projects at Shahpur-Kandi and a second Sutlej-Beas link in Punjab and the Ujh dam in Jammu and Kashmir.

BEL UNVEILS ATMOSPHERIC WATER GENERATOR AERO INDIA 2019

- Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has unveiled the Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG) at the Aero India 2019.
- The new product aims to provide an innovative solution to meet the ever-increasing need for drinking water worldwide.

ABOUT THE ATMOSPHERIC WATER GENERATOR:

- The Atmospheric Water Generator would generate water straight from the humidity present in the atmosphere through a novel technology.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator extracts water from the humidity present in the atmosphere through the process of condensation and purifies it.
- The water generator uses the process of heat exchange for condensing the atmospheric moisture to produce pure, safe and clean potable water.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator is integrated with a Mineralisation Unit to add minerals which are required to make the water potable.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator would be made available in both static and mobile (vehicular) versions and would be available in 30 litres/day, 100 litres/day, 500 litres/day and 1,000 litres/day capacities.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Atmospheric Water Generator is being manufactured by BEL in collaboration with CSIR-IICT and MAITHRI, a start-up company based in Hyderabad.
- The search for the alternate sources of water has become a necessity due to the twin challenge of water pollution and climate change.
- The Atmospheric Water Generator is a good step in this direction.

DR. DIVYA KARNAD WON GLOBAL FUTURE FOR NATURE AWARD 2019

- Dr. Divya Karnad, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies at Ashoka University has been awarded the prestigious Global Future For Nature Award 2019 for her work on marine conservation.

OTHER RECIPIENTS OF THE AWARD:

- The other recipients of the Global Future For Nature Award for the year 2019 are **Fernanda Abra (Brazil)** and **Olivier Nsengimana (Rwanda)**.

DETAILS:

- Dr. Divya Karnad's project InSeason Fish had successfully reduced the unwanted bycatch of endangered sharks along the Coromandel coast of India.
- Divya Karnad did her PhD in Geography from Rutgers University, USA and has completed her Masters in Wildlife Biology and Conservation from the Post Graduate Programme run by the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Centre for Wildlife Studies and Wildlife Conservation Society, India.

AIMS OF THE AWARD:

- Reward and fund individuals for their outstanding efforts in the protection of species of wild animals and plants.
- Stimulate Award winners to sustain their dedicated work.
- Help winners to raise their profile, extend their professional network and strengthen their funding basis.

MP GOVT. LAUNCHES MUKHYAMANTRI YUVA SWABHIMAN YOJANA

- The Government of Madhya Pradesh has launched the Mukhyamantri Yuva Swabhiman Yojana to provide employment for the youth.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- The scheme guarantees 100 days of employment every year to urban youths from economically weaker sections (EWS).
- The youth would get Rs 4,000 stipend per month and total Rs 13,500 for the 100 days period would be provided.
- During this period, they would be given skill development training, so that they become independent.
- The scheme defines Economically weaker sections as those whose family's annual income is less than Rs 2 lakh and the scheme is limited to youth in the age group 21-30 years.

MORE DETAILS:

- The Government has stated that already about 1.5 lakh urban youths have registered themselves for this scheme.
- The Government further aims to invite companies to provide full-time employment to trained youths under the scheme.
- The scheme has been launched by the Government of Madhya Pradesh to enhance the employment opportunities for youth.

FICCI CSR AWARD AWARDED TO JSPL

- Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) has been honoured with the prestigious 'FICCI CSR Award' for Women Empowerment.
- JSPL was awarded for its innovative and high impact women empowerment programmes, implemented by the company's CSR Arm- JSPL Foundation, across its operational areas in the country.

ABOUT FICCI CSR AWARD:

- **FICCI Corporate Social Responsibility Awards are India's first CSR awards and were instituted in 1999 by FICCI.**
- The award aims to identify and recognize the efforts of companies in integrating and internalizing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CATEGORIES OF THE FICCI CSR AWARD:

- FICCI CSR Award for Women Empowerment
- FICCI CSR Award for Education, Skill Development and Livelihood
- FICCI CSR Award for Environment Sustainability
- FICCI CSR Award for Health, Water and Sanitation
- FICCI CSR Award for Exemplary Innovation (irrespective of the turnover of the company)
- FICCI CSR Award for Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)- companies having turnover up to INR 200 Crores per annum

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Over the years, a number of companies including HPCL, ITC Limited, Mahindra & Mahindra, Cairn India, SAIL, Tata Tea, Infosys, Tata Chemicals, HINDALCO, TISCO, TELCO, Lupin, Gujarat Ambuja Cement, etc. have been recognised by the FICCI CSR Award for their exemplary work in the area of CSR.

CHENNAI SPARTANS WIN "INAUGURAL PRO VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE" TITLE

- **Chennai Spartans defeat Calicut Heroes and won the inaugural Pro Volleyball League Title.**

DETAILS:

- Chennai Spartans defeated Calicut Heroes 15-11, 15-12, 16-14 in the summit clash.
- **As a result of the winning the Pro Volleyball League Title, Chennai Spartans have also qualified for this year's FIVB Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship.**

ABOUT PRO VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE:

- Pro Volleyball League is a professional men's indoor volleyball league in India and the inaugural session was held in February 2019.
- The league has been initiated by the Volleyball Federation of India in association with Baseline Ventures.
- The inaugural session saw six teams competing for the title.
- **The six teams are:**
 - Ahmedabad Defenders
 - Calicut Heroes
 - Chennai Spartans
 - Black Hawks Hyderabad
 - U Mumba Volley

- Kochi Blue Spikers

ABOUT ASIAN MEN'S CLUB VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP:

- Asian Men's Club Volleyball Championship is an international volleyball competition in Asia, contested by the men's clubs of the members of Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC).
- The championship competition is held every year.

IOC SUSPENDED ALL DISCUSSIONS WITH INDIA

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has suspended all discussions with India regarding hosting of global sporting events in the backdrop of denial of visas to the two Pakistani Shooters.
- The Pakistani shooters were supposed to participate in the 25m rapid fire pistol event in the ISSF World Cup.

DETAILS OF THE IOC STATEMENT:

- IOC notes that the Indian Government authorities have failed to grant an entry visa for the Pakistani delegation to participate in the ISSF World Cup which was a qualification competition for the Tokyo Olympic Games to be held in 2020.
- Keeping in mind the interests of other 500 athletes from 61 countries participating in other events of ISSF World Cup, the IOC has withdrawn the recognition of the 25m rapid fire pistol event and not the whole World Cup.
- Denial of visa for Pakistani shooters is against the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter.
- As a result, IOC Executive Board has decided to suspend all discussions with India regarding the potential applications for hosting future sports and Olympic-related events until clear written guarantees are obtained from the Indian Government to ensure the entry of all participants in compliance with the rules of the Olympic Charter.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The tensions due to Pulwama Terrorist Attack and the role of Pakistan based groups behind the attack has deteriorated the bilateral relations.
- This is having a spillover effect in the arena of sports.
- There are also demands for withdrawing the Indian team from the match against Pakistan in the cricket world cup.

NTCA STATES THAT CHEETAHS KEPT AT NAURADEHI SANCTUARY

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has stated in the Supreme Court that Spotted Cheetahs being translocated from Namibia would be kept at Nauradehi Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.

MORE DETAILS:

- **NTCA even stated that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has given no objection** for the translocation and the decision to reintroduce spotted Cheetahs in India was supported by Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.

SAD TO KNOW:

- India's last spotted Cheetah had died in 1947.
- In 1952, the animal was declared extinct in the country.

ABOUT THE CHEETAH RE-INTRODUCTION PROJECT:

- The Central Government had set up an expert panel for reintroducing the Cheetah in India.
- The panel recommended that the home of the fastest animal could be Kuno Palpur in Madhya Pradesh, Velavadar National Park in Gujarat and Tal Chapar sanctuary in Rajasthan.
- NTCA, a statutory body under Union Environment Ministry had committed Rs.50 crore to State for this project in the year 2011.
- Cheetah Re-introduction Project was conceived in the year 2012.
- But the activists went to the Supreme Court against the decision and the Supreme Court appointed a panel to review the project.
- The Supreme Court appointed panel advised against the reintroduction citing "India does not have habitat and prey density" to support Cheetahs.
- The report even accused government-run institutions of "incorrectly compressing" data to get the approval of the apex court to seek the reintroduction of the big cat from Africa. As a result, the project had gone into dead storage.
- In the year 2018, the Government of Madhya Pradesh wrote to NTCA to revive the project.
- The NTCA has approached the Supreme Court seeking a clarification that there is no blanket ban of the apex court on re-introduction of Cheetahs in the country.

HP GOVT DECLARES MONKEY AS VERMIN FOR ONE YEAR

- **The Government of Himachal Pradesh has made an announcement declaring Monkey as Vermin for the period of one year in 11 districts.**

DETAILS:

- Monkeys were declared as vermin in 38 tehsils and sub-tehsils of 10 districts in Himachal Pradesh.
- The period of this notification was extended for one year on December 20, 2017.
- The State Government had urged the Centre to declare Monkeys as vermin because the animals have been adversely affecting crops and causing harm to humans.

MEANING OF VERMIN:

- **Vermin refers to pests or nuisance animals which spread diseases or destroy crops or livestock.**

- In India Section 62 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 empowers the states to send a list of wild animals to the Centre requesting it to declare them vermin for selective slaughter.
- The Central Government through notification may declare any wild animal other than those specified in Schedule I and part 11 of Schedule H of the law to be vermin for any area for a given period of time.
- For the period the notification is in force such wild animal shall be included in Schedule V of the law, depriving them of any protection under that law.
- **Declaration of Vermin provides a reprieve for those who kill these animals in the specified areas for a year after these notifications, from the jail and fines that hunting these animals typically invite.**
- The hunted wildlife is declared as government property and it imposes restrictions on how these carcasses must be disposed of.
- **It is criticised that once the animals are slotted as vermin they become an easy game for hunters as well as traders in meat.**

2ND EDITION OF SUJALAM SUFALAM JAL SANCHAY ABHIYAN LAUNCHED

- The Government of Gujarat has launched the second edition of the water conservation scheme- Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan.

ABOUT SUJALAM SUFALAM JAL SANCHAY ABHIYAN:

- The scheme aims to deepen water bodies in the state before monsoon to increase storage of rainwater to be used during times of scarcity.
- The scheme involves cleaning and desilting of riverfronts.
- It also involves sprucing up of irrigation canals.
- **The state government has increased its financial contribution for the scheme to 60 per cent, which meant private groups getting involved would have to give only the remaining 40 per cent.**

ABOUT THE FIRST EDITION:

- During the first edition against its anticipated target of 16,616 works of deepening of ponds and lakes across the state, 18,220 works were accomplished.
- The first edition witnessed an increase in the water storage capacity of more than 11,000 lakh cubic feet rainwater through different sources like ponds, reservoirs, check dams, bori bandh and other.
- The desilting had also generated a huge amount of loose/soil or clay which can be used by farmers to increase agricultural productivity.

WORLDCLASS INITIATIVE LAUNCHED BY DELOITTE IN INDIA

- Deloitte has announced the launch of its global initiative 'WorldClass' in India for the empowerment of women.
- The initiative was launched by Deloitte's Global CEO, Punit Renjen in the presence of Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

ABOUT THE WORLDCLASS INITIATIVE:

- In India, the initiative aims to support 10 million girls and women by 2030 through education and skills development.
- To attain the objectives of WorldClass Initiative, Deloitte will align with organisations such as Katha and Pratham in India.
- WorldClass programme in India will focus on improving girls retention rate in school, higher educational outcomes, and skills development for women to access employment.
- The initiative aims to give a boost to women education since almost 40 per cent of girls aged 15-18 years, drop out of school and college, and only 26 per cent of women are employed.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Through the WorldClass Initiative in India Deloitte aims to fuel India's growth story by aiding India to encash its demographic dividend.
- Globally, the WorldClass initiative seeks to prepare 50 million people by 2030, to be better equipped for the future of work, in-line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

AFGHANISTAN CREATES HISTORY IN T20 INTERNATIONAL SCORE

- Afghanistan has created history in its second Twenty20 International against Ireland at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- Afghanistan scored 278 runs for the loss of three wickets in 20 overs and registered the highest-ever total in T20s.
- Afghanistan broke the record of Australia.
- Australia had scored 263/3 back in 2016 against Sri Lanka.

DETAILS:

- Hazratullah Zazai was a star performer in Afghanistan's innings with a score of 162 runs from just 62 balls.
- He hit 11 fours and 16 sixes and scored 140 runs from boundaries alone.
- Usman Ghani also made a significant partnership with his 73 runs from 48 balls including 7 fours and three sixes.
- The 236 run partnership of Hazratullah Zazai and Usman Ghani beat the earlier record of Australia's Aaron Finch and Darcy Short who had a score of 223 runs.

WHY IS INDIA HOSTING AFGHANISTAN'S HOME SERIES?

- Afghanistan hit by war is still in the process of recovery.
- The Afghanistan Cricket team is making significant progress.
- Lack of necessary infrastructure and law and order issues makes it impossible to host the cricket matches.
- India is hosting the home series for Afghanistan and is providing all infrastructural facilities for the country to enhance its excellence in the game of cricket.
- In a significant development, all international teams touring India will now play a practice match against Afghanistan.

UAE INVITES INDIA AS GUEST OF HONOUR FOR OIC FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET

- For the first time, India would be attending the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers Meet.
- India will attend 46th Session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers to be held in Abu Dhabi from March 1 to 2.

ABOUT UAE'S INVITATION TO INDIA:

- The host UAE has stated that the friendly country of India has been named as the guest of honour in view of its great global political stature as well as its time-honoured and deeply rooted cultural and historical legacy and its important Islamic component.
- UAE's invitation to India highlights the desire of the UAE to go beyond rapidly growing close bilateral ties and forge a true multifaceted partnership at the multilateral and international level.
- The invitation is seen as a milestone in the comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE.
- The invitation is also recognition of the presence of 185 million Muslims in India and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India's contribution to the Islamic world.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INVITATION:

- The invitation has gained immense significance because of the timing.
- At a time when India is cornering Pakistan on all international forums due to its role in Pulwama terror attack, the invitation by the OIC which was the biggest supporter of Pakistan is highly significant.
- This invitation is seen as a signal of changing geopolitical dynamics.

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION:

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) established in 1969 aims to provide a collective voice to the Muslim world and safeguard and protect interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony.
- Headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, it has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- India has about 12% of the world's Muslim population.
- But India's entry into the organisation had been blocked by Pakistan.
- The policies of OIC are largely pro-Pakistan and sees Kashmir as occupied by India.
- Bangladesh has proposed to make India an observer in the forum.
- It could not be materialised due to resistance from Pakistan.
- The invitation to India signals a possible change in stance towards India.

NEW EXPORT ROUTE TO INDIA LAUNCHED BY AFGHANISTAN

- Afghanistan has launched a new export route to India through the Chabahar Port of Iran.

DETAILS:

- 3 trucks carrying 57 tonnes of dried fruits, textiles, carpets and mineral products were dispatched from western Afghan city of Zaranj to Iran's Chabahar Port.
- The consignment would be then shipped to Mumbai.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHABAHAR PORT:

- Chabahar port is seen as a testimony of healthy cooperation between India, Iran and Afghanistan this will ensure economic growth.
- The Chabahar Port of Iran provides easy access to the sea for Afghanistan.
- India has invested in the development of this route as well as the Chabahar port.
- This route allows both India and Afghanistan to engage in trade bypassing Pakistan.

ABOUT INDIA-AFGHANISTAN TRADE:

- Afghan exports to India stood at \$740 million in 2018 and India is the largest export destination for Afghanistan.
- The new route is one of the many initiatives undertaken by the governments of India and Afghanistan to enhance trade relations.
- To boost the trade relations, both India and Afghanistan had established an air corridor in the year 2017.
- The opening of new avenues for Afghanistan to trade with India will aid Afghanistan in to reduce its trade deficit.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- After the withdrawal from JCPOA and reimposing of sanctions on Iran, US had granted an exception for the development of Chabahar port since the new transportation corridor could contribute significantly for Afghanistan's economy and meet their needs of non-sanctionable goods such as food and medicines.

KELLY KNIGHT CRAFT NOMINATED AS THE NEW US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

- US President Donald Trump has announced the nomination of Kelly Knight Craft as the new US ambassador to the UN.

DETAILS:

- The post of the US ambassador to the UN was vacant due to the resignation of Nikki Haley.
- Kelly Knight Craft is currently serving as the US ambassador to Canada.
- The appointment would be formalised after the approval by the US Senate.

WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN?

- Representing the United States on the U.N. Security Council and during almost all plenary meetings of the General Assembly.
- Keep the U.S. State Department informed of events at the United Nations.
- Making recommendations to the State Department and the President as to what course of action the United States should pursue.

ABOUT KELLY KNIGHT CRAFT:

- Kelly Knight Craft who is currently serving as ambassador to Canada was the first woman to ever hold the post.
- Previously she had served as an alternate delegate to the UN during President George W Bush's reign where her focuses included Africa.

CIPET INAUGURATED IN TRIPURA

- Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers D V Sadananda Gowda inaugurated the centre of the Central Institute of Plastic Engineering and Technology (CIPET) in Tripura.
- The centre of CIPET in Tripura would produce 1500 skilled workers per annum.

ABOUT THE CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PLASTIC ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY:

- The Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology (CIPET) was established in 1968 with the assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at Chennai.
- The institute was set up to develop manpower in different disciplines of Plastics Engineering & Technology as no such institute existed in the country.

FUNCTIONS OF THE CIPET:

- CIPET renders Technology Support Service in the areas of design, tooling, plastics processing and testing and quality assurance in India and abroad.
- CIPET is at the forefront of strengthening the technological capabilities and has been constantly building capacities and leveraging its expertise, calibre and skill sets to meet the emerging and evolving needs of the industries.
- CIPET works in close liaison with industries to implement its initiatives in the areas of Polymer and Allied Industries in accordance with the environmental policies of the country.

MORE ABOUT THE CIPET:

- CIPET is working under the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers and is focused on Skill Development, Technology Support Services, Academic and Research (STAR).
- CIPET is headquartered at Chennai and has centres at Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Aurangabad, Agartala, Baddi, Balasore, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandrapur, Chennai, Dehradun, Gurgaon, Guwahati, Gwalior,

Hyderabad, Hajipur, Haldia, Imphal, Jaipur, Kochi, Lucknow, Madurai, Murthal, Mysore, Raipur, Ranchi, Valsad and Vijayawada.

NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL INAUGURATED BY PM NARENDRA MODI IN NEW DELHI

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the National War Memorial adjoining the India Gate in New Delhi.
- The memorial honours the soldiers who laid down their lives for the country after Independence.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL WAR MEMORIAL:

- The memorial is spread over an area of approximately 40 acres.
- **The memorial comprises four concentric circles, namely:**
 - Amar Chakra
 - Veerta Chakra
 - Tyag Chakra
 - Rakshak Chakra
- The memorial includes a central obelisk, an eternal flame and six bronze murals depicting famous battles fought by Indian Army, Air Force and Navy in Veerta Chakra gallery.
- **16 walls have been constructed in the Tyag Chakra for paying homage to the 25,942 battle casualties and their names have been inscribed on granite tablets arranged in a circular pattern, symbolizing the ancient Indian war formation 'Chakravyuh'.**
- Rakshak Chakra, the outermost one comprises of rows of more than 600 trees with each tree representing many soldiers who guard the territorial integrity of the nation round the clock.
- **The National War Memorial will have a new 'eternal flame' and the existing eternal flame at the Amar Jawan Jyoti built in 1972 in honour of soldiers who lost their lives in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, will continue as it is.**

MORE DETAILS:

- India Gate itself is a war memorial built during the British Raj as the All India War Memorial Arch to honour the soldiers who died in the First World War (1914-1918) and the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919).
- But there was no memorial to commemorate the sacrifice of fallen soldiers after independence.
- The proposal to set up a National War Memorial had been under consideration since the early 1970s.
- **The National War Memorial pays tribute to soldiers who laid down their lives defending the nation during the India-China war in 1962, Indo-Pak wars in 1947, 1965 and 1971, Indian Peace Keeping Force Operations in Srilanka and in the Kargil conflict of 1999.**

UNION MINISTER OF RAILWAYS LAUNCHES THE 'RAIL DRISHTI DASHBOARD'

- The Union Minister of Railways Piyush Goyal has launched the 'Rail Drishti Dashboard'. It encompasses all the digitisation efforts in Indian Railways and promotes transparency and accountability.

ABOUT THE RAIL DRISHTI DASHBOARD:

- The url of the dashboard is raildrishti.cris.org.in
- The dashboard brings information from various sources on a single platform and gives access to key statistics and parameters to every citizen of the country.
- The dashboard can be accessed using a desktop/laptop or a mobile device such as a phone or tablet and the application is mobile optimized for ease of use of the public.
- The dashboard will provide every kind of information related to railways anytime, anywhere to everybody.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RAIL DRISHTI DASHBOARD:

- The Rail Drishti dashboard through promoting transparency aims to empower the citizens with the information regarding the working of the Indian Railways.

GOVIND PRASAD SHARMA APPOINTED AS THE CHAIRMAN OF NBT

- Educationist and Author Govind Prasad Sharma has been appointed as the Chairman of National Book Trust (NBT).

ABOUT GOVIND PRASAD SHARMA:

- Govind Prasad Sharma in his long career has served as the Principal of Government P.G. College in Madhya Pradesh, Additional Director of Higher Education of Gwalior Chambal Division, Director of Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Akademi and also as Vice Chairman of Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL BOOK TRUST:

- National Book Trust (NBT) is an apex body established by the Government of India in the year 1957 under the Department Of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF NBT?

- To produce and encourage the production of good literature in English, Hindi and other Indian Languages.
- To make such literature available at moderate prices to the public.
- Arrange Book Fairs/Exhibitions and Seminars.
- Take all necessary steps to make the people book-minded.

TO PURSUE THESE OBJECTIVES THE NBT PUBLISHES:

- The Classical Literature of India.
- Outstanding works of Indian authors in Indian Languages and their translation from one Indian Language to another.
- Translation of outstanding books from foreign languages.
- Outstanding books of modern knowledge for popular diffusion.

MORE DETAILS:

- The major activities of NBT include publishing non- textbooks, organizing book fairs, book exhibitions, conducting literary events, activities for children, training in publishing throughout the country, participating in international book fairs to promote Indian literature.

MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR CHOSEN FOR META LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT**AWARD**

- **Eminent Indian playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar has been chosen for META Lifetime Achievement Award 2019.**
- The award would be conferred on March 12 during the Mahindra Theater Festival.

ABOUT MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR:

- Mahesh Elkunchwar is regarded as one of the progressive playwrights of the country and is critically-acclaimed and widely-known for having experimented with a wide range of drama and is considered a powerful force in both Indian and Marathi theatre scene.
- **Mahesh Elkunchwar is also a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship.**
- He has over 30 plays and essays to his credit including works like 'Sultan', 'Holi', 'Garbo', 'Yatanaghar', and 'Atmakatha'.

ABOUT META AWARDS:

- **The Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards (META) is aimed at applauding the finest in theatre.**
- The META awards were instituted by the Mahindra Group with the objective of becoming a significant platform for celebrating this art.
- META recognizes theatre's varied elements like playwriting, set, costume and light designing, direction and performance.
- Over the 14 years since its inception, META has succeeded in setting a stage that represents the diverse interpretations of this art form as understood in various regions of the country.

4TH GLOBAL DIGITAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT HELD

- **The 4th Global Digital Health Partnership Summit being held in New Delhi was inaugurated by the Union Health Minister J P Nadda in the presence of Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad- Union Minister of Law & Justice and Electronics & Information Technology.**

DETAILS:

- The summit provides an opportunity to support governments and health system reformers in improving the health and well-being of their citizens through digital technologies.

- The Global Digital Health Partnership Summit is being hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP).

ABOUT THE GLOBAL DIGITAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP:

- The Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) is a collaboration of governments and territories, government agencies and the World Health Organization aimed at supporting the effective implementation of digital health services.
- The GDHP was established in February 2018 to provide an international platform for global collaboration and sharing of evidence to guide the delivery of better digital health services within participant countries.
- The GDHP also provides an opportunity for transformational engagement between its participants, who are striving to learn and share best practice and policy that can support their digital health systems.
- The secretariat services for the GDHP are provided by Australian Digital Health Agency for the initial 18 months.

MOU SIGNED BETWEEN INDIA AND SWEDEN

- Swedish Health Minister Lena Hallengren after meeting with Union Health Minister J P Nadda announced that Anti-microbial resistance (AMR) is really dangerous and India and Sweden intend to boost cooperation to tackle it.

DETAILS:

- India and Sweden had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in the field of various issues, including AMR, communicable diseases and public health on February 24, 2019.
- As per the two countries, AMR work is an "ongoing cooperation" between India and Sweden.
- There would be bilateral cooperation between companies, agencies, universities and institutions.

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE OF CHAMPIONS:

- The Alliance of Champions was launched by then Swedish Health Minister Gabriel Wikstrom at the 2015 World Health Assembly.
- Alliance of Champions consisted of health ministers of 14 countries aimed to promote "political awareness, engagement and leadership" on AMR.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Sweden hoped that India would join the Alliance of Champions, which is a creation between many countries globally to face and to fight AMR.

AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

THE OSCAR AWARD LIST FOR THE YEAR 2019 IS LISTED BELOW:

- **Documentary (Feature)** - Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi for "Free Solo"
- **Actress in a Supporting Role** - Regina King for "If Beale Street Could Talk"
- **Cinematography** - Alfonso Cuarón for "Roma"
- **Actor in a Supporting Role** - Mahershala Ali for "Green Book"
- **Animated Feature Film** - Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse; Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, Rodney Rothman.
- **Animated Short Film** - Domee Shi for "Bao"
- **Documentary Short Subject** - Rayka Zehtabchi and Melissa Berton for "Period. End of Sentence"
- **Live Action Short Film** - Guy Nattiv and Jamie Ray Newman for "Skin"
- **Best Original Screenplay** - Nick Vallelonga, Brian Currie, Peter Farrelly for "Green Book"
- **Best Adapted Screenplay** - Spike Lee, Sean McKittrick, Jason Blum, Raymond Mansfield, Jordan Peele for "BlacKkKlansman"
- **Original Score** - Ludwig Goransson for "Black Panther"
- **Original Song** - Lady Gaga, Mark Ronson, Anthony Rossomando and Andrew Wyatt for "Shallow" from "A Star Is Born"
- **Best Actor in a Leading Role** - Rami Malek for "Bohemian Rhapsody"
- **Best Actress in a Leading Role** - Olivia Colman for "The Favourite"
- **Best Director** - Alfonso Cuarón for "Roma"
- **Best Picture** - "Green Book"

ABOUT THE OSCAR AWARDS:

- The Oscars Awards also known as Academy Awards honour artistic and technical merit in the film industry.
- The awards are given by the **Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS)**, to recognize excellence in cinematic achievements as assessed by the Academy's voting membership.