

A cityscape at sunset with a white text box overlay. The sky is a mix of orange, red, and purple. Several tall buildings are visible, some with lights on. The text 'MONTHLY GK DIGEST' is written in large, bold, red letters. Below it, 'JANUARY 2019' is written in bold, black letters. The text is enclosed in a white box with a thin red border.

MONTHLY GK DIGEST

JANUARY 2019

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MONTHLY GK DIGEST: JANUARY 2019

BIMAL JALAN PANEL ON ECONOMIC CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an expert committee, headed by its Former Governor Bimal Jalan, to suggest how the Central Bank should handle its reserves and whether it can transfer its surplus to the Government.

- The committee will submit its report within 90 days of its first meeting.
- The expert committee headed by Bimal Jalan will have former RBI deputy governor Rakesh Mohan as its Vice Chairman.
- The members of the committee are RBI Central Board Directors Bharat Doshi and Sudhir Mankad, Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan, and economic affairs Subhash Chandra Garg.

RBI RESERVES:

- RBI's contingency fund core reserve is only around 7% of its total assets and the rest of it is largely in revaluation reserves.
- **Revaluation reserves fluctuate with corresponding changes in currency and gold valuations.**
- In 2017-18, the central bank's contingency funds and revaluation reserves stood at ₹2.32 trillion and ₹6.92 trillion respectively.
- The data shows that the growth in revaluation reserves has far exceeded the growth in the contingency fund.
- While revaluation reserves have more than tripled from ₹1.99 trillion in 2008-09 to ₹6.92 trillion in 2017-18, the contingency fund has grown 50% during the same period from ₹1.53 trillion to ₹2.32 trillion.

CORE RESERVE AND REVALUATION RESERVE:

- Core Reserves are considered to be of highest quality and consists mainly of share capital and disclosed reserve.
- They are fully available to cover losses.
- Revaluation reserves arise from revaluation of assets that are undervalued in the bank's books, e.g. Marketable Securities.
- The Revaluation Reserves can be used as a cushion for unexpected losses and depends mainly upon the level of certainty that can be placed on estimates.

WHY THE COMMITTEE IS FORMED?

Since the RBI and the Government were at loggerhead over the transfer of surplus, the committee has been formed to look into this issue.

THE COMMITTEE WILL:

- Decide whether RBI is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in the surplus of the required levels.
- Propose a suitable profits distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI, including the situations of holding more provisions than required and the RBI holding lesser provisions than required.
- Suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain.

PM INAUGURATES INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE'S SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL CENTRE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the International Rice Research Institute South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI SARC) in Varanasi.

- It is the sixth campus of IRRI SARC.
- The institute will complement the government's effort to double farmer's income by 2022.

WHAT WILL IRRI SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL CENTRE (IRRI SARC) DO?

- The education and training arm of IRRI SARC will educate scientists and agriculture leaders about the latest technologies and innovations for sustainable farming.
- The IRRI SARC will house laboratories for digital crop monitoring and assessment.
- IRRI SARC will house demonstration fields for testing various varieties of rice.
- IRRI SARC will also house Centre of Excellence in Rice Value Addition (CERVA), which would be a suite of modern laboratories where rice grains are assessed for quality and nutritional value and sensory evaluations for grain taste, texture and aroma are conducted on-site facilities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE IRRI SARC:

- It will serve as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia and SAARC region.
- The IRRI SARC will aid in improving crop production, seed quality and the nutritional value of rice.
- The Centre will work with national partners to enhance farmers' knowledge and income and deliver advanced research, teaching and services in the connection.
- IRRI SARC aims to improve livelihood and nutrition, abolishing poverty, hunger, and malnutrition among those countries which depend on rice-based agri-food systems.
- The Centre will help in utilizing the rich biodiversity of India to develop special rice varieties which will help India to achieve higher per hectare yields and improved nutritional contents.
- The Centre will support in adopting a value chain based production system in the country by reducing wastage, adding value and generating higher income for the farmers.

PM RELEASES COMMEMORATIVE STAMP ON MAHARAJA SUHELDEV

PM Narendra Modi released a commemorative stamp on Maharaja Suheldev.

- He described Maharaja Suheldev as a brave warrior and a hero who inspires the people and said that the Union Government is determined to preserve the legacy of all those who contributed to the cause of India's defence and security, and to its social life.

LEGACY OF MAHARAJA SUHELDEV:

- **Maharaja Suheldev is a semi-legendary king whose references are found somewhere between the boundary of fiction and history.**
- There is no consensus about his name and is alternating between Sakardev, Suhirdadhvaj, Suhridil, Suhridal-dhaj, Rai Suhrid Dev, Susaj, Suhardal etc.
- There is also not much clarity on his caste and religious identity.
- Of late various Hindu nationalist groups have characterized him as a Hindu king who defeated a Muslim invader.
- The only surviving historical account of him can be traced to Mirat-i-Masudi, a 17th-century Persian-language historical romance.
- **Maharaja Suheldev is said to have defeated and killed the Ghaznavid general Ghazi Saiyyad Salar Masud at Bahraich, in the early 11th century.**

"ONE DISTRICT, ONE PRODUCT" SCHEME OF UTTAR PRADESH

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has initiated "One District, One Product" Scheme to encourage indigenous and specialized products and crafts of the state.

AIM OF THE SCHEME:

- The scheme aims to capitalize the rich heritage of the Uttar Pradesh by reviving them through modernization and publicisation to enhance the reach of these products.

DETAILS:

- Uttar Pradesh is a vast state with vast diversity in all facets of life.
- The diversity of products and crafts in UP is breathtaking.

THE VAST DIVERSITY ENCOMPASSES:

- The ancient and nutritious Kala Namak Rice
- The rare and intriguing Wheat-Stalk Craft
- World-famous Chikankari and Zari-Zardozi work on clothes
- The intricate and stunning Horn and Bone work that uses the remains of dead animals rather than live ones
- A nature-friendly replacement for ivory
- Many of these rich traditions are facing the existential threat.

- The One District, One Product aims to revive these traditional heritages by reviving them through modernization and publicisation.

RAJASTHAN CABINET SCRAPS EDUCATION CRITERIA FOR CIVIC POLL CANDIDATES

The new Government of Rajasthan has abolished the condition of a minimum educational qualification to contest local body elections.

- The cabinet also decided on holding the election of mayors and chairman's in corporations through the direct system instead of the indirect method introduced by the previous government.

CRITERIA'S FOR CONTESTING IN LOCAL POLLS:

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.

SUPREME COURT ON EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION FOR CONTESTING POLLS:

- Even Haryana had passed a similar law mandating minimum education qualification for those contesting in Panchayat Raj Institutions.
- The constitutional validity of this law of Haryana was questioned in the Supreme Court.
- The Supreme Court had upheld the constitutional validity of the law enacted by Haryana government to bar the illiterate from contesting panchayat polls in the state.
- The Supreme Court had ruled that "it is only education which gives a human being the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and bad".
- The Supreme Court had even made it clear that it would be valid for the legislature to disqualify a candidate from seeking election to a civic body if he or she lacks "basic norms of hygiene" by not having a functional toilet at home.

MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT TO CREATE AN ADHYATMIK VIBHAG (SPIRITUAL DEPARTMENT)

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has announced setting up of a new Adhyatmik Vibhag (Spiritual Department).

- The proposed new department will be set up by merging several existing departments.
- As per the tweet from the Chief Minister's office of Madhya Pradesh, Dharmik Nyas Evam Dharmasv Department (Religious Trust and Endowment Department), Anand Vibhag

(Happiness Department) in addition to the Directorate of Religious Trust and Endowment, Madhya Pradesh Teerth Evam Mela Pradhikaran and Rajya Anand Sansthan would be merged to form the proposed Adhyatmik Vibhag (Spiritual Department).

ANAND VIBHAG (HAPPINESS DEPARTMENT):

- **Madhya Pradesh had become the first state in the country to create Happiness Department.**
- **The government had also announced the setting up of the Happiness Institute.**
- Before announcing the creation of Happiness Department the state government had undertaken an in-depth study of the measures taken to assess the status of happiness among the citizens by the United Nations as well as the Government of Bhutan and America's International Management Institute.

KHUSHI SCHEME OF ODISHA

Khushi Scheme of Odisha aims to provide good menstrual hygiene care to women of the state.

- The initiative aims to promote health and hygiene among school going adolescent girls leading to higher retention in school and greater empowerment of women.

ABOUT THE SCHEME:

- **Under the Scheme, the Government will provide free sanitary napkins to 17 lakh girls studying in Classes 6 to 12 in Government and Government-Aided Schools.**
- The Scheme is being implemented by the health and family welfare department of the state at a cost of Rs 70 crore per year.

WHY THE SCHEME HAS BEEN INITIATED?

- As per the data of the National Family Health Survey, in Odisha 53 per cent women use unhygienic methods and around 69 per cent women use cloth during menstruation.
- To address this dire scenario, the Odisha Government has initiated Khushi Scheme.
- **The Government of Odisha is also providing sanitary napkins to rural women at subsidised rates of Rs. 6 for six napkins through ASHA workers.**

UJJWALA SANITARY NAPKIN INITIATIVE

The oil marketing companies have launched Ujjwala Sanitary Napkin Initiative, as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Odisha.

- According to the data from the National Family Health Survey-4, overall use of sanitary napkins in Odisha is 33.5 per cent and only 42.8 per cent of rural women between the age of 15 and 24 years use proper hygienic methods of protection during menstruation.
- The oil companies came up with this initiative keeping this scenario in mind.

UNDER THE INITIATIVE:

- **Around 100 local manufacturing units will be set up by oil marketing companies at Common Service Centres (CSCs) across 93 blocks in all 30 districts of Odisha.**
- **Each facility will have the capacity to produce 1200-2000 pads each day.**
- **Each facility will also have a sterilization room to ensure that the napkins are sterilized before they are packed for use of rural women.**
- **The companies will provide machineries and raw material for one time.**
- **Then the women will manage it and earn by selling the pads.**
- The women will also be provided with proper training in the manufacturing and sale of sanitary napkins.
- The oil companies have started this initiative on a pilot basis and would be expanded across the state if the module gets success.

WHAT ARE COMMON SERVICE CENTRES?

Common Service Centres are physical facilities for delivering Government of India e-Services to rural and remote locations where availability of computers and Internet was negligible or mostly absent.

PAKISTAN TO ISSUE PANDA BONDS TO RAISE CAPITAL IN CHINA

The government of Pakistan has decided to launch Panda Bonds to raise loans from Chinese capital markets.

- Launching of Panda Bonds is part of Pakistan's plans to move towards giving the Chinese currency, a status at par with that enjoyed by the US dollar.
- The interest rates and the size of the bonds would be decided at a later stage.

DETAILS:

- The Finance Ministry of Pakistan has said that the Panda Bonds are part of its multipronged approach for bridging the foreign financing needs and building foreign exchange reserves.
- Panda Bonds will help Pakistan to diversify the investor base of capital market issuance and provide a source of raising renminbi.
- China is Pakistan's largest trading partner.
- Pakistan has the highest trade deficit with China.
- The raising of capital in Chinese currency will aid Pakistan to bridge the deficit.

ABOUT PANDA BONDS:

- **Panda bonds are Chinese renminbi-denominated bonds from a non-Chinese issuer, sold in the People's Republic of China.**
- The first two Panda bonds were issued in October 2005 on the by the International Finance Corporation and the Asian Development Bank on the same day.

- The Philippines issued its inaugural Panda bonds in 2018.
- It was the first ASEAN member to issue Panda bonds.

PANEL SUGGESTS NOT TO ALLOW NEW ENGINEERING COLLEGES FROM 2020

The Panel headed by IIT-Hyderabad chairman B V R Mohan Reddy has suggested All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), not to allow setting up of new Engineering colleges from 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

- **To stop setting up new colleges from 2020 and review the creation of new capacity every two years after that.**
- No additional seats should be approved in traditional engineering areas such as mechanical, electrical, civil and electronics and suggests that institutes should be encouraged to convert current capacity in traditional disciplines to emerging new technologies.
- **To introduce undergraduate engineering programmes exclusively for artificial intelligence, blockchain, robotics, quantum computing, data sciences, cybersecurity and 3D printing and design.**
- The panel has said that concessions should be made for applications already in the pipeline while not allowing new engineering institutes should be set up from 2020.

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Current capacity utilisation in traditional disciplines is just 40% as opposed to 60% seat occupancy in branches such as computer science and engineering, aerospace engineering and mechatronics.
- **As per the reports, there were no takers for 51 per cent of the 15.5 lakh B.E/B.Tech seats in 3,291 engineering colleges in 2016-17.**

SAMWAD WITH STUDENTS

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched an outreach programme called Samwad with Students.

- During Samwad with Students on 1st January, ISRO Chairman K Sivan interacted with 40 students and 10 teachers from select schools.

DETAILS:

- **ISRO's outreach programme was aimed at motivating young India and tapping their scientific potential.**
- During the interaction, the ISRO Chairman engaged with students on a series of topics ranging from rockets, satellites, Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan and other space applications.

WHAT WILL BE THERE IN THE PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS?

- **ISRO will be organising guided tours thrice in a year, especially during summer and Christmas holidays for students of class 11 and class 12.**
- **The students would be taken to ISRO facilities in Thiruvananthapuram and Bengaluru and the launch centre at Sriharikota.**
- **Students would also be taken to space laboratories and would be allowed to make small satellites.**

RBI LAUNCHES SRPHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched Survey on Retail Payment Habits of Individuals (SRPHi).

- The Survey will capture payment habits of individuals in cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Guwahati.

ABOUT THE SURVEY:

- **Sigma Research & Consulting Pvt Ltd has been engaged by RBI to conduct the fieldwork of the survey.**
- **Around 6000 individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds across six cities would be covered under the survey.**
- **The survey seeks qualitative responses from individuals on their payment habits.**
- The findings of the survey will provide insights into awareness and usage habits of digital payment products.

JAPAN TO WITHDRAW FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

Japan has announced its decision to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

- The withdrawal would enable Japan to resume commercial whaling activities.
- Japan has said that it would undertake commercial whaling from July 2019 limited to Japan's territorial waters and exclusive economic zones.
- As per the announcement, Japan would not undertake whaling activities in Antarctic waters or in the southern hemisphere.

WHY THE WITHDRAWAL?

- The Japanese Government was trying hard to persuade the IWC to allow its commercial whaling operations.
- IWC refused to budge and rejected the proposal of Japan.
- **Japan has said that since most whale species are not endangered and that eating whale is a part of its culture, Japan has been forced to withdraw from the IWC.**
- **With the withdrawal, Japan joins Iceland and Norway in openly defying the organization's**

ban on commercial whale hunting.

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC):

- **The International whaling commission was set up under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling which was signed on 2nd December 1946 at Washington DC.**
- **The IWC aims at providing for the proper conservation of whale stocks and make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry.**
- IWC is accompanied by legally binding schedule which sets out specific measures that the IWC has collectively decided as necessary in order to regulate whaling and conserve whale stocks.
- Schedule can be amended by at least three quarters majority agreement unlike convention.
- Conservation measures advocated under the schedule are catch limits (which may be zero as in the case for commercial whaling) by species and area, designating specified areas as whale sanctuaries, protection of calves and females accompanied by calves, and restrictions on hunting methods.

CENTRE APPROVES RENAMING ALLAHABAD TO 'PRAYAGRAJ'

The Union Home Ministry has approved the proposal of the Uttar Pradesh Government to rename Allahabad as Prayagraj.

WHY WAS THE NAME CHANGE PROPOSED?

- **The Government of Uttar Pradesh has said that it is restoring the original name of the city.**
- The Government states that the city was rechristened during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar.
- **Akbar called the city Illahabas, meaning the abode of God.**
- **Before renaming by Akbar, the city was known as Prayag.**
- Medieval texts, including Akbar's court historian Abul Fazl, called the city as Piyag.

PROCEDURE FOR CHANGING NAMES:

- The proposals of the states would be scrutinised by the Union Home Ministry according to the existing guidelines in consultations with agencies concerned.
- **The Ministry approves the proposal after taking no-objections from the Ministry of Railways, Department of Posts and Survey of India, which confirms that there is no such city, town or village in their records with a name similar to the proposed one.**
- Then an executive order is passed.

RBI PROPOSES LOAN RESTRUCTURING OF MSMES

The RBI has proposed a one-time loan restructuring scheme for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

- The loan restructuring would be a big relief for troubled small businesses hit by demonetisation in late 2016 and the implementation of Goods and Services tax (GST) in July 2017.

FEATURES OF THE RESTRUCTURING SCHEME:

- **The scheme is applicable to the stressed accounts provided the total fund and non-fund based exposure to such a borrower does not surpass Rs 25 crore.**
- **The scheme will be applicable to the existing loans of the MSMEs that are in default but classified as 'standard' as on January 1, 2019, without an asset classification downgrade.**
- **The restructuring has to be implemented by March 31, 2020.**
- A provision of 5 per cent of the total outstanding loan, in addition to the money already set aside to cover potential losses, will have to be made for such borrowers.
- Each bank or non-banking financial company (NBFC) should formulate a policy which includes a framework for viability assessment of the stressed accounts and regular monitoring of the restructured accounts.
- **The loan restructuring scheme would be applicable for the borrowers who are GST-registered on the date of implementation of restructuring.**
- The restructuring would aid to provide a stimulus to the economy since the MSME sector contributes significantly to job creation and employs around 12 crore people, the second largest after the agriculture sector.

JUSTICE AK SIKRI NOMINATED AS EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF NALSA

President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Justice AK Sikri as Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

- He will be replacing Justice Madan B Lokur.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA):

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.

FEATURES OF THE NALSA ARE:

- **NALSA was brought into existence to fulfil the provisions under the Article 39A of the constitution which provides for free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity.**
- **NALSA organises Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.**
- The functions of the NALSA also includes spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations.
- **The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the Senior most Judge of the Supreme Court of India and is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.**

- NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalized and excluded groups from the diverse populace of the country and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes to be undertaken and implemented by the Legal Services Authorities at the various levels.

MORE DETAILS:

- **NALSA works in close coordination with various State Legal Services Authorities, District Legal Services Authorities and other agencies for a regular exchange of relevant information, monitoring and updating on the implementation and progress of the various schemes.**
- NALSA fosters a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.

INDIA-PAKISTAN EXCHANGE LIST OF NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS

Both India and Pakistan have exchanged their list of nuclear installations.

- The exchange was in accordance with the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India.

ABOUT THE AGREEMENT ON PROHIBITION OF ATTACKS AGAINST NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES:

- **The Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan on 31 December 1988 at Islamabad and came into force on 27th January 1991.**
- **Both India and Pakistan would refrain from undertaking, encouraging or participating in, directly or indirectly, any action aimed at causing the destruction of, or damage to, any nuclear installation or facility in the other country.**
- **Both India and Pakistan will inform each other about their nuclear installations and facilities on 1st January each year and also whenever there is a change.**

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AGREEMENT:

- Both countries have adopted the agreement as part of their efforts to uphold durable peace and develop friendly and harmonious bilateral relations.
- The exchange under the agreement is also a confidence-building measure in the bilateral relations.

STATES SET TO ROLL OUT PARIVESH

An ambitious web-based single-window system PARIVESH (Pro-Active and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous and Environmental Single-window Hub) for environmental clearances will be rolled-out at state levels by January 15.

- PARIVESH provides for an automated system for submission, clearance and monitoring.
- PARIVESH is expected to bring an end to the clearance nightmare for entrepreneurs.
- **PARIVESH has already been implemented at the Central level.**

ABOUT PARIVESH:

- **PARIVESH is a web-based workflow application which has been developed for online submission and monitoring of the proposals submitted by the proponents for seeking Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ Clearances from Central, State and district level authorities.**
- PARIVESH automates the entire tracking of proposals which includes online submission of a new proposal, editing/updating the details of proposals and displays status of the proposals at each stage of the workflow.

BENEFITS OF PARIVESH:

- **PARIVESH empowers the proponent to track real-time pendency of their proposals or applications.**
- **The system will show a bar chart about the delay at each level of clearance.**
- The sharp reduction in the time taken for issuance of Terms of Reference (TOR) for a project is the biggest benefit of the scheme.
- **PARIVESH removes manual intervention and puts the proposals on the first-come-first-serve basis for agenda.**
- Also barring a few special and specific mentions of a project, the minutes of a meeting will be auto-generated by the system and made available on the same day.
- This enhances the transparency of the system.
- PARIVESH provides for an amalgamation of various objectives of the Government like Digital India initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.

WEST BENGAL ANNOUNCES KRISHAK BANDHU SCHEME

The government of West Bengal has announced the Krishak Bandhu scheme to address farm distress in the state.

FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- **The West Bengal government will give annual financial assistance of Rs 5,000 per acre in two instalments, one during Kharif and another during Rabi season.**
- **Farmers can also take the financial assistance at one go.**
- **The scheme also provides for a life insurance cover of Rs 2,00,000 in case of death, irrespective of the cause, of an earning family member (farmer) aged between 18 and 60 years.**

- Farmers are not required to pay any premium to avail the insurance benefit.
- The scheme would cover 72 lakh farmer and share-cropper families in the State.

FINANCIAL BURDEN ON THE EXCHEQUER:

- The average land holding per cultivator in West Bengal is pegged at around 0.5 hectares (or 1.2 acres).
- Hence the average financial assistance to a farmer would come around to Rs 6000.
- **To cover 50 lakh farmers, the burden on the exchequer would be Rs 3000 Cr.**

SABARIMALA OPENS FOR MAKARAVILAKKU FESTIVAL SEASON

The Sabarimala Shrine has been opened for the annual 21-day Makaravilakku festival season.

ABOUT MAKARAVILAKKU:

- **Makaravilakku is the religious practice performed by the tribes in the forest of Ponnambalamedu.**
- **Once the Cyrus star (Makara Jyothi) appears in the sky during the day of the Makara Sankranti festival, the tribes perform their rituals in a temple at Ponnambalamedu forest.**
- **As part of the ritual, the tribes perform aarathi by lighting camphor and ghee in a vessel and circling around the idol at the temple in the Ponnambalamedu forest 3 times.**
- **This Aarathi performed by the tribes is referred to as Makaravilakku.**

RECENT CONTROVERSY:

- **On 2nd January 2019, women on the menstrual age entered the Sabarimala shrine during this season of Makaravilakku festival.**
- Even though Supreme Court had struck down the century-old religious practice which barred the entry of women in the menstrual age to the temple, the entry of women was not possible due to widespread opposition by the religious groups.
- But during the early hours of 2nd January 2019 two women by name Bindu Ammini, 42 years and Kanaka Durga, 44 years entered the adobe of Swamy Ayappa.

EXPORT PROMOTION CELL FOR MSMES

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has established an Export Promotion Cell.

- The cell aims to create to create a sustainable ecosystem for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

EXPORTS FROM THE MSME SECTOR:

- The value of MSME-related export products was USD 147,390.08 million in 2017-18.

- The share of MSME-related products in the country's exports was 48.56 per cent during 2017-18.

BENEFITS OF THE PROMOTION CELL:

- Integration of MSMEs into the global value chain.
- Evaluation of readiness of MSMEs to export their products and services.
- Recognition of areas where improvements are required in order to be able to export effectively and efficiently.

PRESENCE OF A GOVERNING COUNCIL:

- **In order to ensure the efficient delivery of the export-related interventions for the MSMEs, the MSME Ministry has decided to set up a Governing Council chaired by the Secretary of the MSME Ministry and co-chaired by the Development Commissioner, MSME.**
- The Council will also comprise of senior officials and members from ministries of MSME and commerce, MSME Export Promotion Council, Export Development Authority, Commodity Boards, and other bodies.

GEF ASSISTED GREEN - AG PROJECT TO TRANSFORM INDIAN AGRICULTURE

The Government has launched the Green - Ag: Transforming Indian Agriculture project for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes in association with Global Environment Facility (GEF).

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

- The project would be implemented in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in high-conservation-value landscapes of five States namely:
 - I. Madhya Pradesh: Chambal Landscape
 - II. Mizoram: Dampa Landscape
 - III. Odisha: Similipal Landscape
 - IV. Rajasthan: Desert National Park Landscape
 - V. Uttarakhand: Corbett-Rajaji Landscape
- **The Green-Ag project seeks to integrate biodiversity, climate change and sustainable land management objectives and practices into Indian agriculture.**
- The project aims to catalyze a transformative change of India's agricultural sector to support the achievement of national and global environmental benefits and conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.
- The project supports harmonization between India's agricultural and environmental sector priorities and investments to realise the national and global environmental benefits without compromising on India's ability to strengthen rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition

security.

HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLAUSE 6 OF THE ASSAM ACCORD

The Union Cabinet has approved the setting up of a high-level committee for the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

- The committee is formed to address the sense of feeling that clause 6 has not been fully implemented even almost 35 years after the accord was signed.

WHAT THE COMMITTEE WILL LOOK INTO?

- The committee shall examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause.
- The committee will suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as envisaged in clause 6.
- Examine the measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam.
- Assessing the quantum of reservation in employment under the Government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
- Assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in Assam assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.
- The committee will hold consultation with all the stakeholders and recommend the necessary measures to the Government.

CLAUSE 6 OF THE ASSAM ACCORD:

- The clause 6 of the Assam Accord reads "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people."
- The Assam Accord came as a culmination of a movement against immigration from Bangladesh.
- The cutoff date to be considered as citizens of India under the accord was set at March 24, 1971.
- The immigrant's up to March 24, 1971, will get all rights as citizens of India.
- But the immigrants are not eligible for safeguards meant for Assamese people because the cutoff for defining "Assamese people" eligible for the proposed safeguards was set at National registry of Citizens, 1951.
- Hence those who migrated between 1951 and 1971 to Assam would be Indian citizens, but would not be eligible for safeguards meant for "Assamese people".

PARLIAMENT PASSES NCTE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

The Parliament has given its approval to the National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill, 2018.

- The bill aims to protect the interest of the students who had completed courses from unrecognized institutes.

FEATURES OF THE BILL:

- **The Bill grants retrospective recognition** to institutions offering teacher education courses after the establishment of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) until the academic year 2017-18.
- **The Bill grants retrospective permission** to start a new course or training in teacher education to institutions which satisfy certain conditions and which have offered teacher education courses after the establishment of the NCTE until the academic year 2017-2018.

WHY WAS THE BILL NECESSARY?

- As per the data from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 23 state and Central universities and colleges offering B.Ed courses were found not recognised by the National Council for Teacher Education.
- As a result, the fate of thousands of students who had completed the courses from these unrecognized institutes was in jeopardy as their degrees would not be recognized anywhere.
- Hence the granting of retrospective permission had become a necessity.

ANINDITA NEOGY ANAAM HONOURED WITH NATIONAL NRITYA SHIROMANI AWARD

Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam has been honoured with the prestigious National Nritya Shiromani award for her contribution towards preserving and promoting the dance form across the world.

- The award was conferred during the 10th Cuttack Mahotsav: International Dance and Music festival.

ABOUT THE CUTTACK MAHOTSAV: INTERNATIONAL DANCE AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Cuttack Mahotsav is an International Dance and Music festival organised by Utkal Yuva Sanskrutik Sangh, in collaboration with the state government's Department of Odia Language.

ABOUT ANINDITA NEOGY ANAAM:

- US-based Kathak exponent Anindita Neogy Anaam has been trained under Pandit Rajendra Gangani and Pandit Jaikishan Maharaj.
- She has acquainted herself with both Jaipur and Lucknow Gharana of the art-form.

- She has been awarded the National Nritya Shiromani award for her contribution towards preserving and promoting the Kathak dance form across the world.

106TH SESSION OF INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS INAUGURATED

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi delivered the inaugural address at the 106th session of the Indian Science Congress.

- **The 106th Indian Science Congress is being held at Jalandhar.**
- The theme of the 106th science congress is 'Future India: Science and Technology'.
- Reflecting on the theme of 'Future India: Science and Technology', PM Modi said that he would like to add Jai Anusandhan to former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's famous slogan of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan and Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Jai Vigyan.
- He gave the nation a new slogan Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan and Jai Anusandhan.

ABOUT THE INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS:

- Indian Science Congress is organised by the Indian Science Congress Association every year in the first week of January.
- The Indian Science Congress Association was started in the year 1914 in Kolkata and has a membership of more than 30,000 scientists.
- The two British chemists, namely, Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P. S. MacMahon thought that scientific research in India might be stimulated if an annual meeting of research workers somewhat on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science could be arranged.
- This led to the establishment of the Indian Science Congress Association and the annual session of the Indian Science Congress.

PAKISTAN'S PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT DECLARES PANJ TIRATH HINDU RELIGIOUS SITE AS NATIONAL HERITAGE

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provincial government of Pakistan has declared the ancient Hindu religious site of Panj Tirath in Peshawar of North Western Pakistan as national heritage.

- The Directorate of Archaeology and Museums of KP has issued a notification under the KP Antiquities Act 2016 declaring the land in the Panj Tirath Park as a heritage site.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE:

- Panj Tirath derives its name from the five pools of water in the site which also has a temple.
- According to the epic of Mahabharat, King Pandu belonged to this area and Hindus used to come to these pools for bathing during the auspicious month of Kartek and worship for two days under the trees.

CHINA'S CHANG'E 4 PROBE MAKES HISTORIC TOUCHDOWN

China's Chang'e 4 probe spacecraft has become the first spacecraft to land on the far side of the Moon.

- Chang'e 4 is a Chinese lunar exploration mission that aims to achieve soft-landing on the far side of the Moon.
- The mission aims to deliver samples of Moon rock and soil to Earth.

ABOUT THE MISSION:

- **For the first time, there would be soft-landing on the far side of the Moon.**
- China's mission consists of a static lander and rover.
- **The rover will touch down on the Von Kármán crater, located on the side of the Moon which never faces Earth.**
- During the landing, the probe will descend on thrusters and touch down on the rugged terrain of the lunar far side.
- **The landers will aid in characterising the region's geology and the composition of rock and soil.**
- Chang'e-4's instruments would examine whether the impact which created the South Pole Aitken Basin has punched through the crust down to the Moon's mantle layer.
- The Chang'e-4 mission will also characterise the "radio environment" on the far side to lay the groundwork for the creation of future radio astronomy telescopes on the far side, which is shielded from the radio noise of Earth.
- **To study the respiration of the seeds and the photosynthesis on the Moon the static lander is carrying a container with potato and Arabidopsis plant seeds to perform a biological experiment.**
- **The lander will send the data through the satellite Queqiao of China.**

ABOUT THE VON KÁRMÁN CRATER AND THE FAR SIDE OF MOON:

- **Von Kármán crater is located within the oldest and largest impact feature on the Moon - the South Pole-Aitken Basin, which was formed by a giant asteroid impact billions of years ago.**
- **The far side of the Moon is never visible from Earth because of the phenomenon of tidal locking.**
- **As the Moon takes just as long to rotate on its own axis as it takes to complete one orbit of Earth, we are able to see only one face of the Moon from the Earth.**
- Even though it is called as the dark side, it is also illuminated by the Sun and has the same phases as the near side. Dark in this context simply means unseen.
- The far side is rather different than the near side. The far side has a thicker, older crust that is packed with more craters.

ABOUT THE CHANG'E-4 MISSION:

- **The Chang'e-4 mission is part of the Chinese larger lunar exploration mission.**
- The first and second Chang'e missions were aimed at gathering data from orbit.
- The third and fourth missions concentrated on surface operations.
- The fifth and sixth are sample return missions, delivering lunar rock and soil to laboratories on Earth.

NASA'S NEW HORIZON SPACECRAFT FLEW PAST ULTIMA THULE

The New Horizon Spacecraft of NASA has flown past Ultima Thule, a trans-Neptunian object located in the Kuiper belt.

- This marks a new beginning in the era of exploration from the enigmatic Kuiper Belt region.

DISCOVERIES ABOUT ULTIMA THULE:

- Ultima Thule (TOO-lee) has two reddish globes joined by a narrow neck, much like a snowman.
- Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles (6.4 billion kilometres) from Earth.
- Ultima Thule is spinning like a propeller.
- Ultima Thule, as it's known, is still not showing any signs of craters, moons or rings.

ABOUT THE NEW HORIZON MISSION:

- The New Horizon Mission is an interplanetary space probe part of NASA's New Frontiers programme.
- The New Horizon was launched in 2006.
- Its primary mission was to perform a flyby study of the Pluto system in 2015.
- The secondary mission: To fly by and study one or more other Kuiper belt objects.

AIM OF THE NEW HORIZON MISSION:

The New Horizons mission was aimed at getting insights about the edge of our solar system by making the first reconnaissance of the dwarf planet Pluto and by venturing deeper into the distant, mysterious Kuiper Belt which is a relic of solar system formation.

RBI FORMS EXPERT COMMITTEE TO REJUVENATE MSMES

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed an expert committee to look into the various challenges being faced by MSMEs and suggest ways and measures to rejuvenate them.

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE:

The eight-member committee would be Chaired by former Securities and Exchange Board of India Chairman UK Sinha.

- The other members of the committee are Ram Mohan Mishra, Pankaj Jain, PK Gupta, Anup

Bagchi, Abhiman Das, Sharad Sharma, and Bindu Ananth.

ABOUT THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE:

- Review the current institutional framework in place to support the MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises).
- Examine the factors affecting the timely and adequate availability of finance to the MSME sector.
- **Study the impact of the recent economic reforms on the sector and identify the structural problems affecting its growth.**
- **Conduct a study about the best global practices with respect to MSMEs and recommend its adoption in India, wherever appropriate.**
- Review the existing MSME focused policies and its impact on the sector.
- **To propose measures for leveraging technology in accelerating the growth of the sector.**

SIGNIFICANCE OF MSMES FOR INDIAN ECONOMY:

- The MSMEs are termed as the engines of growth of India.
- MSMEs account for more than 80% of the total industrial enterprises in India creating more than 8000 value-added products and contribute about 8% to the GDP.
- About 45% of total manufacturing output and 40% of the total exports from the country are from MSMEs.

ATAL SOLAR KRISHI PUMP YOJANA

The Government of Maharashtra has decided to give two LED bulbs, a DC fan and a mobile charging socket as freebies to farmers enrolling under the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana.

ABOUT THE ATAL SOLAR KRISHI PUMP YOJANA:

The Government of Maharashtra introduced the Atal Solar Krishi Pump Yojana to reduce losses due to non-payment of electricity bills and also promote solar energy.

- The Government would provide solar pumps at subsidised rates to the farmers.
- **Under the Scheme, farmers with less than five acres will have to pay 5 per cent of the cost of a 3 HP solar pump while farmers with more than five acres will get a 5 HP solar pump for Rs 30000.**
- With this Scheme, the Government aims to reach out to farmers from remote areas where the agricultural feeder is not possible.

UN OBSERVES FIRST-EVER WORLD BRAILLE DAY

The United Nations observed the first official World Braille Day on 4th January to create awareness about the importance of Braille for approximately 1.3 billion people living with some form of

distance or near vision impairment.

- The proclamation for the celebration of World Braille Day was made by the United Nations General Assembly as a means for realising the human rights of visually-impaired and partially-sighted people, and bringing written language to the forefront as a critical prerequisite for promoting fundamental freedom.

WHY JANUARY 4TH?

- **World Braille Day is celebrated on the January 4th to honour Louis Braille, who is credited for inventing the Braille script.**
- **Louis Braille was born in France on 4 January 1809.**
- Therefore, the World Braille Day is celebrated on his Birth Anniversary.

VIJAY MALLYA DECLARED AS FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDER

The Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) court in Mumbai has declared Vijay Mallya as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

- **Vijay Mallya is the first businessman to be charged under the new Fugitive Economic Offender's Act 2018.**

DECLARATION OF THE FUGITIVE ECONOMIC OFFENDER

- Vijay Mallya is declared as the Fugitive Economic Offender under the following provisions:
- According to the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018 a fugitive economic offender is a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for his or her involvement in economic offences involving at least Rs. 100 crore or more and has left India to avoid prosecution.
- The investigating agencies have to file an application in a Special Court under the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act, 2002 containing details of the properties to be confiscated, and any information about the person's whereabouts.
- The Special Court will issue a notice for the person to appear at a specified place and date at least six weeks from the issue of notice.
- Proceedings will be terminated if the person appears and if not then the person would be declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender based on the evidence filed.

Interesting to know:

- The person who is declared as a Fugitive Economic Offender can challenge the proclamation in the High Court within 30 days of such declaration according the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

NATIONAL HEALTH AGENCY TO BE RESTRUCTURED AS NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Modi has approved the restructuring of existing National Health Agency as National Health Authority.

- The existing society, "National Health Agency" has been dissolved and it is now restructured as an Authority to effectively implement Pradhan Mantri- Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- The National Health Authority would be empowered with full autonomy, accountability and the mandate to implement PM-JAY through an efficient, effective and transparent decision-making process by aligning the accountability with responsibility.
- The National Health Authority would be chaired by Union Health Minister and have representation from the Government and domain experts.

WHY THE AUTHORITY HAS BEEN CONSTITUTED?

- To enable faster decision-making.
- **Replacing the multi-layered structure with a simplified structure.**
- Authority will be able to specify treatment protocols and enforce their compliance.
- **The Authority with a stronger mandate would be able to prevent, detect and control frauds, abuse and redress grievances, thus resulting in the reduction of leakages.**

ABOUT THE PRADHAN MANTRI- JAN AROGYA YOJANA (PM-JAY):

- **Pradhan Mantri- Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) is a scheme of the Government under Ayushman Bharat.**
- **The scheme aims to reduce the financial burden on poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and ensure their access to quality health services was conceived.**
- It also seeks to accelerate India's progress towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal- 3 (SDG3).
- **Under the scheme about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) will have health benefit cover of Rs. 500,000 per family per year at free of cost.**
- The health benefit cover includes more than 1,350 medical packages covering surgery, medical and daycare treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostic.

YARN BANK SCHEME

The Ministry of Textiles, Government of India had launched the Yarn Bank Scheme as one of the components of PowerTex India Scheme with an aim to avoid fluctuation in yarn price.

OBJECTIVES OF THE YARN BANK SCHEME ARE:

- **To provide interest-free corpus fund to Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) or Consortium to enable them to purchase yarn at a wholesale rate and give the yarn at a reasonable price to the**

small weavers.

- To avoid middleman and local supplier's brokerage charge on the sales of yarn.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE SCHEME:

Under the Scheme, an interest-free corpus fund up to Rs 2 crore would be provided to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)/Consortium formed by power loom weavers.

WHAT IS POWERTEX INDIA?

- **PowerTex India is a comprehensive scheme for the development of the power loom sector.**
- PowerTex India aims to boost common infrastructure and modernise the power loom sector in the country.

THE COMPONENTS OF THE POWERTEX INDIA SCHEME ARE:

- In-situ Upgradation of Plain Power looms.
- Group Workshed Scheme (GWS).
- Yarn Bank Scheme.
- Common Facility Centre (CFC).
- Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme for Power loom Weavers.
- Solar Energy Scheme for Power looms.
- Facilitation, IT, Awareness, Market Development and Publicity for Power loom Schemes.
- Tex Venture Capital Fund.
- Grant-in-Aid and Modernisation & Upgradation of Power loom Service Centres (PSCs).

70-POINT GRADING INDEX TO ASSESS QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE STATES

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched 70-Point Grading Index to assess the quality of school education in the states.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE 70-POINT GRADING INDEX:

- The 70-Point Grading Index will assess areas of deficiency in each state's school education system so that targeted interventions can be made at every level.
- **Under the grading index, 70 indicators will be used to grade state schooling systems on areas like number of existing teacher vacancies, number of direct entry recruitments especially at leadership positions, school infrastructure and so on.**
- The index will assess states on a 1,000 point grading system with 10-20 points per parameter.
- The government will be setting up a separate fund over and above existing funding mechanisms to help states take up improvement exercises.
- The index will reinforce competitive federalism by giving the correct picture of where every

state stands and inducing a fair competition to improve each other's performances.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

The Ministry is also in the process of setting up a Central Institute of Assessment to strengthen continuous and comprehensive education and handhold states in ensuring customised teacher training and work on pedagogical improvements.

RAIL KUMBH SEVA MOBILE APP

Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App has been launched by the North Central Railway (NCR) to help the devotees arriving in Allahabad for the Kumbh Mela.

ABOUT THE MOBILE APPLICATION:

The Mobile Application 'Rail Kumbh Seva Mobile App' has been designed to provide critical and valuable information to the devotees, tourists and other passengers who will visit Allahabad during the Kumbh Mela period.

WHAT EXACTLY WILL THE APP DO?

- The app will assist to navigate through the city and the mela grounds.
- **The app will also provide information regarding all the 'Mela special' trains that will be run during the period.**
- **The app will provide a link to the user to buy both unreserved and reserved train tickets.**
- The app will aid in knowing their current location and also aid in getting directions to reach railway stations, the mela zone, major hotels, bus stations and other facilities within Allahabad city.
- **The app will also provide information about passenger amenities available at the stations like parking lots, refreshment rooms, waiting rooms, book stall, food plaza, ATMs and train enquiry.**

ABOUT THE KUMBH MELA AT ALLAHABAD:

- As per the holy Hindu scriptures, "During an ongoing war between the demons and the demigods for the possession of the elixir of immortality (Amruth), few drops fell to earth at four places: Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik, and Ujjain.
- At each of the four places, a Kumbh Mela is held.
- At Allahabad, the drop of Amruth is believed to be fallen near Sangam and people assemble near the Sangam during Kumbh Mela to purge themselves of all sins by taking a dip in the waters and attain Moksha (Salvation)."
- The Kumbh Mela is held in these four places based on the astrological calculations and it returns to each place after a gap of twelve years.
- The Kumbh Mela is held every 3 years, the Ardh (half) Kumbh Mela is held every six years at

Haridwar and Allahabad (Prayag) while the Purna (complete) Kumbh mela takes place every twelve years, at four places Prayag (Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik.

- The Maha Kumbh Mela is celebrated at Prayag after 144 years (i.e. after 12 'Purna Kumbh Melas').

CENTRE SETS UP BEZBARUAH COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLAUSE 6 OF ASSAM ACCORD

The Government has set up a committee headed by former Union tourism secretary M.P. Bezbaruah to review the implementation of clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

CLAUSE 6 OF THE ASSAM ACCORD:

- Clause 6 of the Assam Accord provides for Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to protect preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

WHAT WILL THE COMMITTEE DO?

- **The committee will examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause 6 of the Assam Accord.**
- The committee will also suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards as envisaged in clause 6.
- **The committee will examine the measures to be taken to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam.**
- **The committee will assess the quantum of reservation in employment under the Government of Assam and other measures to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.**
- The committee will assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in Assam assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.

MORE DETAILS:

- **The committee will be facilitated by the Noth East Division of the Home Ministry.**
- The state government will provide the necessary administrative and logistic support to the committee.

CRITICISM AGAINST THE MOVE:

- **There is criticism that the committee is an attempt to cover up the Central Government's move to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 which aims to grant citizenship to immigrants.**
- It is said that some provisions of the amendment bill are contrary to the Assam Accord.

RESERVATION FOR ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTIONS

The Government has announced a decision to provide ten per cent reservation in jobs and higher education for those belonging to the economically backward sections of the General Category.

- The Government aims to provide the aid of reservation to economically backward poor people of the General Category who are not availing the benefit of reservation as of now.

WHO WILL BE PROVIDED RESERVATION AND HOW?

- **As per the reports, those with annual family income below Rs 8 lakhs and owning less than five acres of land will be provided reservations.**
- This 10% reservation would be over and above the existing 50 per cent reservation.
- The Government plans to introduce a constitutional amendment to amend Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution for providing reservations.

DOES IT VIOLATE SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS?

- In the landmark verdict of Supreme Court in the Mandal case, the Supreme Court had held that the proposal to provide 10% Reservation for Other Economically Backward Sections of the people who are not covered by any of the existing schemes of Reservation as constitutionally invalid.
- **The Supreme Court had held that mere economic backwardness or mere educational backwardness which is not the result of social backwardness cannot be the criterion of backwardness in Article 16 (4).**
- **The Supreme Court has even ruled in the Indra Sawhney case that the share of jobs or educational or legislative seats reserved for different communities cannot together exceed 50%.**
- So the present order of the Government to provide reservations violates some of the observations made by the Supreme Court in its previous judgments.

HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENT IT?

- **The one way to implement the current reservation proposal is to include the law of providing reservations under the "Ninth Schedule" of the constitution.**
- An example of this can be Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 1993 was placed in Ninth Schedule of the constitution to keep Tamil Nadu's reservation limit intact at 69%.
- **The present proposal is also seen as an attempt by the Central Government to consolidate the upper caste votes just ahead of the general elections.**

CHINA PASSES LAW TO MAKE ISLAM COMPATIBLE WITH SOCIALISM

The People Republic of China has passed a new law to regulate Islam and make it more compatible with socialism by "Sinicizing Islam".

DETAILS:

- The indifference of China towards Islam was garnering it loads of criticism.
- **China has around 20 million Muslims and Islam is one of the five officially recognised religions in atheist China.**
- **Even then the top officials in the Chinese government have often linked the religion to "mental disease" that "needs to be cured".**
- **China has detained more than 1 million Muslim Uyghur's at the indoctrination camps of Xinjiang.**
- **Many heavy-handed measures like confiscating copies of the Quran, issuing diktats to Muslims not to grow beards, and not choose names for their wards which sound "too Islamic", have been witnessed in China.**
- Hence to address the criticisms China has brought in a law to "Sinicise" Islam.

THE CHINESE MEDIA JUSTIFYING THE LAW HAS STATED THAT:

- **"Modern countries are secular and diverse in a globalized world. But the revival and spread of religion have impacted the secular society. Fundamentalism has caused more religious violence. Religious nationalism is threatening countries' legitimate governments and is resulting in social instability."**
- "The main purpose of China's five-year plan to sinicise Islam is to seek Islam governance that tallies with Chinese practice, and it is not only limited to Islam. The government would take similar measures with other recognised religions of the People's Republic of China."

RASHTRIYA GOKUL MISSION

The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is implementing the scheme of Rashtriya Gokul Mission to conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds in a focused and scientific manner.

- The scheme comprises of two components namely National Programme for Bovine Breeding (NPBB) and National Mission on Bovine Productivity (NMBP).
- Rashtriya Gokul Mission aims to enhance the productivity of the indigenous breeds of India through professional farm management and superior nutrition

OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION:

- Development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- Undertaking breed improvement programmes for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock.
- Enhancing milk production and productivity.
- Upgrading nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Deoni, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi.
- Distributing disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVES UNDER THE RASHTRIYA GOKUL MISSION:

- **Establishment of integrated cattle development centres 'Gokul Grams' to develop indigenous breeds.**
- Awards for encouraging farmers and breeder societies to rear Indigenous breeds of Bovines.
- **Gopal Ratna award for farmers maintaining the best herd of Indigenous Breed and practising best management practices.**
- **Kamdhenu award for best managed Indigenous Herd by Institutions/Trusts/ NGOs/ Gaushalas or best-managed Breeders' Societies.**
- National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres are being established as Centres of Excellence to develop and conserve Indigenous Breeds in a holistic and scientific manner.
- An e-market portal "E-Pashu Haat"- Nakul Prajnan Bazaar for connecting breeders and farmers, an authentic market for quality- disease-free bovine germplasm in the form of:
 - I. semen
 - II. embryos
 - III. calves
 - IV. heifers
 - V. adult bovines with different agencies or stakeholders.
- **Pashu Sanjivni Programme encompassing the provision of Animal Health cards ('Nakul Swasthya Patra') along with UID identification and uploading data on National Data Base.**
- Advanced Reproductive Technology: Including Assisted Reproductive Technique- In-vitro Fertilization (IVF)/ Multiple Ovulation Embryo Transfer (MOET) and sex-sorted semen technique to improve the availability of disease-free female bovines.
- National Bovine Genomic Center for Indigenous Breeds (NBGC-IB) for selection of breeding bulls of high genetic merit at a young age using highly precise gene-based technology.

MOU FOR SALE OF FASTAG

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IMHCL) and leading Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) like BPCL, HPCL and IOCL for sale of FASTags through their petrol pumps.

ABOUT FASTAG:

- **FASTag is an electronic toll collection system operated by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).**
- **FASTag enables automatic deduction of toll charges and lets you pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction.**
- FASTags are linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted automatically.
- FASTag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology.

FEATURES OF FASTAG:

- FASTag is bank neutral and can be linked to customers' choice of bank accounts.
- Together with providing flexibility and convenience to the users, FASTag is also user-friendly as there will be no requirement of fulfilling KYC obligations.
- FASTag apps provide provides real-time recharge of any FASTag through UPI by linking customer's bank account with IHMCL FASTags.
- There are plans to expand the FASTag to allow purchasing fuel at petrol pumps in future.

ABOUT RADIO-FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION (RFID) TECHNOLOGY:

- Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags which are containing electronically-stored information.
- A two-way radio transmitter-receivers called interrogators or readers send a signal to the tag and read its response.
- The RFID reader transmits an encoded radio signal to interrogate the tag.
- The tag receives the message and then responds with its identification and other information.

NASA DISCOVERS NEW PLANET

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of USA has discovered a new planet.

- It is the third new planet discovered by the NASA mission- Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS).

ABOUT THE NEW PLANET- HD 21749B:

- The new planet HD 21749b is outside our solar system and orbits a dwarf star 53 light years away.
- HD 21749b orbits a bright star in the constellation Reticulum.
- It has the longest orbital period of all the three discoveries made by TESS.
- It is predicted that the surface of the new planet is likely around 300 degrees Fahrenheit, which is relatively cool, given its proximity to its star, which is almost as bright as the Sun.

OTHER PLANETS DISCOVERED BY TESS:

- The other two discoveries made by the TESS probe are Pi Mensae b and LHS 3844b.
- Pi Mensae b has an orbit of 6.3 days and LHS 3844b has an orbit of just 11 hours.

ABOUT THE TESS MISSION:

- The Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission of NASA is an explorer mission which is undertaking an all-sky survey to search for planets transiting nearby stars.
- The objective of the TESS mission is to discover planets smaller than Neptune that transit stars

bright enough to enable follow-up spectroscopic observations that can provide planet masses and atmospheric compositions.

AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA BANS SINGLE-USE PLASTIC ITEMS

The Airports Authority of India has banned the single-use plastic items at its 129 airports across the country.

- The Airports Authority of India has initiated numerous steps like banning of single-use plastic items like straws, plastic cutlery, plastic plates etc.
- The AAI has already declared 16 of its airports as "Single-Use Plastic Free" based on the third-party assessment carried out by Quality Council of India.

WHAT ARE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS?

- **Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.**
- They degrade into tiny particles after many years.
- In this process of degradation, they release toxic chemicals (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.

ABOUT AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA:

- The Airports Authority of India was created under the Airports Authority of India Act, 1994.
- **The Airports Authority of India came into being on 1st April 1995.**
- The Airports Authority of India was brought into existence as a single Organization entrusted with the responsibility of creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing civil aviation infrastructure both on the ground and airspace in the country by merging erstwhile National Airports Authority and International Airports Authority of India.

INDIAN FOREST SERVICE TO BE RENAMED AS INDIAN FOREST AND TRIBAL SERVICE

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions has initiated an inter-ministerial consultation note to rename the Indian Forest Service as Indian Forest and Tribal Service.

- The consultation note also contains the proposal to train the cadre to be more receptive towards tribals and forest dwellers.
- The proposal has been made according to the recommendations made by the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) in its annual report.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE NCST:

- The NCST highlights the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem as a

resource-base.

- **NCST recommends the renaming of the Indian Forest Service into Indian Forest and Tribal Service in recognition of the close ties between tribals, the forest and forest ecosystem.**
- **NCST argues that merging forest and tribal welfare administrations will further the participation of 'tribals' in forest management.**
- The NCST states that renaming will also engender greater sensitivity on the forest department's part towards the needs of 'tribal' communities.

ABOUT THE INDIAN FOREST SERVICE:

- The erstwhile Imperial Forest Service was constituted in 1867 recognising the need to have a premier forest service to manage the varied natural resources of the vast country like India and to organize the affairs of the Imperial Forest Department.
- After the subject of Forestry was moved to the "Provincial List" by the Government of India Act, 1935, the recruitment to the Imperial Forest Service was discontinued.
- **In the year 1966, the Government of India constituted Indian Forest Service as one of the three All India Services under the All India Services Act, 1951.**
- The Indian Forest Service was provided with the mandate of the implementation of the National Forest Policy which envisages scientific management of forests and to exploit them on a sustained basis for primary timber products, among other things.

GOVERNMENT APPROVES AROUND 5000 ADDITIONAL SEATS IN JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYAS

The Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar has announced an increase of around 5,000 seats in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country.

- This is the biggest-ever expansion and the number of seats has increased from 46,600 to 51,000 at the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs).

WHY THE INCREASE?

- **The increase in the number of seats was part of the Government efforts to increase the access to quality education for students, especially from rural areas.**
- **Over the time there has been an increase in the number of students applying for the exam to get enrolled in the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas.**
- The number of applicants increased from 5.50 lakh aspirants in 2001 to 31.10 lakh aspirants in 2019.
- The increase in the number of applicants reflects the growing aspirations of rural children for acquiring quality education.
- **Hence the Government has increased the number of seats to provide more opportunity for talented children from rural areas to get a quality education in the nearly free of cost residential schools.**

ABOUT JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYAS:

- **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were set up under the provisions of National Policy on Education-1986.**
- The Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas were set up to nurture and provide opportunities for children with special talent or aptitude to progress at a faster pace by making good quality education available to them irrespective of their capacity to pay for it.
- **It was a unique experiment in India where the students are selected for admission to Class 6 based on their performance at the entrance examination.**
- **These schools are fully residential and co-educational schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi and provide education from class VI to XII standard.**

NILEKANI PANEL TO STRENGTHEN THE DIGITAL PAYMENTS ECOSYSTEM

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a high-level committee under Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

- Nandan Nilekani will be the head of the committee which comprises of former RBI deputy governor H.R. Khan, former MD and CEO of Vijaya Bank Kishore Sansi, former secretary in ministries of IT and steel Aruna Sharma and chief innovation officer, Centre for Innovation, Incubation & Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIM Ahmedabad, Sanjay Jain.

TERMS OF THE REFERENCE:

RBI HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMITTEE:

- To encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitization.
- Reviewing the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identifying the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them.
- Assessing the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion.
- Suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments.
- Suggest a road map for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes.
- Undertake cross-country analysis to identify best practices to accelerate digitisation of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments.
- Suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **RBI has asked the committee to submit its report within a period of 90 days from the date of its first meeting.**

GITA GOPINATH BECOMES THE FIRST FEMALE CHIEF ECONOMIST OF IMF

Gita Gopinath has joined the International Monetary Fund as its Chief Economist.

- **She is the first woman to occupy the post of Chief Economist of IMF.**
- She is the 11th Chief Economist of the IMF.

ROLE OF THE CHIEF ECONOMIST OF IMF:

- The Chief Economist is also the Director of the Fund's Research Department and is responsible for providing independent advice to the Fund on its policy issues, integrating ideas of the research in the design of policies, conveying these ideas to the policymakers inside and outside the fund and managing all research done at IMF.
- The Chief Economist is part of the senior leadership team of the IMF and directly advises the Managing Director.
- **The Chief Economist also leads about a hundred PhD economists in the Research Department.**

ABOUT GITA GOPINATH:

- Gita Gopinath is an Indian-American Economist.
- Prior to her present role as the Chief Economist of IMF, she was serving as the John Zwaanstra of International Studies and Economics at Harvard University.
- Born in Mysore, she holds a B.A. degree from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi (1992), Masters in Economics from Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi (1994).
- She also completed her M.A. at the University of Washington (1996).
- In 2001, she completed her PhD at Princeton University.

TIMELINE FIXED FOR SETTLEMENT OF CLAIMS UNDER PMFBY

The operational guidelines of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) prescribed the timeline of two months of completion of Crop Cutting Experiments/harvesting period for settlement of claims by insurance companies.

- This timeline is subjected to conditions like timely release of subsidy and yield data to the insurance companies.

WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR THE DELAY IN SETTLEMENT OF CLAIMS?

- Delayed transmission to yield data.
- Dispute raised by Insurance Companies on yield data.
- Reconciliation of individual farmer data on the portal by bank branches.
- Late release of their share in premium subsidy by some States.
- NEFT related issues.

ABOUT THE REVISED GUIDELINES TO OVERCOME THE DELAYS:

- Provision of 12% interest rate per annum to be paid by the Insurance Company to farmers for any delay in settlement of claims beyond 10 days of prescribed cut off date for payment of claims.
- State Governments are required to pay 12% interest rate for delay in the release of the State share of Subsidy beyond three months of prescribed cut off date/submission of requisition by Insurance Companies.

ABOUT THE PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY):

- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) is the government-sponsored crop insurance scheme that integrates multiple stakeholders on a single platform.
- It was supposed to provide a breakthrough by enhancing the coverage of the crop insurance and protect the farmers from the vagaries of the monsoon.
- Under the scheme, there is a uniform premium of 2% to be paid by farmers for all Kharif crops, 1.5% for all Rabi crops and 5% in case of annual commercial and horticultural crops.
- The balance premium would be paid by the government.
- The scheme is being implemented in an area-based approach.

KUMAR RAJESH CHANDRA APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE
SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL

The appointment of Kumar Rajesh Chandra as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has been approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

- As per the notification, he would continue in the post up to 31.12.2021 i.e. date of his retirement on superannuation or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- **Kumar Rajesh Chandra is a 1985 batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre.**

ABOUT THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET:

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister decides on the appointments to several top posts under the Government of India.
- The committee also has Union Home Minister as the member.

ABOUT SASHASTRA SEEMA BAL (SSB):

- After the Chinese incursion of 1962, it was felt that the borders of the country could not be protected with the force of rifles alone.
- Hence a unique, unconventional yet specialized organization, which would function in the far, flung, vulnerable, strategic, remote, climatically and topographically difficult border areas and motivate the border population across several states towards the cause of protecting our national sovereignty was conceived as Special Service Bureau in 1962.

- It was eventually created in March 1963.
- **This Special Service Bureau was renamed the Sashastra Seema Bal in January 2001.**

LOK SABHA PASSED 124TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL TO PROVIDE RESERVATIONS TO THE ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTIONS

The Lok Sabha has passed the 124th Constitutional Amendment Bill to provide reservations to the 'Economically Weaker Sections' of society.

- The Central Government is planning to introduce a ten per cent reservation for those belonging to economically weaker sections of society.

FEATURES OF THE 124TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL:

- The Bill states that people from the economically weaker sections of the society have largely remained excluded from attending the higher educational institutions and public employment on account of their financial incapacity to compete with the persons who are economically more privileged.
- The Bill is brought in to fulfil the commitments under the Directive principles of the state policy listed in the Article 46 of the Constitution which urges the government to protect the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of society.
- The Bill amends Article 15 of the Constitution to provide reservations to economically weaker sections for admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions.
- The Bill also amends Article 16 of the Constitution to provide reservations to people from economically weaker sections in government posts.
- **The Bill caps the reservation to economically weaker sections at 10%.**
- The Bill states that the criterion for the economically weaker sections would be notified by the State from time to time on the basis of family income and other indicators of economic disadvantage.

KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES 2019

Khelo India Youth Games 2019 are being held at Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Pune.

- Previously called as Khelo India School Games, it has been now renamed as Khelo India Youth Games.

ABOUT KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES:

- **Khelo India Youth Games are held annually in January or February as the national level multidisciplinary grassroot games.**
- **The games are held in two categories- under-17 years school students and under-21 college**

students.

- Khelo India Youth Games are part of Khelo India programme, which was introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and establish India as a great sporting nation.

KHELO INDIA PROGRAMME HAS BEEN DIVIDED INTO 12 VERTICALS, NAMELY:

1. Play Field Development
2. Community Coaching Development
3. State Level Khelo India Centres
4. Annual Sports Competition
5. Talent Search and Development
6. Utilization and Creation/Upgradation of Sports Infrastructure
7. Support to National/Regional/State Sports Academies
8. Physical Fitness of School Children
9. Sports For Women
10. Promotion of Sports amongst People with Disabilities
11. Sports for Peace and Development
12. Promotion of Rural and Indigenous/Tribal Games

ONE MUST KNOW:

Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years.

PRANAV R MEHTA BECOMES PRESIDENT OF THE GLOBAL SOLAR COUNCIL

Pranav R Mehta, President of the National Solar Energy Federation of India has become the President of the Global Solar Council.

- He has become the first Indian to head the Global Solar Council.

ABOUT GLOBAL SOLAR COUNCIL:

- **Global Solar Council is an international non-profit association of the national, regional and international associations in solar energy and the world's leading corporations.**
- **The Global Solar Council, headquartered in Washington D.C., USA** came into being following the historic United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 21).
- **The Global Solar Council is an International Coalition of more than 30 nations**, utilising maximum solar energy which have decided to harness the renewable energy for the greater good.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SOLAR ENERGY FEDERATION OF INDIA:

- National Solar Energy Federation of India is an umbrella organization of all solar energy stakeholders of India working in the area of policy advocacy for Solar Energy.

- **National Solar Energy Federation of India aims to provide a platform at the National level for addressing all issues connected with solar energy growth in India.**

KERALA HIGH COURT MAKES NOTICE MANDATORY FOR STRIKE AND HARTALS

The High Court of Kerala has set a seven-day notice period for political parties and individuals to call for hartal and general strike in the State.

WHY THE 7 DAY NOTICE PERIOD?

The Kerala High Court has provided the following reasons for setting a seven-day notice period:

- **To provide time for the citizens to approach the court with their objections and to enable courts to examine the legality of the hartal call on request of citizens.**
- To provide an opportunity for the State to be prepared for safeguarding the interests of the citizens.
- Even though the court recognised the fundamental right of those who call for a strike to demonstrate their protests, it made it clear that the rights cannot be exercised in violation of the fundamental rights of other citizens.
- The court made it clear that the fundamental right of the citizens to life and livelihood would outweigh the fundamental right of persons calling for strikes and hartals.
- The court further said that since the call for hartals and general strikes denies the fundamental rights of traders, the general public, migrant labourers and those in unorganised sectors, those persons who call for hartals will be held responsible for the losses suffered due to the event.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE KERALA HIGH COURT:

- The court observed that Kerala's economy had taken a severe hit during the recent devastating floods and the frequent strikes will only cause more sufferings for the economy of the state.
- Kerala's economy is dependent on tourism and the travel advisories issued by foreign countries against visiting Kerala cannot be ignored.
- The Court noted that in 2018, 97 hartals and strikes had taken place in the State and in 2019 one hartal was called on January 3, Trade unions have also called for a two-day strike starting January 8.
- Frequent strikes like these are a cause of concern.

IIT-M RECREATES SPACE FUEL

The researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) have recreated space fuel by simulating interstellar conditions in the laboratory.

- It is a big breakthrough for India in the exploration of cleaner and sustainable alternatives to

fossil fuel.

- The discovery has the potential to convert atmospheric carbon dioxide into a next-generation energy source to curb greenhouse gases and global warming.
- The research of the IIT-M in this regard has been published in the journal proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS).

DETAILS:

- The team from IIT-M was able to create methane-containing clathrate hydrates in ultra-high vacuum (1000 billion times below the atmospheric pressure) and at a temperature close to -263 degrees Celcius. i.e. the conditions at deep space.
- This discovery of hydrates at extremely low pressures and ultra-cold temperatures is highly unexpected.
- The team predicts that molecules like methane and ammonia in space could exist in a completely different form than what is known to us.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE:

- **Clathrate hydrates are crystalline solids containing gases like methane and carbon dioxide trapped in well-defined cages of water molecules.**
- **These hydrates, especially of methane, are considered to be the fuel of the future.**
- The researchers then repeated the experiments with carbon-di-oxide and similar hydrates were produced.
- This can be a breakthrough in dealing with global warming.
- Now carbon dioxide can be trapped from the atmosphere and carbon dioxide gas can be sequestered as solid hydrates under the sea bed.

SIKKIM TO INTRODUCE UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

The ruling party of Sikkim, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) has assured the implementation of the Universal Basic Income in Sikkim by 2022.

- If things go as per plan, Sikkim would become the first state in the country to implement the Universal Basic Income (UBI).

ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME (UBI):

Universal Basic Income (UBI) refers to a programme wherein the people are provided with a fixed amount of money irrespective of their income, resources or employment status.

RESOURCES FOR FUNDING THE UBI:

The state of Sikkim aims to mobilise the resources for funding the UBI through the following avenues:

- Sikkim is a power-surplus state.

- **Sikkim produces 2200 MW and the requirement of the state is only 200-300 MW.**
- The power generation capacity would further go up to 3000 MW in a few years.
- The revenue from the selling of the surplus power would provide extra revenue, which the government plans to divert to implement UBI.
- Sikkim also plans to subsume other subsidies and allowances in order to provide a particular amount every month to people.

BENEFITS OF UBI:

- **The 2017 Economic Survey had proposed UBI as a conceptually appealing idea which could be a possible alternative to social welfare programmes targeted at reducing poverty.**
- The advocates of the UBI praise the concept as futuristic which will allow the people to look into the future without worrying too much about income to sustain themselves.
- **The pilot programmes for the UBI has been successfully implemented in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and tribal belts with fairly large samples.**

INDIA'S LONGEST SINGLE-LANE STEEL CABLE SUSPENSION BRIDGE INAUGURATED IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu inaugurated India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge over Siang River in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

DETAILS ABOUT THE BRIDGE:

- **The bridge is 300-metre-long and is also known as Byorong bridge.**
- **The bridge will reduce the distance between Yingkiong and Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh by almost 40 km.**
- The bridge was constructed under the non-lapsable central pool of resources (NLCPR) of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region at a cost of Rs 48.43 crore.
- The bridge would be of great help to around 20,000 people on living on both sides of the Siang river.
- **The bridge will also bolster defense preparedness and facilitate the army in their operations.**

ABOUT THE SIANG RIVER:

- **The Siang River** is considered as the lifeline of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Tsangpo river originates in the Angsi Glacier in the Himalayas.
- The river enters India through Arunachal Pradesh where it is called as Siang.
- The river is also called as Dihang in the plain regions.
- As the river flows through the plains it is joined by the rivers Dibang and Lohit.
- **Downstream of the confluence of Lohit, the river is called as Brahmaputra.**

JANUARY 10: WORLD HINDI DAY

Every year 10th January is celebrated as World Hindi Day to create awareness about the language of Hindi across the World and to present Hindi as an international language.

WHY 10TH JANUARY?

The first world World Hindi Conference was organized in Nagpur on January 10, 1975.

- The conference saw representation from 30 countries.
- To commemorate the occasion, the Government of India since 2006 is celebrating 10th January as World Hindi Day.

HOW IT IS DIFFERENT FROM HINDI DIVAS?

- Every year Hindi Divas is celebrated on September 14th because it was the day Hindi was recognised as an official language.
- On 14 September 1949, the constituent assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the Official Language of the Union.
- While the World Hindi Day is aimed at the promotion of the Hindi language at the global stage, the Hindi Divas is being observed across the country at the national level.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF HINDI:

Various constitutional provisions like Article 120, Article 210, Article 343, Article 344 and Articles from 348 to 351 are aimed at the promotion of Hindi.

WEB-WONDER WOMEN CAMPAIGN

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has launched an online campaign Web-Wonder Women to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media.

ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN:

- Through the campaign, the Ministry aims to recognize the fortitude of Indian women stalwarts from across the globe who have used the power of social media to run positive & niche campaigns to steer a change in society.
- The Campaign is aimed at encouraging, recognizing and acknowledging the efforts of these meritorious Women.
- The Campaign has been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India in association with the NGO Breakthrough and Twitter India.
- Based on the nominations received from a large number of categories including Health, Media, Literature, Art, Sports, Environmental protection, fashion, the entries would be shortlisted.
- Then the shortlisted entries will be open for public voting on Twitter.
- The finalists would then be selected by the panel of judges.

ABOUT BREAKTHROUGH NGO:

- Breakthrough NGO is a global human rights organization working to end violence against women and girls.
- Some of the well-known programmes of the NGO are Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell!), Nation Against Early Marriage, Deport The Statue and #ImHere.

PM LAUNCHES GANGAJAL PROJECT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Gangajal Project which aims to improve water supply to the city of Agra.

ABOUT THE GANGAJAL PROJECT:

- **The Gangajal project aims to provide a better supply of drinking water which will benefit the residents as well as tourists.**
- The Gangajal project aims to bring 140 cusecs of Ganga water to Agra to help in meeting the drinking water demands in the city.
- The project was launched in 2005 in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency and was scheduled to be completed by March 2012.
- The project missed several deadlines and even the cost of the project escalated from Rs 345 crore in 2005 to over Rs 2,800 crore.
- Under the Gangajal project, Agra will get 140 cusec water supply per day from Palra headworks in Bulandshahr's Upper Ganga canal through the pipelines.
- **Together with Agra, Mathura and Vrindavan will also get water through these pipelines.**

ABOUT THE JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY:

- Japan International Cooperation Agency is an agency of the Japanese Government which coordinates official development assistance (ODA) for the Government of Japan.
- It aims to assist economic and social growth in developing countries and promote international cooperation.
- Japan International Cooperation Agency is advancing its activities around the pillars of a field-oriented approach, human security, enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, and speed.

FIRST INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA DIALOGUE TO BE HELD IN UZBEKISTAN

The first India-Central Asia Dialogue will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on January 12 and 13.

- The Dialogue will be co-chaired by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj and the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov.
- The Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan will participate in the event.

- The Foreign Minister of Afghanistan will participate in the dialogue as a special invitee for the session dedicated to connectivity issues in the region.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DIALOGUE:

- To enhance their cooperation in wide-ranging spheres including exploring ways to substantially enhance India's economic involvement in business and development sector of Central Asia.
- Developing viable connectivity options between India and Afghanistan and Central Asia to further facilitate trade and economic activity in the region.
- Strengthen India's engagement, including political, economic, development partnership and cultural, with all the Central Asian countries and take it to a new level.

AIM OF THE DIALOGUE:

The first India-Central Asia Dialogue aims at taking forward the bilateral relations which have strengthened following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to all the five Central Asian nations- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan- in 2015 and the EAM's tour across the region in August 2018.

CHHATTISGARH WITHDRAWS GENERAL CONSENT ACCORDED TO THE CBI TO PROBE CASES IN THE STATE

The Government of Chhattisgarh has withdrawn the general consent accorded to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe the cases in the state.

- The general consent was withdrawn under Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

ABOUT THE DELHI SPECIAL POLICE ESTABLISHMENT ACT, 1946:

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) derives its powers to investigate the cases from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.
- The Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 provides for a special police force to investigate the offences specified by the Central Government through the Gazette notification.

ABOUT SECTION 6:

Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 makes the consent of the states mandatory for the CBI to exercise its power and jurisdiction in the state.

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL CITED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH

- The credibility and integrity of the CBI have been compromised under the present Central Government.
- As a result of the free hand to CBI to operate in the state, the law & order and state officers

were being disturbed.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The CBI is now required to seek permission from the state government before initiating any investigations.
- Chhattisgarh has joined the list of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh which have withdrawn the general consent for CBI to undertake investigations.

NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

The Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

- The programme aims to tackle the challenge of increasing pollution in the cities and towns.

FEATURES OF THE PROGRAMME:

- It is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
- The plan covers 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.
- The centre plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India under the programme.
- Studies would be conducted across 102 non-attainment cities to ascertain pollution sources and the extent of their contribution.
- The Apex committee in the Ministry of Environment would periodically review the progress of these components on the basis of appropriate indicators, which will be evolved.
- Each city would be asked to develop its own action plan for implementation based on sources of pollution.
- Each city would be asked to develop its own action plan for implementation based on sources of pollution.
- A three-tier system, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards are proposed under the plan.
- The plan document is not binding on the states since the document is not a legal document.

THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS' VIEW:

- **The Environmentalists criticised the plan for not making it legally binding.**
- The Environmentalists demand a more stringent action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of millions of lives at risk because of the continuously growing air pollution crisis.

RBI TWEAKS GOLD MONETISATION SCHEME

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made changes with the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) to allow charitable institutions, Central Government entities and state government entities to deposit gold under GMS.

- Now the entities allowed to deposit gold under the scheme include Resident Indians (Individuals, HUFs, Proprietorship & Partnership firms), Trusts including Mutual Funds/Exchange Traded Funds registered under SEBI (Mutual Fund) Regulations, Companies, charitable institutions, Central Government, State Government or any other entity owned by Central Government or State Government.

WHY THE AMBIT TO DEPOSIT GOLD UNDER THE SCHEME WAS EXPANDED?

- To bring out the unaccounted gold with the charitable institutions.
- To enable the government agencies to deposit gold which they had confiscated.

ABOUT THE GOLD MONETISATION SCHEME:

- The Gold Monetisation Scheme was launched with the tagline Earn, while you secure.
- The scheme provides the dual benefit of, interest (denominated in gold) on the gold deposited and an option of encashing the gold at maturity.
- All the scheduled commercial banks except the RRBs are authorised to implement the scheme.

THE GOLD DEPOSITS CAN BE MADE UNDER 3 TERM DEPOSIT PLANS:

- i. Short term- 1 to 3 years
 - ii. Medium term- 5 to 7 years
 - iii. Long term- 12 to 15 years
- Short-term deposit rates are decided by the banks concerned, while the medium and long-term deposit interest rates are decided by the Central Government.
 - **The minimum deposit one can make in a gold monetisation scheme is 30 grams of any purity and there is no maximum limit.**
 - The capital gains from the scheme are exempted from capital gains tax, wealth tax and income tax.

TATA STEEL'S NETHERLANDS PLANT RECOGNISED AS THE FACTORY OF THE FUTURE

The World Economic Forum has recognised Tata Steel's plant at IJmuiden in the Netherlands as Manufacturing Lighthouse with state-of-the-art production facilities which successfully adopt and integrate the cutting-edge technologies of the future and drive financial and operational impact.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE RECOGNITION:

- Acknowledgement of the thriving culture of innovation at Tata Steel and advanced analytics team's vision and commitment to realise more efficient, productive and responsible steelmaking.
- The pioneering use of advanced analytics to optimise the way raw materials are used, increase the yield at every step of the steelmaking process and further improve logistics between the different processes and the quality of the product for customers.
- **The Advanced Analytics Academy gives Tata Steel employees an impetus to find solutions for waste reduction, quality improvement and overall reliability of production processes.**

ABOUT MANUFACTURING LIGHTHOUSES:

- The World Economic Forum organizes a network of leading intelligent production companies as Manufacturing Lighthouses under its 'Shaping the Future of Production' initiative to allow the exchange of knowledge and promote collaborations in the area of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' in production.
- These Manufacturing Lighthouses showcase how best a strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution be developed by training employees, cooperating with other parties, implementing changes in the workplace and in the value chain through greater efficiency and contribute to reducing the climate footprint of production companies by 50 per cent.

CABINET APPROVES CURRENCY SWAP AGREEMENT WITH JAPAN

The Union Cabinet has approved India's Currency Swap Agreement with Japan.

- The \$75-billion bilateral currency swap arrangement is a milestone in mutual economic cooperation and special strategic and global partnership between the two countries.

WHAT IS A CURRENCY SWAP AGREEMENT?

A Currency swap agreement is a foreign exchange agreement between two parties to exchange a given amount of one currency for another and, after a specified period of time, to give back the original amounts swapped.

HOW A CURRENCY SWAP AGREEMENT CAN BENEFIT A COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY INDIA?

- **The currency swap facilities make it easier for India to pay for its imports. This aids in addressing the challenge of depreciation in INR.**
- Since the Currency swap agreement involves trading in local currencies. Countries pay for imports and exports through their own currencies rather than involving a third country currency. This does away with the charges involved in multiple currency exchanges.
- The currency swap makes it easier to improve liquidity conditions.
- **Currency swap agreements help in saving for a rainy day when the economy is not looking in**

good shape.

- The swap agreements also contribute towards stabilising the country's balance of payments (BoP) position.
- The agreement aids in improving the confidence in the Indian market.
- **Together with ensuring that the agreed amount of capital is available to India, it also brings down the cost of capital for Indian entities while accessing the foreign capital market.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

The Currency Swap Agreement was concluded between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the summit level meeting at Yamanashi, Japan.

AGREEMENT FOR RENUKAJI DAM MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT SIGNED

The Agreement for the construction of Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project was signed by six states, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the presence of Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari.

FEATURES OF THE PROJECT:

- **Renukaji Dam Multi-Purpose Project is a storage project on the Giri river which is tributary of the Yamuna at Sirmour district of Himachal.**
- A 148 m-high rock-filled dam would be constructed across the river Giri.
- **The project also involves the generation of 40 MW of power during peak flow to be executed by Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (HPPCL).**
- The project would increase by the river flow about 110 per cent which will be used to meet the drinking water needs of Delhi and the other Yamuna basin states up to some extent in the lean period.
- The share of stored water among the states will be as follows: Haryana-47.8 per cent; Uttar Pradesh/ Uttarakhand-33.65 per cent; Himachal-3.15 per cent; Rajasthan-9.3 per cent and NCT of Delhi: 6.04 per cent.
- The Central Government will bear 90 per cent of the cost of irrigation/drinking water component, and the balance cost will be borne by the states.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

Along with the Renukaji Dam Multipurpose Project other two projects are planned in the Yamuna river basin, Lakhwar Project on the River Yamuna in Uttarakhand, Kisau Project on the River Tons in Uttarakhand and Himachal for the effective utilisation of the water resource.

SARVA BHASHA KAVI SAMMELAN OF AIR INAUGURATED IN CHENNAI

The Governor of Tamil Nadu inaugurated the Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan of All India Radio (AIR), a National Symposium of Poets, in Chennai.

- The poems were recited in the original language by the poets themselves and then they were translated to Hindi and Tamil.

ABOUT THE SARVA BHASHA KAVI SAMMELAN:

- Sarva Bhasha Kavi Sammelan of All India Radio (AIR) aims to provide a creative platform for national integration and linguistic harmony through mutual interaction and coordinated presentation of the best in contemporary poetry of all Indian languages.
- This Kavi Sammelan made its beginning in 1956 and is one of its kind programme wherein 23 eminent poets from 22 Indian languages come together on one stage to offer their creative best.
- The Kavi Sammelan is the reflection of rich culture, literacy and shared heritage of Indian languages.

ABOUT ALL INDIA RADIO:

- **All India Radio is the National Radio Broadcaster of India.**
- Living up to its motto- '**Bahujan Hitaya: Bahujan Sukhaya**' it is striving to inform, educate and entertain the masses of the country.
- **The All India Radio broadcasts programmes in 23 languages and 179 dialects.**

AMA GHARE LED SCHEME OF ODISHA

The Government of Odisha has launched the scheme "Ama Ghare LED" to provide LED bulbs at free of cost to about 95 lakh families in the state.

FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- The beneficiaries of the scheme are those who have registered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and the State Food Security Scheme (SFSC).
- The implementing agency for the scheme is Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (OPTCL).
- The LED bulbs would be distributed through camps and PDS outlets.
- **Biometric authentication is mandatory to avail the benefits of the scheme.**

DETAILS:

- **The people in the rural areas were forced to use incandescent or CFL bulbs due to non-availability of quality LED bulbs at a reasonable price.**
- As a result, they were burdened with higher electricity bills.
- **Distribution of LED bulbs at free of cost to the poor families together with reducing the financial burden, would enhance the energy efficiency.**
- It is estimated that Odisha would require about 3.8 crore LED bulbs to implement the scheme successfully.

PM RELEASES COMMEMORATIVE COIN AND STAMP ON SIKH GURU GOBIND SINGH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released a commemorative coin and stamp on Guru Gobind Singh to mark his 350th birth anniversary.

- On the occasion, Prime Minister Modi underlined the role of Guru Gobind Singh in uniting the country through Khalsa sect.

ABOUT THE COMMEMORATIVE COIN:

- Rs 350 commemorative Coin with the standard weight of 35 gram will have 50 per cent silver, 40 per cent copper and 5 per cent each of nickel and zinc.
- The front side of the coin bears the rupee symbol and denominational value '350' in international numerals below the Lion Capital.
- The reverse side bears the picture of "Takht Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib" in the centre and the years '1666' and '2016' in international numerals will be on the left and right periphery of the coin.

ABOUT GURU GOBIND SINGH:

- Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and last of the human Gurus of Sikhism.
- He became Guru at the age of 9 in 1675 after the martyrdom of his father, the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- Guru Gobind Singh played a vital role in moulding the Sikh religion into its present shape, with the institution of the Khalsa fraternity, and the completion of the sacred scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Guru Gobind Singh lost his four sons died during his lifetime two in battle and two executed by the Mughal army.
- Later he himself declared Guru Granth Sahib as the next and perpetual Guru of the Sikhs before leaving his mortal body in 1708.

ABOUT THE KHALSA SECT:

- After the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh had declared that he would create such a Panth which would challenge the tyrant rulers in every walk of life to restore justice, equality and peace for all of mankind.
- This led to the institution of the Khalsa Sect.
- He infused the dual spirit of a saint and a soldier in the minds and hearts of the Khalsa sect followers to fight oppression in order to restore righteousness (Dharma) and to uplift the down-trodden people in this world.
- He introduced the 5Ks, of the Khalsa: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha(wooden comb), Kara(iron or steel bracelet worn on the wrist), Kirpan (sword or dagger) and Kacchera (short breeches).

POSTPONED PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIVAS TO BE HELD IN VARANASI

The Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) will be held in Varanasi on January 21 and would be formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22, 2019.

- The theme of the PBD 2019 is "Role of Indian Diaspora in building a New India".
- The convention held during the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) provides an important platform to engage and connect with the overseas Diaspora.
- **The Chief Guest for this year's Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is Pravind Jugnauth, the Prime Minister of Mauritius.**

DETAILS ABOUT PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIVAS:

- **India celebrates Pravasi Bhartiya Divas on 9 January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the development of India.**
- **9th January also commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai in 1915.**
- The decision to celebrate Pravasi Bhatrtiya Divas was taken based on the recommendations of the High-Level Committee (HLC) on the Indian Diaspora under the Chairmanship of L. M. Singhvi.
- **The first Pravasi Bhatrtiya Divas was celebrated in 2002 and the Pravasi Bhatrtiya Divas was held every year on 9th January since then.**
- In 2015, a decision was made to celebrate Pravasi Bhatrtiya Divas once in two years in different states and a smaller event would be held in Delhi every alternate year.
- **Now, India celebrates Pravasi Bhartiya Divas once in every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots.**

WHY WAS THE PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIVAS POSTPONED IN 2019?

The Pravasi Bhatrtiya Divas 2019 has been delayed to facilitate the dignitaries to participate in the Kumbh Mela being held at Prayagraj and the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi.

TRISHNA GAS PROJECT OF ONGC GET THE APPROVAL OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE BOARD

The National Wildlife Board has given its approval for the Trishna Gas project of ONGC which falls in the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary in the Gomati district of Tripura.

DETAILS ABOUT THE TRISHNA GAS PROJECT:

- **ONGC has discovered 10-12 gas bearing wells in the Trishna Wildlife sanctuary.**
- The gas extracted from these wells would be supplied to the North Eastern Electric Power

Corporation Ltd (NEEPCO) owned 100 MW gas-based thermal power project at Monarchak in Sonamura subdivision of Sipahijala district of Tripura.

- The Tripura unit of ONGC has also committed to provide Rs 25 crore to the state government for carrying out Swacch Bharat Abhiyan.

ABOUT THE TRISHNA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY:

- **The Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1988.**
- The vegetations in the sanctuary fall under four broad categories of tropical semi-evergreen forest, the east Himalayan lower Bhanar Sal, moist mixed deciduous forest and the Savanah woodland.
- Prominent medicinal plant species are Kurcha, Tulsi, Vasak, Sarpaganda, Rudraksha, Bel, Chirata, and Kalamegh can be found here.
- The wildlife prominent in the sanctuary comprises of Indian Gaur(Bison), Deer, Hooklock Gibbon, Golden Langur, Capped Langur, Pheasants and Reptiles.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE BOARD:

- **National Board for Wild Life is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**
- It is an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approves projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- The National Board for Wild Life is chaired by the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the vice-chairman of the Board and the members include 15 non-government members, 19 ex-officio members and 10 government officials such as secretaries.

INDIA CELEBRATED NATIONAL YOUTH DAY ON JANUARY 12

India celebrated National Youth Day on January 12 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

- The National Youth Day is celebrated on the birth anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda so that the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and the ideals for for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth.
- The government aims to imbibe the students and youth with the philosophy and ideals of Swami Vivekananda, the man who brought a change in the thought process of the Indian youth.

ABOUT SWAMI VIVEKANANDA:

- Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863.
- He was a renowned philosopher, poet, writer, social reformer and orator.
- **His works include 'Jnanayoga', 'Bhaktiyoga', 'Rajayoga', 'To the Youth of India'.**
- **He also founded the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.**

- He passed away on July 4, 1902, at the age of 39.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S EFFECT ON THE WORLD:

- Swami Vivekananda was the main force behind the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the western world.
- Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament of the World's Religion at Chicago is cherished even today.
- He is credited with raising interfaith awareness and bringing Hinduism to the status of major world religion in the late 19th century.

WHY NATIONAL YOUTH DAY IS CELEBRATED?

To commemorate the great contribution of the Swami Vivekananda to Indian society and to ensure his ideas, ideals and philosophies continue as guiding light for Indian youth, his birth anniversary is celebrated as National Youth Day.

MACEDONIA RENAMED BY ITS PARLIAMENT AFTER AN AGREEMENT WITH GREECE

The Parliament of Macedonia has passed the resolution to amend the constitution of the country to rename it as The Republic of Northern Macedonia.

- The opposition parties had boycotted the vote and the proposal narrowly got the two-thirds majority vote required for the constitutional amendment.
- The renaming is in line with a landmark agreement with Greece to end a decades-long dispute.

WHAT WAS THE DISPUTE BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND GREECE?

- **The use of the name "Macedonia" was disputed between the European countries of Greece and the Republic of Macedonia, formerly a state within Yugoslavia.**
- After the declaration of independence of Macedonia from erstwhile Yugoslavia, the country named it as the Republic of Macedonia.
- The dispute was mainly due to the ambiguity in nomenclature between the Republic of Macedonia, the adjacent Greek region of Macedonia and the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia.
- Greece opposed the use of the name "Macedonia" by the Republic of Macedonia without a geographical qualifier such as "Northern Macedonia".
- Greece accused the Republic of Macedonia of appropriating symbols and figures that are historically considered part of Greek culture such as the Vergina Sun and Alexander the Great, and of promoting the irredentist concept of a United Macedonia, which involves territorial claims on Greece, Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia.
- **Due to the conflict over the name, Greece vetoed Macedonia's attempt to join Nato in 2008**

and even blocked its EU membership ambitions.

- The opposition of Greece was so fierce that the United Nations was forced to refer Macedonia as "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

DETAILS ABOUT THE AGREEMENT WITH GREECE:

- After a lot of negotiations, an agreement was reached between Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and his Macedonian counterpart Zoran Zaev.
- **The agreement is famously referred to as the Prespa Agreement.**
- As per the agreement the Republic of Macedonia would be renamed as the Republic of North Macedonia.
- **The language of the country would be referred to as Macedonian and its people known as Macedonians (citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia).**

SIKKIM COMES UP WITH "ONE FAMILY ONE JOB" SCHEME

The Chief Minister of Sikkim- Pawan Kumar Chamling has announced the One Family One Job scheme to provide employment to the youth of Sikkim.

DETAILS ABOUT SIKKIM'S ONE FAMILY ONE JOB SCHEME:

- **One Family One Job scheme entitles one government job for every family in the state.**
- The Chief Minister handed over appointment letters to over 12,000 unemployed youths at an employment fair organised at the Paljor Stadium in Gangtok.
- **Only members of those families which do not have a government job at present are eligible for government employment under the scheme.**
- **The government has announced that the nature of the job is not temporary and would be regularised after five years.**
- Sikkim is the first state in the country to launch an exclusive programme which entitles every family in the state with a government job and Sikkim earmarks 70 per cent of its revenues towards salaries for state government employees.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT FESTIVAL

The Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore (Retd.) launched the National Youth Parliament Festival as part of the National Youth Day celebrations.

DETAILS ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT FESTIVAL:

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the December Mann Ki Baat address had shared the idea of organizing Youth Parliaments for young people in every district of the country.

As a step forward the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has shaped the initiative of National Youth Parliament to:

- **Capture the voice of Youth.**
- Provide a chance to the youth to brainstorm about new India and to find ways and chalk out plans to realize our resolves before 2022.
- Hear the voice of Young minds in the age bracket of 18-25 who are allowed to vote, but not allowed to contest in elections.
- To engage with public issues, understand the common man's point of view, form their opinion.

THEME OF THE FESTIVAL:

The theme of the National Youth Parliament festival is "**Be the Voice of New India**" and "**Find solutions and contribute to policy**".

HOW WOULD IT FUNCTION?

- Through District Youth Parliaments, the festival would be taken to the doorstep of the youth.
- This is to ensure a large number of Youth participate in the initiative.
- **The participants for the District Youth Parliament would be selected through two screening processes i.e. Digital and Walk-in screenings.**
- Three best speakers from each District Youth Parliament will participate at the State Youth Parliament and two best speakers selected from each State Youth Parliament will participate as speakers in the National Youth Parliament.
- The highest scorer from each of the District Youth Parliament (DYP) will participate in the National Youth Parliament (NYP) as a delegate.
- **A cash award of Rs. 2 Lakhs, Rs. 1.50 Lakhs and Rs. 1 Lakh would be awarded for three best speakers at the National Youth Parliament.**

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SPONSORS SAKHI CENTRES

Sakhi Centre or One Stop Centre (OSC) is a fully sponsored scheme of Central Government which offers integrated services like medical, legal, psycho-social support and temporary shelter under one roof.

- These centres are set up through the Nirbhaya Fund under the National Mission for Empowerment of women by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

DETAILS:

- **Sakhi Centres offer integrated services like medical, legal, psycho-social support and temporary shelter under one roof.**
- These centres provide necessary support to women facing physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, irrespective of age, class, caste, education status, marital status, race and culture will be facilitated with support and redressal.

OBJECTIVES OF THESE CENTRES:

- To provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof.
- To facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **These are 24x7 centres and any woman in an adverse situation or someone on her behalf can seek help from the Sakhi Centre by dialling Women's toll-free helpline 181.**
- Due attention is given to the training of staff in these centres to ensure that survivors of violence who have faced tremendous physical, emotional and psychological trauma are not further victimised and treated with sensitivity and care.

ABOUT THE NIRBHAYA FUND:

- **Nirbhaya Fund was announced by the Government of India in the 2013 Union Budget.**
- The fund was established to support initiatives by the Government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring the safety of women in India.
- Nirbhaya Fund is administered by the Department of Economic Affairs of the Finance Ministry.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development together with concerned ministries will work out details of the structure, scope and the application of this fund.
- Nirbhaya which means fearless was the pseudonym given to the 2012 Delhi gang-rape victim to hide her actual identity.

HUNAR HAAT EXHIBITIONS TO PROMOTE THE TALENT OF INDIAN ARTISANS INAUGURATED IN NEW DELHI

- Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley and Union Minority Affairs Minister Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi inaugurated Hunar Haat exhibitions in New Delhi.
- Hunar Haat plays an important role in national and international branding of the heritage of master artisans in India.
- Hunar Haat is aimed at "Development with Dignity" of the artisans and craftsmen from the minority communities.

EXPECTED BENEFITS OF HUNAR HAAT:

- **Projecting the talent of Indian artisans.**
- Build a credible brand of indigenous talent of Indian artisans and craftsmen.
- Promoting the artisan and craftsmen heritage of India which had been marginalised for a long time.
- **Provides an Empowerment & Employment Exchange platform for master artisans and craftsmen.**

- Provides a platform to fulfil the commitments under "Make in India", "Stand up India" and "Startup India".

ABOUT HUNAR HAAT:

- **Hunar Haat exhibitions are organised by the Ministry of Minority affairs under its USTAAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.**
- USTAAD scheme aims to preserve the heritage of traditional arts and crafts of minority communities, build the capacity of traditional craftspersons and artisans and establish linkages of traditional skills with the global market.
- Together with boosting the skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans engaged in the traditional ancestral work, USTAAD scheme aims to enhance the market access to the traditional arts and crafts, so that the rich heritage of the minority communities are preserved for future generations.

THE GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY DECIDES TO BAN SINGLE-USE PLASTIC FROM MARCH 1, 2019

The Government of Puducherry has decided to ban the production, sale and use of single-use plastic products from March 1, 2019.

- To ensure the ban is effective on the ground both in letter and spirit, the Government of Puducherry would be conducting a massive drive to create awareness among the merchants and the public on the necessity of the ban.

ONE MUST KNOW:

The Government of the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu had announced on World Environment Day 2018, that it would ban the use of plastic items including non-biodegradable carry bags from January 1, 2019.

THE INDUSTRIALISTS' VIEW:

- **Industrialists argue that it is not the plastics which have become a problem, rather it is the way in which human beings deal with disposable plastics is the real cause for concern.**
- Hence, it would be wise to regulate the use rather than ban so that it doesn't harm the industry.

THE GOVERNMENT'S STAND:

The Government has said that the decision to ban single-use plastic was taken to gift a plastic-free Puducherry to the future generation and curb the plastic in the larger interest of the environment.

FAMOUS WRITER NAMITA GOKHALE BESTOWED WITH SUSHILA DEVI LITERATURE AWARD

Renowned writer Namita Gokhale was awarded Sushila Devi Literature Award for her work "Things to Leave Behind".

- She was honoured in the 'Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author' category at the inaugural edition of Bhopal Literature and Art Festival.

ABOUT THE SUSHILA DEVI LITERATURE AWARD:

- Sushila Devi Literature Award is constituted by Ratanlal Foundation.
- The award recognises the Best Book of Fiction Written by a woman author.
- **It is a newly constituted award and comes with a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.**

ABOUT BHOPAL LITERATURE AND ART FESTIVAL:

- **Bhopal Literature and Art Festival was the brainchild of former bureaucrat Raghav Chandra and was Conceptualised by the Society for Culture and Environment, Heartland Stories.**
- The festival draws inspirations from glorious traditions and rich history of Central India.
- The literature festival is organised by the Society for Culture and Environment, Heartland Stories in association with Sahitya Akademi.

ABOUT NAMITA GOKHALE:

- Namita Gokhale is an Indian writer, publisher and festival director who has authored sixteen books including nine works of fiction.
- She has also conceived and curated over a hundred episodes of 'Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond', a book-show broadcast on Indian's national broadcaster Doordarshan.
- Namita Gokhale is a founder-director of the 'Jaipur Literature Festival' along with William Dalrymple.
- She has also served as member-secretary of Indian Literature Abroad (ILA), an initiative by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to translate and promote contemporary literature from the Indian languages into the major international languages, particularly the six UNESCO languages (English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Russian and Chinese).

FIRST EVER PHILIP KOTLER PRESIDENTIAL AWARD CONFERRED UPON PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded the first ever Philip Kotler Presidential Award.

- Philip Kotler Presidential Award aims to spread examples of individuals and companies who create an innovative culture for the economic, social and technological advancements of an industry or a country.

REASONS FOR SELECTING PRIME MINISTER MODI FOR THIS AWARD:

- PM Modi was selected for his outstanding leadership for the nation.
- PM Modi's selfless service towards India, combined with his tireless energy has resulted in extraordinary economic, social and technological advances in the country.
- Under PM Modi's leadership, India is now identified as the centre for innovation and value-added manufacturing (Make in India), as well as a global hub for professional services such as information technology, accounting and finance.
- Modi's visionary leadership has also resulted in the digital revolution (Digital India), including the Unique Identification Number, Aadhaar, for social benefits and financial inclusion.
- **Initiatives such as Make in India, Startup India, Digital India and Swachh Bharat have positioned India as one of the most lucrative manufacturing and business destinations in the world.**

ABOUT THE PHILIP KOTLER PRESIDENTIAL AWARD:

- **Philip Kotler, a professor of marketing at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management is also known as 'Father of Modern Marketing'.**
- Apart from marketing, Philip Kotler has extensively written on education, environment, government marketing, healthcare, hospitality, and innovation.
- **The Philip Kotler Presidential Award is constituted to honour mastery in the field of marketing and management.**
- The award recognises and celebrates achievements of organisations, marketing teams, and individuals in different industries around the world.

INDIA CELEBRATED THE ARMY DAY ON JANUARY 15TH

Every year India celebrates Army Day on January 15th.

- Army Day is celebrated to salute the valiant soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the country and its citizens.

WHY IT IS CELEBRATED ON JANUARY 15?

It is in recognition of Field Marshal Kodandera M. Cariappa taking over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Commander-in-Chief of India, on 15th January 1949.

DISPLAY OF WOMEN POWER:

For the first time in the history of Indian Army, Lieutenant Bhavana Kasturi lead the Indian Army's Service Corps (ASC) contingent and Captain Surabhi, a female officer, lead the Army's Daredevils Motorcycle Display team comprising 33 men riding nine bikes in a pyramid formation.

ABOUT THE INDIAN ARMY:

Indian Army traces its origin to the Military Department which was created within the Government of the East India Company at Kolkata in the year 1776.

- With the motto of 'Service Before Self', Indian Army is on the mission to ensure national security, national unity, defend the nation from external aggression and internal threats, and maintain peace and security within its borders.

APPROVAL COMES FOR SITA RAMA LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECT OF
TELANGANA

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has given its approval for the Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project of Telangana.

- The project would be completed in three years and would lead to submergence of about 1,930-hectare area and 157 villages.

ABOUT THE SITA RAMA LIFT IRRIGATION PROJECT:

- **The Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Project aims to divert Godavari river water to irrigate 2.72 lakh hectares in three districts of Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam and Mahabubabad districts of Telangana.**
- The water from River Godavari will be diverted from the upstream of existing Dummugudem Anicut barrage.
- Head regulator would be constructed at Dummugudem Anicut on Godavari river and lined canal of about 372 km would be constructed.

AIM OF THE PROJECT:

The project aims to provide water for irrigation as well as to enrout tanks, villages, towns and supplement some of the existing/ proposed irrigation.

QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA SURVEYS THE SANITATION ACROSS CITIES ON
THE BANK OF RIVER GANGA

The Quality Council of India undertook a survey on the status of sanitation across cities and towns on the bank of River Ganga for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

- There are 39 towns on the banks of river in West Bengal, 20 in Uttar Pradesh, 17 in Bihar and 14 and two towns respectively in Uttarakhand and Jharkhand.

ABOUT THE FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:

- **Four out of five towns along the River Ganga have waste dumps along the banks and nearly**

55 per cent of the towns have drains emptying into the river without any cleaning.

- Only 19 towns had municipal solid waste (MSW) plants and only 7 towns in the plains can claim installation of a trash cleaner in their territory.
- 72 per cent of towns have nullahs (drains) discharging into the river and 77 per cent of these drains do not have functional screens that filter out filth.
- 12 towns have scored A, 44 B-grade and the rest scored a poor C grade in performance.
- **Poor-performing towns were in states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.**

WHAT DOES DIFFERENT GRADES SIGNIFY?

- **Grade A-** Towns had good cleanliness and waste management services.
- **Grade B-** Towns managed only a partial cleanliness around the ghats.
- **Grade C-** Towns have a lot to do to achieve over improvement in cleanliness, solid waste management and in setting up infrastructure at treating sewage flowing into the river.

ABOUT THE QUALITY COUNCIL OF INDIA:

- The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an accreditation body established in 1997 jointly by the Government of India and the Indian Industry represented by the three premier industry associations i.e. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- Quality Council of India (QCI) is set up as a non-profit autonomous society to establish an accreditation structure in the country and to spread quality movement in India by undertaking a National Quality Campaign.

PUNE TO GET 'ROADEO' ON ITS ROADS SOON!

The traffic police authorities of Pune are planning to introduce a robot named 'Roadeo' which would move around city roads, functioning as a quasi-traffic policeman and cautioning commuters about traffic rules and offences.

REASON FOR BRINGING IN ROADEO:

The Traffic Police Department of Pune is looking at a futuristic model to maintain traffic flow and spread awareness about the traffic rules.

ABOUT ROADEO:

- Roadeo consists of a 16-inch LED display to showcase traffic rules and other important messages such as 'Wear a helmet', 'Do not jump the signal' and others.
- The Hands of the Roadeo are also engineered to move and show stop signs to vehicles.
- Roadeo is also equipped with a siren, skid-steering wheels and obstacle-detection sensors.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT:

- It is a first of its kind initiative in the entire country.
- If this pilot project turns out to be successful it would go a long way in easing the traffic management burden and reducing the workload of overburdened policemen.

ONE MUST KNOW:

The Robot "Roadeo" is developed by SP Robotics Maker Lab, a Pune based laboratory that trains people to learn about robotics and build tech themselves.

IMBEX 2018-19 BEGINS AT CHANDIMANDIR MILITARY STATION

India-Myanmar bilateral army exercise, IMBEX 2018-19, has begun at Chandimandir Military Station which houses the headquarters of the Western Command.

- It is the second edition of the IMBEX

OBJECTIVES OF IMBEX 2018-19:

Train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations under the UN flag.

- Training the Myanmar Army delegation on tactics, procedures, expertise and methodology required by contingents of the member nations for serving in UN peacekeeping operations.
- Provide opportunities to the army personnel of both the nations to serve effectively in UN missions by providing understanding about each other's training, tactics, procedures and best practices.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS EXERCISE:

- **India is one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping force and has a rich experience of serving in UN peacekeeping operations.**
- This expertise will be shared with the delegation from Myanmar.
- This delegation would form the core group of trainers who will further impart training to Myanmar Army personnel who are likely to serve in UN peacekeeping operations.

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS PEACE KEEPING FORCE:

- United Nations Peace Keeping Force are employed in areas of armed conflict to maintain or re-establish peace.
- The UN Peacekeeping Forces would be employed only when both parties to a conflict accept their presence.
- Often referred to as Blue Helmets, the peacekeeping operations are authorised by the United Nations Security Council which is authorised by the United Nations Charter to maintain global

peace.

SPACE-X-CRS-16 DRAGON CARGO CRAFT DEPARTS FROM INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION AFTER ITS SUCCESSFUL MISSION

The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon cargo craft departed from the International Space Station after its successful mission to deliver scientific equipment and other supplies.

- The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon successfully delivered more than 2,500 kilograms (5,600 pounds) of cargo to the space station and orbited Earth for five weeks.
- The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon craft is expected to splash down just west of Baja, California.

ABOUT SPACE-X-CRS-16 DRAGON:

- The SpaceX-CRS-16 Dragon is a Commercial Resupply Service mission to the International Space Station launched by NASA.
- **The NASA had contracted this mission to SpaceX for launch.**

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION:

- **The International Space Station is a habitable artificial satellite, in low Earth orbit.**
- The ISS maintains an orbit with an altitude of between 330 and 435 km (205 and 270 miles) by means of reboost manoeuvres and circles the Earth in roughly 92 minutes and completes 15.5 orbits per day.
- **The ISS programme is a joint project between five participating space agencies: NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada).**

DD SCIENCE AND INDIA SCIENCE LAUNCHED TO NURTURE SCIENTIFIC MINDSET IN THE COUNTRY

The Minister of Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan launched the initiatives DD Science and India Science to popularise science in India.

- The initiatives aim to develop scientific temper in the Indian society.

ABOUT DD SCIENCE:

- **DD Science is a one-hour slot on Doordarshan National channel which will be telecast Monday to Saturday from 5 pm to 6 pm.**
- DD Science may be scaled up to a full-fledged channel in the future.

ABOUT INDIA SCIENCE:

- **India Science is an Internet-based channel which will be available on any internet-enabled device and will offer live, scheduled play and video-on-demand services.**

- India Science will have a 24x7 presence through www.indiascience.in.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DD SCIENCE AND INDIA SCIENCE:

- **DD Science and India Science have been conceived and supported by the Department of Science and Technology and are being implemented and managed by Vigyan Prasar.**
- An agreement has been signed between Vigyan Prasar and Doordarshan in this regard.

ABOUT VIGYAN PRASAR:

- Vigyan Prasar (VP) is an autonomous organisation under the Department of Science and Technology.
- Vigyan Prasar aims to popularise science in India through several strategically important approaches.

WORLD'S FIRST TV CHANNEL DEDICATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS LAUNCHED

The world's first television channel dedicated to human rights was launched in London by the International Observatory of Human Rights (IOHR).

DETAILS:

- **It would be a web-based channel and would deliver human rights issues to audiences in over 20 countries across Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.**
- The broadcasts of the channel can be viewed via the netgem.tv interactive platform.
- **The programmes are currently broadcasted in English and eventually hopes to broadcast in other languages including Farsi, Turkish, Arabic and Russian.**

AIMS OF THE CHANNEL:

- The Human Rights Channel aims to deliver hidden stories ignored by mainstream media into people's living rooms.
- **The Channel would focus on issues like refugees, press freedom and the incarceration of journalists, extremism, women's rights, LGBT+ issues and the plight of the world's stateless people.**

PROGRAMMES THAT THE CHANNEL HAS IN THE PIPELINE:

- China, 30 years after the crackdown on the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests.
- The positive and negative impacts of technology on women.
- The human rights implications of Brexit.
- Britain's departure from the European Union.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS (IOHR):

- The International Observatory of Human Rights is an independent non-profit and non-governmental organisation.
- IOHR partners with local and international human rights group to drive and promote positive changes and push for justice and the respect of human rights worldwide.
- IOHR aims to defend the dignity of people stripped of their rights including unjustly jailed journalists, human rights defenders, refugees and victims of oppression.

ODISHA ENCOURAGES CULTIVATION THROUGH KRUSHAK ASSISTANCE FOR LIVELIHOOD AND INCOME AUGMENTATION (KALIA)

Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) is a support scheme of Odisha whose primary targets are small farmers, cultivators and landless agricultural labourers.

- The scheme involves payments to encourage cultivation and associated activities.

FEATURES OF THE KALIA 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 as 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.**

VISION BEHIND THE SCHEME:

- The scheme is proposed as an alternative to the demand of farm loan waiver.
- The 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.

PRESIDENT KOVIND APOINTS SANJAY JAIN AND K M NATARAJ AS ADDITIONAL SOLICITOR GENERALS OF INDIA

President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed senior advocates Sanjay Jain and K M Nataraj as Additional Solicitor Generals of India.

- The appointments were made by the President as per the recommendations of the Appointments Committee of the cabinet.

ABOUT THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET:

- **The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet is headed by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister is a member of the committee.**
- The Appointments Committee of the cabinet is responsible for making recommendations for several important positions under the Government of India.

ABOUT THE ADDITIONAL SOLICITOR GENERAL:

- **Additional Solicitor General, ASG is the third important law office of the country in the hierarchy.**
- The post of ASG is neither constitutional nor statutory.
- The post of ASG is governed by Law Officers (Conditions of Service) Rules, 1987.

TRIPURA CM LAUNCHES SUSTAINABLE CATCHMENT FOREST MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched the Sustainable Catchment Forest Management (SCATFORM) Project which is undertaken with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency).

DETAILS ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE CATCHMENT FOREST MANAGEMENT (SCATFORM) PROJECT:

- The SCATFORM project aims to address issues such as forest cover loss and forest degradation that have been mainly caused by shifting cultivation, which increases soil erosion risks on hill slopes especially in upper catchment areas.
- **The SCATFORM project would be implemented mainly in upper catchments where forest degradation and soil erosion are severe and livelihood improvement needs are high.**
- The project aims to improve the quality of forest in the catchment area by sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development.
- The activities undertaken under the project involves:
- Promotion of bamboo plantation Agroforestry based livelihood.
- Eco-Tourism Development.
- Development of value addition for bamboo and other Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities.
- **The 80 per cent of the cost is contributed by JICA and the rest would be funded by the state and Central Governments.**

ABOUT THE JAPAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGENCY:

- **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) aims to promote international cooperation as the Japanese Governmental Agency in charge of official development assistance implementation.**
- JICA which is an incorporated administrative institution under the Government of Japan is the world's largest bilateral donor agency.

HARYANA CM ANNOUNCES SHAURYA AWARDS FOR STUDENTS OF THE STATE

The Chief Minister of Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar has announced the Shaurya Awards for students in the name of 71 state police martyrs.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SHAURYA AWARDS:

- The Shaurya Awards with prize money of Rs 11,000 will be awarded to students in the name of 71 personnel of the state police forces who laid down their lives while protecting society and maintaining law and order in the state.
- The award would be given to a student for courageous deeds every year in a village block where the school is located and where a martyr studied during his childhood.
- The announcements were made by the Chief Minister while addressing the family members of Haryana Police martyrs at the National Police Memorial in New Delhi.
- **The Chief Minister also announced the construction of a state-level police memorial in the state of Haryana and released the titled 'Martyrs of Haryana Police'.**

ABOUT THE NATIONAL POLICE MEMORIAL:

- **Renovated and refurbished National Police Memorial was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 21 October 2018.**
- National Police Memorial commemorates the 34,844 police personnel from all of the central and state police forces in India who have died in the line of duty since the nation's Independence in 1947.
- The National Police Memorial commemorates the police personnel whose lives were lost in the fight against terrorism, militancy and insurgency in states such as Punjab, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Jammu and Kashmir and red corridor-affected regions in India.
- The National Police Memorial also hosts the Wall of Valour with names of police personnel engraved on the granite, who died in the line of duty from 1947 to the present day.

EXPANSION OF NUMALIGARH REFINERY IN ASSAM APPROVED BY THE UNION CABINET

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the capacity expansion project of Numaligarh Refinery from 3 MMTPA (Million Metric Tonne Per Annum) to 9 MMTPA.

DETAILS:

- **The expansion project involves setting up a crude oil pipeline from Paradip in Odisha to Numaligarh and product pipeline from Numaligarh to Siliguri in West Bengal.**
- The expansion is expected to be completed by within a period of 48 months, after approval and receipt of statutory clearances.

FUNDING OF THE PROJECT:

- The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 22,594 crore.
- The Numaligarh Refinery will raise a debt of Rs.15,102 crore and would contribute Rs.2,307 crore from its internal accrual.
- The promoters of NRL, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Oil India Ltd & Government of Assam (GoA) will contribute to equity and the Government of India would provide a Viability Gap Funding of Rs.1,020 crore.

ABOUT THE NUMALIGARH REFINERY LIMITED (NRL):

- **Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) was set up at Numaligarh in the district of Golaghat (Assam) in accordance with the provisions made in the historic Assam Accord.**
- The NRL was conceived as a vehicle for speedy industrial and economic development of the region.
- The promoters of the NRL are Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Oil India Ltd & Government of Assam (GoA).
- **The expansion of the NRL will aid in meeting the deficit of petroleum products in the North East and also sustain the operations of all North East refineries by augmenting their crude availability.**
- Together with generating direct and indirect employment in Assam, it is the driver of Government's Hydrocarbon Vision 2030 for the North East.

UNION MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS DHARMENDRA PRADHAN FLAGS OFF SANRAKSHAN KSHMATA MAHOTSAV (SAKSHAM) VANS

Sanrakshan Kshмата Mahotsav (SAKSHAM) Vans were flagged off by Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan to promote and create awareness among people on the need of oil and gas conservation for the future and the methods to do it.

- To spread the awareness about energy conservation for better future these vans will travel to 30 districts.
- As part of the awareness drive, Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) will also run people-centric drives throughout the country between January 16 to February 15 under SAKSHAM.

ABOUT THE SANRAKSHAN KSHMATA MAHOTSAV (SAKSHAM):

- Sanrakshan Kshmata Mahotsav (SAKSHAM) is an annual flagship event of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India.
- PCRA undertakes this awareness programme in collaboration with Oil & Gas PSUs along with other stakeholders like State Governments, for creating focused attention on fuel conservation through people-centric activities and to sensitize the masses about the conservation and efficient use of petroleum products leading to better health and environment.

ABOUT THE PETROLEUM CONSERVATION RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (PCRA):

- **Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) is a non-profit organization registered society set up under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India.**
- PCRA is the principal National Government Agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of the economy.
- It undertakes studies to identify the potential and to make recommendations for achieving conservation of petroleum products in various sectors of the economy and sponsors R&D activities for the development of fuel-efficient equipment/devices.
- As part of its effort to increase awareness about energy conservation, it undertakes multi-media campaigns through All India Radio, Doordarshan, TV channels, Private FM channels, Digital Cinema Theaters etc.

KOLKATA MOUNTAINEER SATYARUP SIDDHANTA SETS WORLD RECORD OF BEING YOUNGEST TO CLIMB 7 HIGHEST VOLCANOES, 7 HIGHEST MOUNTAINS IN 7 CONTINENTS

Satyarup Siddhanta, 35-year-old Kolkata mountaineer has set the world record of youngest to climb 7 highest volcanoes, 7 highest mountains in 7 continents in 7 years.

- He is also the first Indian to conquer the seven mountain peaks and seven volcanic summits.

HIGHEST MOUNTAINS SCALED BY SATYARUP SIDDHANTA:

- Mount Everest (8,848 m) - Nepal
- Mt Aconcagua (6,961 m) - Argentina
- Mt McKinley/Mt Denali (6,194 m) -USA
- Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) -Tanzania
- Mt Elbrus (5,642 m) - Russia
- Mt Blanc (4,808.7 m) - France
- Mt Vinson Massif (4,892 m) - Antarctica
- Puncak Jaya/Carstensz Pyramid (4,884 m) - Indonesia
- Mt Kosciuszko (2,228 m) - Australia

SEVEN VOLCANIC PEAKS SCALED BY SATYARUP SIDDHANTA:

1. Ojos del Salado (6,893 m) - Chile
2. Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) - Tanzania
3. Mount Elbrus (5,642 m) - Russia
4. Mount Pico de Orizaba (5,636 m) - Mexico
5. Mt Damavand (5,610 m) - Iran
6. Mt Giluwe (4,368 m) - Papua New Guinea
7. Mt Sidley (4,285 m) - Antarctica

ABOUT SATYARUP SIDDHANTA:

- **Satyarup Siddhanta who is 35 years and 262 days old broke the record of Australia's Daniel Bull who was 36 years 157 days old when he achieved the feat.**
- Software engineer by profession, Satyarup Siddhanta hails from Haridevpur in South Kolkata and is based at the Silicon Valley of India, Bengaluru.
- Reports suggest that had to work different shifts in two companies to raise funds for his mountaineering trips.

TAMIL NADU CM RELEASES 2 COINS TO COMMEMORATE MGR'S 102ND BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami released two Commemorative Coins in the denominations of Rs 100 and Rs 5 to mark the 102nd birth anniversary of Dr. M G Ramachandran.

DETAILS:

- **The first sets of Coins were received by Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam at an event organised at the Tamil Nadu MGR Medical University.**
- The Commemorative Coins bear the portrait of Ramachandran at the centre along with the inscription 'DR M G Ramachandran Birth Centenary' on the lower periphery.

ABOUT COMMEMORATIVE COINS IN INDIA:

- **Commemorative Coins are issued to celebrate some special occasion or to mark a special event or as a mark of respect towards some distinguished individuals or monument.**
- The first Commemorative Coin in Independent India was issued in 1964 to commemorate the birth anniversary of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Thereafter many Commemorative Coins have been issued.
- The lower denomination Commemorative Coins are usually for general circulation and their metal composition is usually in line with the regular coins, whereas the higher denomination Commemorative Coins usually contain some silver and are meant for collection purposes only.

ABOUT DR. M G RAMACHANDRAN:

Dr. M G Ramachandran popularly known as M. G. R is an actor, filmmaker and politician who served

as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for ten years between 1977 and 1987.

PALESTINE TAKES OVER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF G77 FROM EGYPT

Palestine has taken over the Chairmanship of G77 from Egypt.

- Palestine will be formally elected chair at the annual G77 ministerial meeting, scheduled to take place in mid-September.

DETAILS:

- The Chairmanship of the G77 is based on the system of geographical rotation.
- 2019 was Asia's turn and the Asian group had unanimously endorsed Palestine.
- Egypt was representing the African Group of countries.
- Palestine's Chairmanship of G77 which is the biggest UN block assumes great significance at a time it is being increasingly blacklisted by the Trump administration of US.
- **Even though Palestine is not the member-state of UN, Palestine has been recognised by 136 UN members and has the status of non-member observer state similar to Holy city of Vatican.**

ABOUT G77:

- **G77 is a coalition of 134 developing nations (including China) at the United Nations.**
- Traditionally G77 speaks with a single voice before the 193-member General Assembly and also at all UN committee meetings and at international conferences.
- **G77 was formed on 15 June 1964 by the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).**
- The group was credited with a common stance against apartheid and for supporting global disarmament.

ABOUT G77 AND CHINA:

- **The G77 grouping considers China as the member state.**
- China is providing consistent political support to the G77 and even makes financial contributions.
- **But China does not consider itself as the member of the group.**
- Hence official statements of the G77 are delivered in the name of the Group of 77 and China.

IIT HYDERABAD BECOMES THE FIRST INSTITUTE IN INDIA & THIRD IN THE WORLD TO LAUNCH A B.TECH COURSE IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- IIT Hyderabad has announced the launch of a full-fledged Bachelor's programme in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology.
- **IIT Hyderabad has become the first institute in the country to launch a full-fledged Bachelor's programme in AI technology.**

- IIT Hyderabad will be the third institute to globally to offer the B.Tech course in AI.

ONE MUST KNOW:

Other institutes providing similar courses in AI are US-based Carnegie Mellon University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:

- **Artificial Intelligence refers to the process of making a computer, a computer-controlled robot or a software think intelligently, in a similar manner the intelligent humans think.**
- Artificial Intelligence is designed by studying how human brain thinks, and how humans learn, decide, and work while trying to solve a problem, and then using the outcomes of this study as a basis of developing intelligent software and systems.

ABOUT THE COURSE:

- The Bachelor's course in AI would fill the demand gap which far exceeds the current supply.
- **The Bachelor's course in AI will train students in the fundamentals of computer science, AI and Machine Learning, in addition to sensitising them to the ethical issues in deploying AI-based solutions.**
- The course would focus on application verticals such as healthcare, agriculture, smart mobility, among many others.

IAF AN-32 FOR THE FIRST TIME MAKES A LANDING AT SIKKIM'S PAKYONG AIRPORT

For the first time, Antonov-32 (AN-32) transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out a successful landing at Sikkim's Pakyong Airport, one of the highest airfields in the country.

WHY IS THE LANDING SIGNIFICANT?

- The successful landing has assumed great importance due to its strategic location of 60 km from the India-China border and it is located 4,500 feet above sea level.
- The successful landing is a booster for the Indian efforts which is aggressively overhauling the infrastructure, particularly in the North-Eastern region, following the Doklam standoff in 2017.

ABOUT THE PAKYONG AIRPORT:

- **Pakyong Airport is a Greenfield airport near Gangtok, the capital of the state of Sikkim.**
- **It is the first greenfield airport to be constructed in the North-Eastern Region of India.**
- The airport is strategically important and the Indian Air Force is also building on the ability to land certain military aircrafts at the Pakyong Airport.
- Prior to the inauguration of the Pakyong Airport by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 24th

September 2018, Sikkim was the sole state in India without a functional airport and Sikkim was dependent on the airport at Bagdogra in the neighbouring state of West Bengal, and Paro Airport in Bhutan.

INDEPENDENT MLA KARAT RAZACK DISQUALIFIED BY THE HIGH COURT OF KERALA FOR DEFAMING RIVAL CANDIDATE

The High Court of Kerala has disqualified an independent MLA Karat Razack from the Koduvally Assembly constituency for his defamatory campaign against his rival candidate during the 2016 Assembly polls.

DETAILS:

- **The election of the independent MLA Karat Razack was declared void by the High Court of Kerala since it found that he was involved in corrupt practices.**
- The High Court found that Razack and his agents had screened a 20-minute video across Koduvally Assembly constituency during the 2016 election campaign to tarnish the image of the rival candidate.
- The disqualification has been stayed by the High Court to provide an opportunity to appeal against the verdict.

ABOUT THE LEGAL PROVISIONS FOR THE DISQUALIFICATION:

- **The disqualification was as per the provisions of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951.**
- The Representation of the Peoples act defines the corrupt practices for the disqualification of the elected representative.
- Under the section 125 (4) of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1951, The publication by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent, of any statement of fact which is false, and which they either believes to be false or does not believe to be true, in relation to the personal character or conduct of any candidate or in relation to the candidature, or withdrawal, of any candidate, would be reasonably calculated to prejudice the prospects of that candidate's election and it constitutes corrupt practice.

UNION DEFENCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN INAUGRATES 'DIFFO BRIDGE' IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the 426.60 m long 'Pre Stressed Concrete Box Girder' type Diffo Bridge over Diffo river on Roing-Koronu-Paya road in Arunachal Pradesh.

- The construction of the bridge was undertaken by the Project Udayak of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DIFFO BRIDGE:

The Diffo Bridge will provide for uninterrupted access between Dibang Valley and Lohit valley region of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh together with providing an all-weather road to our troops deployed on the China border.

ABOUT PROJECT UDAYANK:

- Project Udayank of the Border Roads Organisation was raised on June 1990 at Doomdooma Assam.
- The name of the project Udayank is synonymous to the land of rising sun which fits appropriately to the area it operates.
- It consists of two border road taskforces undertaking construction activities in the North Eastern region.

ABOUT THE BORDER ROADS ORGANISATION (BRO):

- **Border Roads Organisation (BRO) develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighbouring countries.**
- Border Road Organisation has also undertaken the infrastructure development activities in neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.
- The Border Roads Organisation works under the Ministry of Defence.

RESPONSIBILITIES VESTED WITH THE BRO DURING PEACETIME:

- Develop & Maintain the operational road infrastructure of General Staff (GS) in the border areas.
- Contribute to the socio-economic development of the border states.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BRO DURING WARTIME:

- Developing & Maintaining roads to keep line of control through in Original Sectors and Re-deployed Sectors.
- Executing additional tasks as laid down by the government contributing to the war effort.

ISRO ANNOUNCES YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced "Young Scientist Programme" to inculcate and nurture space research fervour in young minds.

- Young Scientist Programme is part of ISRO's efforts to reach out to the student community.
- On the New Year's Day, ISRO had organised 'Samwad with Students' and an announcement was made about the student outreach programme.

MORE ABOUT THE YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME:

- It would be a one month programme.
- Mostly 8th standard passed out students will be given lectures and access to research laboratories.
- 3 students from each of the 29 States and 7 Union Territories will be selected for the Young Scientist Program.
- The students will be exposed to the practical experience of building small satellites.

ONE MUST KNOW:

ISRO also announced about setting up of an incubation centre in Tripura, Trichy, Nagpur, Rourkela, and Indore.

WOMEN SET TO EVENTUALLY COMPRISE 20% OF TOTAL CORPS OF MILITARY POLICE

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the decision to induct women in Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) role in Corps of Military Police.

DETAILS:

- **The women will be inducted in a graded manner to eventually comprise 20% of total Corps of Military Police.**
- Accordingly, the Army chalked out induction of approximately 800 women in military police with an yearly intake of 52 personnel per year.

ABOUT THE MILITARY POLICE:

- **Military Police are the corps responsible for the enforcing discipline and the maintenance of law and order in the military environment and for military puposes.**
- The functions of the Military Police includes policing cantonments and Army establishments, preventing a breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers as well as logistics during peace and war, handling prisoners of war and extending aid to civil police whenever required.

ROLE OF WOMEN SEEN IN MILITARY POLICE:

- Investigation of offences such as rape, molestation, theft etc.
- Military operation where Army needs assistance from police organizations.
- Assisting Civil Police/Administrations for evacuation in forward villages during hostilities.
- Crowd control of refugees comprising women and children.
- Searching/Frisking of women during cordon & search operations/check posts.
- Ceremonial and Policing Duties such as maintaining military discipline.

- Manning the Prisoner of War Camps.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The announcement is seen as a precursor for allowing the women in combat roles.
- Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat had earlier said that the process to allow women in a combat role, currently, an exclusive domain of men was moving fast and initially, women will be recruited for positions in the military police.

TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT RELEASES STARTUP AND INNOVATION POLICY
2018-2023

The Government of Tamil Nadu has released "Startup and Innovation Policy 2018-2023" with a mission of providing an enabling and innovative ecosystem for startups registered in the state and to make Tamil Nadu a 'Global Innovation Hub for Startups' by 2023.

- The policy aims for a minimum of 1,00,000 high skilled job creation, direct and indirect, in the startup ecosystem.

CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE STARTUP AND INNOVATION POLICY 2018-2023:

- **Creation of at least 5000 technology startups of which at least 10 global high growth startups are in social impact sectors.**
- Infrastructure support to strengthen existing mechanism in areas like the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Software as a Service (SAAS).

COMPONENTS OF THE STARTUP AND INNOVATION POLICY 2018-2023:

- **The policy aims to collaborate with educational institutions to promote entrepreneurial spirit, reduce existing regulatory and tax burden on startups in the field of labour, pollution and building norms.**
- The policy aims to partner with reputed investors across the globe to bring investment to the Tamil Nadu startups.
- The policy envisages nurturing aspiring entity or individuals (defined as 'Start Steps') who develops a potentially scalable business model that can generate wealth and employment.
- Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) will act as a nodal agency to promote and facilitate startups.
- Tamil Nadu Startup and InnovaTN Mission (TANSIM) headed by a full-time officer will advocate and oversee policies and programmes for promoting startup.
- Tamil Nadu Startup Seed Grant Fund (TNSSGF) of Rs 50 crore with an allotment of Rs 5 crore in the first year in partnership with financial institutions and universities for supporting early-stage financing requirements of the startups in the form of grants to fill the gap in fund requirement for for research & innovations.

5-POINT ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY:

- Creating ecosystems for encouraging innovations.
- Ensuring resources availability to Startup ecosystem.
- Enabling skill development and job creation.
- Supporting social entrepreneurship.
- Establishing global accessibility and partnerships.

DEFINITION OF A START-UP IN TAMIL NADU AS PER THE POLICY:

- Registration under Tamil Nadu Startup and InnovaTN Mission (TANSIM).
- Date of incorporation less than 7 years (less than 10 years in case of biotechnology, AI and ML startups).
- Registration and turnover less than Rs 25 crore in any of the financial years.

PM MODI INAUGURATES NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIAN CINEMA IN MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) at Films Division of India premises in Mumbai.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF INDIAN CINEMA (NMIC):

- **The National Museum of Indian Cinema (NMIC) aims to conserve the film heritage of India.**
- NMIC is housed in two buildings, the New Museum Building and the 19th-century historic palace Gulshan Mahal- in the Films Division campus in Mumbai.
- The museum provides a glimpse of the evolution of Indian cinema in a storytelling mode with the help of visuals, graphics, artifacts, interactive exhibits, and multimedia expositions.
- Posters have been on display at NMIC to map the journey of Indian cinema over the last century.
- The museum also hosts scenes from landmark films like Dadasaheb Phalke's Raja Harishchandra and Kaliya Mardan, replicas of old cameras and long-missing shooting equipment, and rare photographs.
- The verandah of Gulshan Mahal takes visitors through the multiple eras of Hindi and regional cinema, with the showcasing of posters, booklets, lobby cards and other exhibits.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

The Museum was refurbished by Navratna public sector undertaking NBCC (India) Limited under the guidance of the Museum Advisory Committee headed by Shyam Benegal, and an innovation committee headed by Prasoon Joshi.

ISRO TO LAUNCH AN EXCLUSIVE SATELLITE TO HELP IN SECURING BORDERS WITH PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a satellite exclusively for the Union Home Ministry to help it in strengthening its frontiers with Pakistan and Bangladesh among others.

FEATURES OF THE EXCLUSIVE SATELLITE FOR BORDER MANAGEMENT:

- **The exclusive satellite will be utilised for the purpose of using space resources for security, operational planning and border infrastructure development.**
- It would strengthen island and border security and facilitate the development of infrastructure in border and island areas.
- A short, medium and long-term plan have been proposed for implementation in five years in close coordination with the ISRO and the Union Defence Ministry for the implementation in a time-bound manner.
- Under short term plan, immediate needs of border guarding forces will be met by procurement of high-resolution imagery and the hiring of bandwidth for communications.
- Under the mid-term plan, one satellite will be launched by the ISRO for the exclusive use of the MHA.
- Under long term plan, the MHA will develop ground segment and network infrastructure to share satellite resources by user agencies, develop a central archival facility for storing various imagery resources and dissemination of the same to user agencies.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

The plan for an exclusive satellite has been formulated based on the recommendations made by a task force on the use of space technology in improving border management.

ARMoured SYSTEMS COMPLEX (ASC) INAUGURATED BY PM MODI AT HAZIRA NEAR SURAT IN GUJARAT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Armoured Systems Complex (ASC), developed by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) at Hazira near Surat in Gujarat.

- This Armoured Systems Complex (ASC) is the country's first private facility where the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns will be manufactured.

ABOUT THE K9 VAJRA SELF-PROPELLED HOWITZER GUN:

- The gun weighs 50 tonnes and can fire 47kg bombs at a 43-kilometre distance target.
- It can turn around at zero radii.
- K9 Vajra is a variant of K9 specially designed for operation in the desert areas bordering Pakistan.

MORE DETAILS:

- The Armoured Systems Complex (ASC) at Hazaria is a striking example of Make in India Defence.

- **The L&T is executing the production of the K9 Vajra self-propelled Howitzer guns and has signed a transfer of technology contract for guns with South Korean company Hanwha Corporation.**
- Also, around 400 SMEs are involved in developing 13,000 parts and steps are being taken to make a totally indigenous battle tank without having to depend on external help.
- The Army now doesn't have to depend on foreign nations for spare parts during its 40-year life cycle.
- The Army's life cycle cost will be drastically reduced.

TO HELP HANDLOOM WEAVERS, MICROSOFT INDIA LAUNCHES AN E-COMMERCE PLATFORM UNDER PROJECT REWEAVE

Microsoft India launched a new e-commerce platform 're-weave.in' under project ReWeave to aid handloom weavers.

BENEFITS OF THE E-COMMERCE PLATFORM:

- **The e-commerce platform would connect artisans to the buyers directly enabling them to expand to newer customers and markets.**
- It will provide a platform to showcase signature collections created by the weaver communities, showcase traditional designs and products created from natural dyes to a broad set of customers.
- The e-commerce platform would aid weavers in increasing their income and earning a sustainable livelihood while also reviving traditional forgotten Indian Art.

ABOUT PROJECT REWEAVE:

- **Project ReWeave was initiated by Microsoft India (R&D) Pvt. Limited in 2016 as part of its Philanthropies efforts, with the aim to revive the handloom weaving ecosystem in India.**
- Under the initiative, Microsoft is working closely with NGO partner, Chaitanya Bharathi to provide infrastructure, financing and marketing support to help weaver families keep their weaving traditions alive by sustaining livelihoods.

C.N.R. RAO AWARDED THE FIRST SHEIKH SAUD INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR MATERIALS RESEARCH

The first Sheikh Saud International Prize for Materials Research has been awarded to C.N.R. Rao.

- The award will be presented to Rao by Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi ruler of Ras Al Khaimah emirate during the International Workshop on Advanced Materials at Ras Al Khaimah on February 25.

ABOUT C.N.R. RAO:

- **Chintamani Nagesa Ramachandra Rao** popularly known as **C.N.R. Rao** is an Indian scientist who has made significant contributions in material research.
- He has authored over 1,600 research papers and 50 books.
- His areas of research include transition metal oxides and other extended inorganic solids, metal-insulator transitions, nano-materials including nanotubes and graphene, artificial photosynthesis and hydrogen generation by photocatalysis and thermal means.
- He has been honoured several national and international awards which include honorary fellowship of the 'Royal Society of Chemistry', London in 1989 and 'Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur' from France in 2005.
- He has also been conferred with 'Padma Shri' (1974), 'Padma Vibhushan' (1985) and 'Karnataka Ratna' (2001), Bharat Ratna(2014) among others.

UNESCO RECOGNIZES RIO DE JANEIRO AS WORLD CAPITAL OF ARCHITECTURE 2020

Rio de Janeiro has been recognised as the 'World Capital of Architecture' for 2020 by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

DETAILS:

- Rio de Janeiro will be hosting the World Congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) in July 2020.
- The theme of the 2020 World Congress of the International Union of Architects is "All the worlds. Just one world".
- UNESCO in the release said that "Through the range and quality of its activities, the World Capital of Architecture in Rio de Janeiro will demonstrate the crucial role of architecture and culture in sustainable urban development".

ABOUT THE WORLD CAPITAL OF ARCHITECTURE INITIATIVE:

- **The World Capital of Architecture initiative underscores the common commitment of UNESCO and the UIA to preserve architectural heritage in the urban context.**
- UNESCO designates the World Capital of Architecture as per the partnership agreement with the UIA.
- **The World Capital of Architecture also hosts the UIA's World Congress, an event that takes place every three years.**
- The World Capital of Architecture aims to become an international forum for debates about pressing global challenges from the perspectives of culture, cultural heritage, urban planning and architecture.

INDIANS BELOW THE AGE OF 15 & ABOVE 65 CAN VISIT NEPAL AND BHUTAN PRODUCING AADHAAR AS ID PROOF

The Union Home Ministry has tweaked the travel document norms for visiting Nepal and Bhutan.

DETAILS:

- As per new norms, Indians can travel to Nepal and Bhutan by producing Aadhaar as Identity proof but this is only for those Indians aged under 15 and over 65 years.
- **Indians other than in those age brackets will not be able to use Aadhaar to travel for Nepal and Bhutan.**

ABOUT THE OPEN DOOR POLICY:

- India has an open door policy with Nepal and Bhutan.
- Indians don't require a passport to travel to either of these countries.
- **Indians can enter these countries by showing any of the acceptable photo identity documents like Passport, Voter Id etc.**

WHY THE OPEN DOOR POLICY?

- India's open door policy with Nepal and Bhutan is in recognition with the shared history, culture and deep-rooted interpersonal ties of Indians with the citizens of these countries.
- Article 7 the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship allows free movement of people between the two nations on a reciprocal basis.
- The 1949 Treaty of Friendship between India and Bhutan allows for free movement of people between the two nations on a reciprocal basis.
- Hence as a result of these two treaties mentioned above Indians doesn't need a visa to enter Nepal or Bhutan.

CHIEF MINISTER OF TRIPURA UNVEILS THE OFFICIAL LOGO OF TRIPURA TEA

The Chief Minister of Tripura Biplab Kumar Deb unveiled the official logo of Tripura Tea.

- The Tripura Tea logo features Neermahal, the iconic landmark of Tripura.

ABOUT NEERMAHAL:

- **Neermahal was built by then Tripura King Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya in the middle of Rudrasagar Lake, as his summer residence.**
- It is located in Melaghar, around 53 km west of Agartala.
- **This is the largest water palace in India and one of two water palaces in India.**
- The other water palace of India is Jal Mahal located in Rajasthan.

WHICH CLIMATIC CONDITIONS MAKE TRIPURA FAVOURABLE FOR TEA CULTIVATION?

- A temperature of 21-29 degrees celsius.
- Annual Rainfall of 150-200 centimetres.

- A soil rich in humus as tea shrubs require fertile mountain soil mixed with lime and iron.
- Well drained land to prevent stagnation of water.

ABOUT TRIPURA AND TEA CULTIVATION:

- The tea cultivation in Tripura began at Hiracherra estate in Unakoti district in 1916.
- At present, Tripura is the second largest tea producing state in the North-East and produces 10 million kg of tea annually with an area of 6,430 hectar.

UNION DEFENCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN INAUGURATED TAMIL NADU DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR

The Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE INAUGRATION:

- During the inauguration, investments worth over Rs 3,038 crore in this defence corridor were announced.
- **Lockheed Martin, a global security giant, also announced its intention to invest in the corridor.**

FEATURES OF THE TAMIL NADU DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR:

- **It is also called as Tamil Nadu Defence Production Quad as the nodal cities of Chennai, Hosur, Salem, Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli form a quadrilateral with one of them at the centre.**
- The five nodal cities already have existing defence ecosystem in the form of ordnance factory boards, vendors working with defence PSUs, and other allied industries.
- Together with helping in accelerated growth and regional industry agglomeration, the defence corridor will also facilitate a well-planned and efficient industrial base which will lead to increased defence production in the country and the region.
- The corridor will help the industry to integrate with the global supply chain of defence manufacturing.
- Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor would be a specialised facility of aero component manufacturing.
- Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor is the country's second defence industrial corridor after the first one was launched in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh in August last year.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **Tamil Nadu currently ranks 4th in exports with 9.8% of India's total exports.**
- The corridor will further expand the exporting opportunities from the state.

ARAB LEADERS MET FOR THE ARAB ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT IN LEBANON, BEIRUT

The leaders from the Arab World met in Beirut, Lebanon to discuss economic and social development in the 'Arab Economic and Social Development Summit'.

- The leaders of the Arab World agreed on a 29-item economic agenda in addition to encouraging the safe return of Syrian refugees to their homeland at the conclusion of the summit.
- A joint statement called the Beirut Declaration was issued in the summit.

ABOUT THE BEIRUT DECLARATION:

- **The declaration calls for the establishment of an Arab Free Trade Zone.**
- **The declaration urged the international community to support countries hosting refugees and displaced people.**
- The declaration notes that the refugee crisis in Arab countries is the worst humanitarian problem since World War II and points out that the crisis leads to an economic slowdown, increases the expenditure and deficit, imposes burdens on public sectors and infrastructure and poses risks to the society.
- Full commitment to implement the decisions that were taken and the projects adopted by previous Arab Development Summits in their successive sessions.

ABOUT THE ARAB ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT:

The Arab Economic and Social Development summits are held at the level of head of state to address issues of economic and social development among member-states.

PREVIOUSLY HELD SUMMITS ARE:

- 2009: Kuwait
- 2011: Egypt
- 2013: Riyadh
- 2019: Beirut

ONE MUST KNOW:

The fifth Arab Economic and Social Development Summit would be held after four years in 2023 in Mauritania.

SOCIAL MEDIA GIANT FACEBOOK TO SET UP AN INSTITUTE FOR ETHICS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN GERMANY

Social media giant Facebook grants \$7.5 million to set up an Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in collaboration with the Technical University of Munich (TUM) in Germany.

WHAT DOES THE PROPOSED INSTITUTE INTEND TO DO?

- The Institute will help to advance the growing field of ethical research on new technology and will explore fundamental issues affecting the use and impact of AI.
- **The Institute will explore the ethical issues of AI and develop ethical guidelines for the responsible use of technology in society and the economy.**
- The institute will conduct independent, evidence-based research to provide insight and guidance for society, industry, legislators and decision-makers across the private and public sectors.
- **The institute will look into issues that affect the use and impact of AI, such as safety, privacy, fairness and transparency.**

ABOUT THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH (TUM):

- Technical University of Munich (TUM) is one of Europe's top universities committed to excellence in research and teaching, interdisciplinary education and the active promotion of promising young scientists.
- It has forged strong links with companies and scientific institutions across the world.
- The university has campuses in Munich, Garching and Freising-Weihenstephan.
- The alumni of the university include 17 Nobel laureates, 18 Leibniz Prize winners and 22 IEEE Fellow Members.

US-BASED INDIAN POET RANJANI MURALI RECEIVES THE WOMAN'S VOICE AWARD

US-based Indian poet Ranjani Murali received the 'Woman's Voice Award' at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF).

- The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh apart from a citation.

ABOUT THE WOMAN'S VOICE AWARD:

- **Prabha Khaitan Woman's Voice Award** popularly known as **Womans Voice Award** aims to **recognize and encourage creative writing by women in India.**
- It also helps to help build a network of women writers across India by creating a forum for their work and to support the publication of new creative writing by women in India.
- **It is a joint initiative between Oxford Bookstore and Prabha Khaitan Foundation.**

ABOUT THE APEEJAY KOLKATA LITERARY FESTIVAL (AKLF):

- **Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) was the first literary festival of India.**
- It is also the only literary Festival to be driven by a bookstore and it celebrates books, music, art, film.
- AKLF explores literature as part of our tangible and intangible heritage.

NORTH-EASTERN STATES OF TRIPURA, MANIPUR AND MEGHALAYA CELEBRATED THEIR 47TH STATEHOOD DAY ON 21ST JANUARY

The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya celebrated their 47th Statehood Day on 21st January.

- The states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya became full-fledged states on January 21, 1972.

A LOOK INTO HISTORY:

At the time of Independence, India's North-East region composed of three kinds of entities which were:

1. Assam Province of British India
2. Princely states of Manipur and Tripura
3. North East Frontier Province (NEFA)

INDIA'S NORTH EAST AFTER 1947:

- Manipur and Tripura were granted the status Union Territories in 1949.
- On 1 December 1963 statehood was granted for Nagaland.
- Meghalaya was made an autonomous state within Assam via the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969 as per the sixth schedule of the constitution.
- **In 1972, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura were granted full statehood via the North East Reorganization Act 1972 and the Mizo Hills region of Assam and NEFA were converted into a Union Territory.**
- As a result of the Mizo Accord of 1986, Mizoram emerged as a full-fledged state of India in 1987.
- Even the NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) was granted full-fledged statehood in 1987.

ONE MUST KNOW:

Meghalaya has organised a week-long programme on the theme, 'Celebrating Meghalaya-India', on the occasion of the 47th Statehood Day and the 70th Republic Day.

RBI KICK STARTS TWO QUATERLY SURVEYS- INDUSTRIAL OUTLOOK SURVEY (IOS) AND SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE OUTLOOK SURVEY (SIOS)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated two quaterly surveys namely, "Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS)" and "Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS)".

- The two quarterly surveys aim to examine the current situation including the job scenario in India's manufacturing, services and infrastructure sectors.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRIAL OUTLOOK SURVEY (IOS):

- The Industrial Outlook Survey (IOS) is based on qualitative responses on a set of indicators pertaining to demand conditions, financial conditions, employment conditions and the price situation.
- The IOS would provide useful insight into the performance of the manufacturing sector.
- **The IOS would be undertaken by Hansa Research Group Pvt Ltd.**

ABOUT THE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE OUTLOOK SURVEY (SIOS):

- The Services and Infrastructure Outlook Survey (SIOS) seeks an assessment of the business situation for the current quarter (January-March 2019) from selected companies in the services and infrastructure sectors in India, and their outlook for the ensuing quarter (April-June 2019).
- **The SIOS would be undertaken by Spectrum Planning India Ltd.**

PM MODI LAUNCHED THE PRAVASI TEERTH DARSHAN YOJANA FOR INDIAN DIASPORA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana for the Indian Diaspora.

FEATURES OF THE PRAVASI TEERTH DARSHAN YOJANA:

- **Under the scheme, a group of Indian diaspora will be taken on a Government-sponsored tour of religious places in India twice a year.**
- The first batch of 40 people already participated in the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2019 held in Varanasi.
- Those selected would be taken to religious places of all major religions in India.
- The Government will bear all the expenses including the airfare from their country of residence.
- People of Indian-origin aged 45 to 65 can apply can avail the benefits under the scheme.
- The Scheme accords first preference to people from Girmitiya countries such as Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica.

GIRMITIYAS AND GIRMITIYA COUNTRIES:

- **Girmitiyas are the descendants of indentured Indian labourers brought to Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, East Africa, the Malay Peninsula, Caribbean and South America (Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname) to work on sugarcane plantations for the prosperity of the European settlers.**
- The term Girmitiya was coined by the Father of the Nation- Mahatma Gandhi who referred to himself as the first Girmitiya.
- **The countries where these indentured Indian labourers settled are known as Girmitiya countries.**

INDIA CELEBRATES "NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY" ON JANUARY 24TH

National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is celebrated in India on January 24th with an aim to raise awareness about Child Sex Ratio (CSR) levels and promote the empowerment of girls.

OBJECTIVES OF CELEBRATING NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY:

- To spread awareness about the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in the country and carry out campaigns to improve the same.
- To empower the girl children with new opportunities via schemes and campaigns.
- To create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

THEME OF THE NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY (NGCD)-2019:

The theme of National Girl Child Day-2019 is "Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow"

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **"The International Day of the Girl Child" is observed every year across world on October 11 to recognize girls' rights and unique challenges faced by girls around the world.**
- Observance of the day seeks to increase awareness of gender inequality faced by girls worldwide based upon their gender and supports more opportunity for girls.

UN REPORT CALLED "WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS 2019" DISCUSSES CHALLENGES IN ATTAINING SDGS

The United Nations report "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019" discusses various challenges in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.

THE CHALLENGES AS PER THE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS 2019 ARE:

- **Economic growth is uneven and is failing to reach where it is most needed.**
- **Per capita incomes would stagnate or grow only marginally in 2019 in several parts of Africa, Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.**
- Even where the per capita growth is strong, economic activity is driven by core industrial and urban regions, leaving peripheral and rural areas behind.
- The report notes that eradicating poverty by 2030 will require both double-digit growth in Africa and steep reductions in income inequality which seems a distant possibility in the current scenario.
- The confluence of risks is clouding and it may severely disrupt economic activity and inflict significant damage on longer-term development prospects.
- As the world experiences an increasing number of extreme weather events, other various risks include- escalation of trade policy disputes; financial instabilities linked to elevated levels of debt; and rising climate risks.

CONCLUSION:

The report notes that the simultaneous appearance of several important risks endangers efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development containing 17 specific goals to promote prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment.

UNION MINISTER NITIN GADKARI INAUGURATES A BRIDGE OVER RIVER RAVI IN KATHUA DISTRICT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping- Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated a 1210-meter span-bridge over the river Ravi in the Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir.

DETAILS ABOUT THE BRIDGE:

- The bridge over river Ravi at Keerian- Gandial is a lifesaver for the people in the region.
- The bridge constructed at a cost of Rs 158.84 crore is a step forward in improving inter-state connectivity.
- The bridge will be of great help to 2,20,000 people living on the two sides- Kathua in Jammu and Pathankot in Punjab.
- **This will save both time and cost by reducing the distance between the two places, Keerian - Gandial from 45 kms to 8.6 kms.**

ABOUT RIVER RAVI:

- The river Ravi originates at Kullu hills near the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh and drains the area between the Pir Panjal and the Dhaola Dhar ranges.
- **The river Ravi enters the plains of Punjab near Madhopur and enters Pakistan, downstream of Amritsar.**
- It merges into the river Chenab, a little above Rangpur in Pakistani Punjab.

LLOYD'S LIST CONTAINERS REPORT TO LIST JAWAHARLAL NEHRU PORT TRUST (JNPT) AMONG THE TOP 30 GLOBAL CONTAINER PORTS

India's premier container port Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) has become India's only port to get listed among the top 30 global container ports in Top 100 Container Ports report by Lloyd's List Containers.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

JNPT has notched up five spots to be 28th on the list, compared to its previous ranking.

EFFORTS OF THE UNION MINISTRY OF SHIPPING THAT HAS MADE THIS JUMP POSSIBLE:

- **New processes activated under the 'Ease of Doing Business' initiative have helped in the overall growth of the port business.**
- The new processes also aided the Export-Import trade to save time and cost which in turn have

accentuated the growth story.

- JNPT has also launched the app services to facilitate better tracking of consignment and ease the trade process for their EXIM partners.
- The app launched by the JNPT allows traders to access all the relevant information about their consignment and port-related updates regarding traffic and weather on their fingertips.

ABOUT THE TOP 100 CONTAINER PORTS REPORT:

- **Top 100 Container Ports report from Lloyd's List Containers provides an exclusive analysis of all ports with detailed information on each port and sets out the winners and losers each year.**
- The report also provides in-depth profiles, analysis, and insight of all 100 facilities, detailing terminals operators, box volumes, recent developments and pipeline projects.

TO ALLEVIATE AGRARIAN DISTRESS, SBI ECOWRAP REPORT RECOMMENDS UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER TO FARMERS

The SBI Ecowrap Report recommends the government to opt for the Unconditional Cash Transfer to farmers to alleviate agrarian distress rather than the Universal Basic Income (UBI) scheme.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDING UNCONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER:

- Currently, it is not feasible to implement Rythu Bandhu Scheme (which is an investment support scheme by the government of Telangana to support the livelihood of farmers) at the national level because the land data is yet to be digitized in several states including Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.
- Hence, the Unconditional Cash Transfer Scheme is the best available option as it will be more equitable (on a per farmer basis) with a meaningful impact and once the problems are ironed out in terms of proper tenancy laws, then it can be made conditional.
- The report mentions that many countries have found that UBI does not address the structural problems and is at best a solution in interregnum.
- The report estimates various subsidy benefits the farmers are availing and suggests if a farmer is availing one or all the three modes of subsidy/supports (Crop Insurance, Interest Subsidy and Fertilizer Subsidy) then he/she will receive a minimum of Rs 5,335 to maximum Rs 10,162 per annum as cash support.
- The report predicts that government would be required to provide cash support in the range of Rs 10,000-12,000 per annum to make it completely cash neutral and the annual cost of such a scheme is Rs 1.2 lakh crore per annum.
- The challenge of providing cash transfer to tenant would be left unaddressed under this scheme.

9TH NATIONAL VOTERS DAY CELEBRATED ON 25TH JANUARY 2019

India celebrated 9th National Voters Day on 25th January 2019 for enhanced participation of citizens in the electoral process.

- The main purpose of celebrating National Voters Day is to encourage, facilitate and maximize the enrollment, especially for the new voters.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The National Voters Day was first celebrated on 25th January 2011.
- **January 25th is celebrated as the National Voter's Day vowing to the fact that it was on this day the Election Commission of India was constituted on 25th January 1950.**

ABOUT NATIONAL VOTERS DAY 2019:

- India would be witnessing the parliamentary elections in 2019 and in order to ensure an inclusive election process, the theme of the National Voters Day 2019 is: "No Voter to be Left Behind".
- President Ram Nath Kovind was the Chief Guest at the main function being organized by the Election Commission in New Delhi.
- The event was also graced by Chief Election Commissioners and senior officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Russia and Sri Lanka.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKET COUNCIL (ICC) HONOURS INTERNATIONAL CRICKET PLAYERS BY ICC AWARDS 2018

The International Cricket Council (ICC), every year recognizes and honours the best international cricket players of the previous 12 months.

THE ICC AWARDS 2018 LIST IS AS FOLLOWS:

- Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Cricketer of the Year: **Virat Kohli**
- ICC Men's Test Player of the Year: **Virat Kohli**
- ICC ODI Player of the Year: **Virat Kohli**
- ICC Emerging Player of the Year: **Rishabh Pant**
- ICC Associate Player of the Year: **Calum MacLeod**
- T20I Performance of the Year: **Aaron Finch**
- ICC Spirit of Cricket award: Williamson
- Umpire of the Year: **Kumar Dharmasena**
- Fans' Moment of the Year: **India's victory in the Under-19 World Cup**

SELECTION PROCESS FOR ICC AWARDS:

- **The awardees are selected by a process wherein the ICC Selection committee comprises eminent former players and selects the finalists for the various awards.**

- Then the awardees are selected through votes by an electoral college comprising of current national team captains of Test playing nations, members of the Elite Panel of ICC umpires and referees, prominent former players and cricket correspondents.
- **The Awards are shared in a case of a 'Tie'.**

ISRO LAUNCHED THE LIGHTEST SATELLITE "KALAMSAT-V2", NAMED AFTER DR. ABDUL KALAM

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched the Kalamsat-V2 from Sriharikota Space Centre.

ABOUT KALAMSAT-V2:

- The satellite is named after former President and Indian scientist Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.
- It is the lightest satellite to be ever built and launched into orbit and it is also ISRO's first launch of a satellite built by a private firm.
- It is a communications satellite for ham radio transmission, a form of wireless communication used by amateurs for non-commercial activities.
- The satellite is being built by students belonging to Space Kidz India, a Chennai-based space education firm.
- The satellite costed 1.2 Million Indian rupees and was built during the span of six days.
- The Satellite was launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), a four-stage rocket.

ISRO ATTEMPTS RECLAIMING THE DEAD ROCKET STAGE IN THIS LAUNCH:

- **ISRO made an attempt to recover the dead rocket stage in this launch.**
- With PSLV rockets the first three stages usually drop back to Earth; its fourth and final stage using liquid propellants is stopped and restarted several times to get a spacecraft into just the right orbit.
- ISRO converted this fourth stage into an experimental orbital platform to conduct small experiments in space.
- This experimental orbital platform will aid in carrying out experiments in a near zero-gravity environment.
- For the first time, ISRO is conducting such an experiment to reclaim a dead rocket stage and to keep it alive.

APARNA KUMAR BECOMES THE FIRST WOMAN IPS OFFICER TO COMPLETE SOUTH POLE EXPEDITION

Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Aparna Kumar who is on deputation to Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), becomes the first woman Indian Police Service (IPS) and ITBP officer to successfully conquer the South Pole.

ABOUT APARNA KUMAR:

- **Aparna Kumar is an IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre and hails from Karnataka.**
- The officer is serving ITBP on deputation as Deputy Inspector General (DIG).

ABOUT THE EXPEDITION:

- The expedition began from Chile.
- IPS officer Aparna Kumar began her journey with a team of seven members and two guides.
- The team walked for 111 miles.

ABOUT SOUTH POLE:

- The South Pole is the southernmost point on the surface of the Earth and is at the centre of the Southern Hemisphere.
- It is situated in Antarctica.
- The South Pole is the coldest and driest place on Earth.
- The temperature there ranges from minus 37 degrees to minus 48 degrees.
- As a result of this harsh climate, there are no native resident plants or animals at the South Pole.
- South Polar Skuas and Snow Petrels are occasionally seen there.

**GUJARAT CO-OPERATIVE MILK MARKETING FEDERATION LIMITED (GCMMF)
LAUNCHES AMUL CAMEL MILK IN GUJARAT**

The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited (GCMMF) has launched Amul Camel Milk in selected markets of Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad and Kutch in Gujarat.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CAMEL MILK?

- **Camel milk assists healthy bacteria growth in the gut making it easy to digest and it also improves gastro-intestinal health and systemic immunity.**
- Rich in Vitamin B1 (Thiamin), Camel Milk can provide 70% of the recommended daily value per serving.
- Camel Milk is rich in calcium which helps to build stronger bones.
- Being a good source of potassium and phosphorus calcium milk helps in maintaining a healthy blood pressure level, in combination with a low-sodium diet, which reduces the risk of a stroke.
- Camel Milk has low levels of saturated fat.

AIM OF THIS INITIATIVE:

This initiative of Amul will give camel farmers better prices and will benefit consumers by giving them hygienically-processed, superior quality camel milk.

AMENDMENTS TO CURRENCY SWAP ARRANGEMENT FOR SAARC MEMBER COUNTRIES APPROVED BY THE UNION CABINET

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the amendments to the framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC member countries.

- The amendments incorporate a standby facility of USD 400 million.
- This stand-by facility enables India to provide a prompt response to the current request from SAARC member countries for availing the swap amount exceeding the present limit prescribed under the SAARC Swap Framework.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SAARC SWAP FRAMEWORK:

- The Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Member Countries was formulated with the intention to provide a line of funding for short term foreign exchange requirements or to meet the balance of payments crises till longer-term arrangements are made or the issue is resolved in the short-term itself.
- It was approved by the Government of India on March 1st, 2012.

BENEFITS TO SAARC AND INDIA:

- The agreement has enabled India to strengthen its ties with the SAARC countries together with improving financial stability in the region.
- This agreement also bolsters the credibility of India among the SAARC countries.
- Together with enhancing India's economic influence in the region, the agreement strengthens regional integration and inter-dependence.

BSNL PARTNERS WITH FRENCH COMPANY BE-BOUND TO OFFER DATA CONNECTIVITY SERVICES VIA SMS IN INDIA

BSNL has signed a partnership agreement with the French company Be-Bound to offer data connectivity through SMS in areas where there is no Internet connectivity or signal breaks.

HOW WILL THE TECHNOLOGY WORK?

- The SMS based data connectivity will work with the help of a technology embedded in a mobile App.
- The app will detect if the user's area has poor network connectivity.
- If yes, then the App will send commands to the Be-Bound server.
- This commands would be sent send SMS from the user's account.
- Be-Bound server will facilitate SMS based data connectivity after getting a command from the App.
- The connectivity is based on SMS sent to and fro between the App and the Be-Bound server.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- This technology was first introduced in France and it is also being tested in some of the African countries.
- In India, BSNL is in talks with some Apps.

INDIA AND JAPAN CONDUCTED DISASTER CONTROL EXERCISE OFF THE COAST OF YOKOHAMA, JAPAN

The Coast Guards of India and Japan undertook disaster control, search and rescue exercises off the coast of Yokohama in Japan.

- India had hosted the Japanese ships for the exercise last year and this time Japan is hosting the exercise.
- ICGS Shaunak is the main Indian ship taking part in the drills.

ABOUT ICGS SHAUNAK:

- **ICGS Shaunak is an Offshore Patrol Vessel of Indian Coast Guards.**
- This 105-meter vessel is capable of carrying a twin-engine light helicopter and five high-speed boats including two quick reaction inflatable boats for swift boarding operations, search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol.
- ICGS Shaunak is fitted with navigation and communication equipment, sensors and machinery including 30 mm CRN 91 naval gun, integrated bridge system, integrated machinery control system, power management system (PMS) and high power external firefighting system.

AIM OF THIS EXERCISE:

This exercise aims to share their expertise in disaster management as both the nations have huge experience in disaster management as Japan regularly faces earthquakes and sea storms while the Indian Coast Guard round the year manages the over 7,000-kilometre coastline of the country.

UNION CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND KUWAIT ON RECRUITMENT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Kuwait for cooperation on the recruitment of domestic workers.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE MOU:

- The MoU will provide a structured framework for cooperation on domestic workers related matters.
- It provides for strengthened safeguards for Indian domestic workers including female workers

deployed in Kuwait.

- Initially valid for five years, it has a provision for automatic renewal.
- The MoU also proposes setting up of a joint committee that will be set up to follow up the implementation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOU:

The MoU will benefit around 3 lakh Indian workers deployed in Kuwait, including about 90,000 female domestic workers and promotes bilateral cooperation in domestic workers-related matters between the two countries.

PRIME MINISTER MODI INAUGURATED FOUR MUSEUMS IN THE RED FORT COMPLEX

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum, Yaad-e-Jallian Museum (museum on the Jallianwala Bagh and World War I), the Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence, and Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art within the Red Fort complex.

ABOUT NETAJI SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE MUSEUM:

The Subhash Chandra Bose museum at Red Fort was inaugurated to mark the Netaji's 122nd birth anniversary.

- This Museum on Subhash Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army showcases different artifacts related to Netaji and Indian National Army which includes a wooden chair and sword used by Netaji, medals, badges and uniforms.
- The museum in the Red Fort complex is also important for the fact that INA trails were held within the Red Fort complex.

ABOUT YAAD-E-JALLIAN MUSEUM:

The Yaad-e-Jallian Museum provides an authentic account of Jallianwala Bagh massacre happened on April 13, 1919.

- The Yaad-e-Jallian Museum will also showcase the heroism, valor and sacrifices made by Indian soldiers during World War-I.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM ON 1857- INDIA'S FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE:

The Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence portrays the historical narrative of 1857 war of independence, showcasing the valor and sacrifices made by Indians during the period.

ABOUT THE DRISHYAKALA-MUSEUM ON INDIAN ART:

The Drishyakala-Museum on Indian Art showcases Indian art works from 16th century till India's

independence.

BHARAT RATNA AWARDED TO FORMER PRESIDENT PRANAB MUKHERJEE, NANAJI DESHMUKH AND BHUPEN HAZARIKA

The 2019 Bharat Ratna award has been bestowed upon former President Pranab Mukherjee, social worker Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika.

- Nanaji Deshmukh and singer Bhupen Hazarika were awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously.

ABOUT PRANAB MUKHERJEE:

- **Pranab Mukherjee served as the 13th President of India from 2012 until 2017.**
- A veteran congressman, Pranab Mukherjee had held various key portfolios like Finance, Defence and External Affairs as Union Minister.
- He is an outstanding statesman of the present time.
- Pranab Mukherjee was born in a Bengali family.
- **Pranab Mukherjee earned an MA degree in Political Science and History and LL.B. from the University of Calcutta.**
- He has also served as a Professor of Political Science at Vidyanagar College in West Bengal.
- Before entering Politics, he was working as a journalist with 'Desher Dak'.

ABOUT NANAJI DESHMUKH:

- **Nanaji Deshmukh laid great emphasis on education as a social worker.**
- **The first Saraswati Shishu Mandir was established by him at Gorakhpur in 1950.**
- He was a member of RSS and also served as General Secretary of Bharatiya Jana Sangh.
- Nanaji Deshmukh took part in Jai Prakash Narayan movement during the Emergency.
- He got elected as a member of Lok Sabha from Balrampur in 1977.
- He has also served as a nominated member of Rajya Sabha.
- **Nanaji was awarded Padma Vibhushan in 1999.**

ABOUT BHUPEN HAZARIKA:

- **Bhupen Hazarika was a playback singer, lyricist, musician, singer, poet and film-maker from Assam, widely known as Sudhakantha.**
- He mainly wrote and sang in the Assamese language.
- His works were marked by humanity and universal brotherhood and have been translated and sung in many languages.
- He also served as a channel to introduce the culture and folk music of Assam and Northeast India to Hindi cinema at the national level.

LANCE NAIK NAZIR WANI AWARDED ASHOKA CHAKRA POSTHUMOUSLY

India's highest peacetime gallantry honour, Ashoka Chakra was awarded to Lance Naik Nazir Wani posthumously.

- The award was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind and was received by Wani's wife and mother at the Republic Day celebrations held at Rajpath.
- Lance Naik Nazir Wani also holds the distinction of being the first Kashmiri to be conferred the Ashoka Chakra.

ABOUT LANCE NAIK NAZIR WANI'S SUPREME SACRIFICE:

- Lance Naik Nazir Wani single-handedly killed two terrorists during the Shopian operation and injured a third one despite receiving serious injuries.
- Lance Naik Nazir Wani prevented the escape of the terrorists from the target house.
- He made a huge contribution in neutralising six hardcore terrorists.
- In the process, he sacrificed his life.

ABOUT ASHOKA CHAKRA:

Ashoka Chakra is India's highest peacetime military decoration awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the battlefield and it is the peacetime equivalent of Param Vir Chakra which is awarded for the most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent valour or self-sacrifice in the battlefield.

UP DIVAS CELEBRATED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON 24TH JANUARY

The Government of Uttar Pradesh celebrated UP Divas for the first time on 24th January 2019.

- The proposal was floated by Governor Ram Naik to celebrate the UP Divas on the lines of Maharashtra Day so that people know the history and culture of the state.

HISTORY OF UTTAR PRADESH: THE BIGGEST STATE OF INDIA

- **The state of Uttar Pradesh was called the Brahmishi Desh or the Madhya Desh during the Vedic period.**
- During the Mughal period, its territory was divided under governors.
- The state was under the Bengal Presidency till 1834.
- After the Agra Presidency was created under a Governor, the state was brought under its control.
- In 1858, the North Western Province was created and the seat of power was transferred from Agra to Allahabad.
- In 1877 the Awadh was merged with North Western Province.
- In 1902 the entire province was named as 'United Provinces of Agra and Oudh'.
- The legislative council was constituted in Lucknow in 1921 and the seat of power again was transferred from Allahabad to Lucknow.

- In 1935 Lucknow was designated as the capital of the United Province.
- **On January 24, 1950, the governor-general of India passed the United Provinces (Alteration of Name) Order 1950, renaming United Provinces as Uttar Pradesh.**

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TESTS LRSAM OFF THE COAST OF ODISHA

India has successfully flight tested Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) from a warship off Odisha coast.

- The LRSAM successfully destroyed a low flying aerial target.
- This paves way for its deployment in the armed forces.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE LRSAM:

- **LRSAM has been jointly developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), India and M/s Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for the Indian Navy.**
- **LRSAM has an operational range of 75 km** and it can destroy airborne threats like jets, aircrafts, anti-ship missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles and rockets including projectiles launched simultaneously.
- The LRSAM has a length of about 4.5 meters, a diameter of 0.54 metre, a wingspan of 0.94 meters and weighs around 275 kg including a 60 kg warhead which detonates at proximity.

ABOUT PREVIOUS TESTS:

- The missile was first tested from INS Kolkata on western seaboard in 2015. It had achieved all objectives.
- The LRSAM was also test fired in operational configuration on board INS Chennai positioned in the Arabian Sea.

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA PRAVASI DIVIDEND PENSION SCHEME

The Government of Kerala has launched 'Pravasi Dividend Pension Scheme'.

- The Governor of Kerala P. Sathasivam made this announcement in the address to the state assembly.

DETAILS OF THE SCHEME:

- **The scheme has been introduced by the Government of Kerala as part of welfare measures towards Pravasi Malayalis.**
- **Under the scheme, a regular pension would be provided to Non-Resident Keralites on a one-time payment of Rs 5 lakh.**
- This onetime payment would be deposited with KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board) for financing infrastructure projects.

- On the occasion, Governor also announced an international Toll-Free Line to provide information, register complaints and details about the action taken on various issues faced by the Non-Resident Indians from Kerala and an interactive portal to provide information on job opportunities in various countries, online attestation and recruitment processes.

ABOUT THE NRIS OF KERALA:

- The NRIs of Kerala, make a significant contribution towards the welfare of the state.
- The inflow of NRI deposits to Kerala stood at Rs 1,52,348 crore at March 2017.
- **Kerala has 2.1 million migrants across the world and almost 90 per cent of the migrant Keralites are in the Middle East.**
- The government had initiated Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS) with the aim of using the expertise, talent and resources of NRIs from Kerala for the overall growth and development of the state.
- The LKS provides a platform for offering meaningful say by the NRI community in implementing schemes for building a new Kerala.

IRCTC TO LAUNCH SAMANTHA EXPRESS ON FEBRUARY 14TH

Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) will launch a new train Samantha Express on February 14 from Nagpur.

- The Samantha Express will cover prominent places associated with Gautam Buddha and chief architect of the Constitution, Dr. B R Ambedkar.

THE SAMANTHA EXPRESS WILL RUN THROUGH THE FOLLOWING PLACES:

- **Chaityabhoomi (Mumbai):** Dr. Ambedkar was cremated here after his death on 6 December 1956 and it hosts a memorial for Dr. Ambedkar.
- **Mhow (Indore):** Dr. Ambedkar was born at Mhow.
- **Bodhgaya (Gaya):** Bodhgaya is a place where Buddha is said to have obtained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.
- **Sarnath (Varanasi):** Gautama Buddha first taught the Dharma here.
- **Lumbini (Nautanwa):** It is the place where Gautama Buddha was born.
- **Kushinagar (Gorakhpur):** It is the place where Gautama Buddha attained Parinirvana after his death.
- **Deekshabhoomi (Nagpur):** It is the place where Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism.

ONE MUST KNOW:

About two months prior to his demise, Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism.

3 DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE (DST) MISSION CENTRES INAUGURATED AT THE IIT-MADRAS

The Union Minister for Science and Technology inaugurated the three Department of Science and Technology (DST) mission centres at the Indian Institute Technology Madras (IIT-M) at the collective cost of Rs 50 crore.

DETAILS ABOUT THE DST MISSION CENTRES:

1. DST -IITM Solar Energy Harnessing Centre:

- This will focus on a wide range of research and technology development activities such as silicon solar cells that promise high efficiency and are suited for Indian conditions.

2. DST- IITM Centre for Sustainable Treatment, Reuse and Management for Efficient, Affordable and Synergistic Solutions for Water (Water-IC for SUTRAM of EASY WATER):

- It focuses on synchronized research and training programs on various issues related to wastewater management, water treatment, sensor development, stormwater management and distribution and collection systems.

3. DST-IITM-KGDS Test-bed on Solar Thermal Desalination Solutions in Narippaiyur:

- It has been established with an aim to deliver customised technology solutions to address prevalent water challenges in the arid coastal village located on the shores of the Bay of Bengal.

WHAT MAKES THESE CENTRES SPECIAL?

These centres are focused on critical technologies for sustainability like harnessing of solar energy in myriad ways, and scientific recycling and conservation of water.

OXFORD DICTIONARIES CHOOSES "NARI SHAKTI" AS HINDI WORD OF THE YEAR 2018

The word 'Nari Shakti' is chosen as Hindi word of the Year 2018 by the Oxford Dictionaries.

- The announcement regarding this was made in the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF).

REASONS FOR CHOOSING NARI SHAKTI AS WORD OF THE YEAR

- There was a large spike in the use of word Nari Shakti in March 2018 around the Government of India's Nari Shakti Puraskar (Women Power Award) held on the International Women's Day.
- Two major decisions of the Supreme Court contributed to Nari Shakti's prominence in 2018: One was a ban on 'Triple-Talaq' and second, the taking down of a rule that disallowed menstrual women entry to the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

ONE MUST KNOW:

The word 'Nari Shakti' derived from Sanskrit means 'Women Power'.

ABOUT THE JAIPUR LITERATURE FESTIVAL (JLF):

- **Jaipur Literature Festival is described as the greatest literary show on Earth.**
- JLF brings together a diverse mix of the world's greatest writers, thinkers, humanitarians, politicians, business leaders, sports people and entertainers on one stage to champion the freedom to express and engage in thoughtful debate and dialogue.
- The Jaipur Literature Festival set against the backdrop of Rajasthan's stunning cultural heritage and the Diggi Palace in Jaipur is a flagship event of Teamwork Arts.

BRITISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES "SOUTH ASIAN NITROGEN HUB"
RESEARCH PROJECT

The British Government has announced a research project- South Asian Nitrogen Hub to study nitrogen pollution in India and South Asia.

DETAILS:

The project led by UK's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology will partner with 50 organisations from the UK and South Asia.

INDIAN INSTITUTIONS PARTNERING FOR THE STUDY ARE:

- National Institute of Oceanography
- Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University
- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology
- Jawaharlal Nehru University
- Aligarh Muslim University
- National Physical Laboratory
- TERI University

AIM OF THE PROJECT:

The project aims to study the impact of different forms of nitrogen pollution, particularly looking at nitrogen in agriculture in eight countries of South Asia which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives.

ABOUT NITROGEN POLLUTION:

- **Pollutant Gases like ammonia (NH₃) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are produced from chemical fertilizers, livestock manure, and burning fossil fuels and is connected to air pollution, biodiversity loss, the pollution of rivers and seas, ozone depletion, health, economy and livelihoods.**

- Gases like Ammonia and nitrogen dioxide can aggravate respiratory and heart conditions.
- **Nitrous oxide is a greenhouse gas that depletes the ozone layer.**
- Nitrate from chemical fertilisers, manure and industry pollutes rivers and seas, poses a health risk for humans, fish, coral and plant life.

GOA CM INAUGURATES "ATAL SETU" ON RIVER MANDOVI

Chief Minister of Goa Manohar Parrikar inaugurated the "Atal Setu" on the Mandovi river in Goa.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE BRIDGE ARE:

- **It is a four-lane 5.1-km long cable-stayed bridge connects state capital Panaji with north Goa.**
- This four-lane bridge weighs at 2.5 lakh tonnes is equivalent to the weight of 570 Boeing aircrafts.
- The bridge has been built by 1 lakh cubic metres of high strength, high performance concrete enough to fill 40 Olympic size swimming pools.
- 13,000 tonnes of corrosion resistant reinforcement steel, 32,000 square metres of structural steel plates and 1,800 kilometres of high tensile pre-stressing strands have gone into making the bridge.
- The bridge utilizes 88 high tensile strength cables in the state-of-art single place harp type cable stay system and a real-time force monitoring mechanism.

ONE MUST KNOW:

The bridge is constructed by the GIDC (Goa Infrastructure Development Corporation) in collaboration with construction major Larsen and Toubro.

ABOUT RIVER MANDOVI:

- **River Mandovi, also known as Mahadayi or Mhadei river is regarded as the lifeline of Goa.**
- The river originates from a cluster of 30 springs at Bhimgad in the Western Ghats in the Belagavi district of Karnataka and has a total 2,032 km² catchment area of which 1,580 square kms, 375 square kms and 77 square kms catchment area are in Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra respectively.
- Owing to the differences over the sharing of the river water among the states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra, the Union Government has constituted Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal to examine the claims made by the states.

VANDE BHARAT EXPRESS TO PLY BETWEEN DELHI AND VARANASI

India's fastest indigenous train, Train 18 named as Vande Bharat Express will ply between Delhi and Varanasi.

- Train 18 is an indigenously developed world-class train under Make in India.

- The 16-coach train has been built completely in India by Indian engineers in a span of 18 months at the Integral Coach Factory, Chennai.

SALIENT FEATURES OF VANDE BHARAT EXPRESS:

- **Vande Bharat Express is the energy efficient and the first locomotive-less train in the country and will be fully air-conditioned.**
- These trains run on electric traction like Metro trains and will start replacing the Shatabdi Express fleet from next year.
- The fares in these world-class trains are 40-50 per cent higher than the Shatabdi Express.
- The train will cover 755 km distance in eight hours with stoppages at Kanpur and Prayagraj.
- It would be the fastest train on the route.
- The new train provides a number of features to enhance passenger comfort which include inter-connected fully sealed gangways, automatic doors with retractable footsteps, onboard Wi-Fi and infotainment, GPS-based passenger information system, modular toilets with bio-vacuum systems, rotational seats which can be aligned in the direction of travel (available only in the executive class), roller blinds and diffused LED lighting and disabled-friendly toilets.

ODISHA CM ANNOUNCES JIBAN SAMPARK PROJECT AT ADIVASI MELA

The Chief Minister of Odisha announced the Jiban Sampark Project of Odisha for the welfare of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups at the annual Adivasi Mela-2019.

ABOUT THE ANNUAL ADIVASI MELA:

- **The annual Adivasi Mela showcases the art, artefacts, culture, tradition, and music of the tribal community.**
- The Adivasi Mela strengthen the livelihood of the tribal communities by creating a sustainable market and business opportunities for tribal artisans.

ABOUT THE JIBAN SAMPARK PROJECT:

- The Jiban Sampark Project undertaken in association with UNICEF aims to generate awareness among Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Odisha on various development and welfare initiatives of State Government, especially on women and child welfare.
- The focus areas of Jiban Sampark Project are skill development, empowering communities, cooperation and innovation among the groups.

ABOUT PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGS):

- **The category of the PVTGs was created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices.**
- A separate category of PVTGs was constituted based on the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission in 1975.

- PVTGs are identified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs based on the recommendations from the state governments or Union territories.
- **The highest numbers of PVTGs are found in Odisha.**

FIRST EVER INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION CELEBRATED ON 24TH JANUARY 2019

The first-ever International Day of Education was celebrated on 24th January 2019 as per the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 3rd 2018 to celebrate the role of education in development.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION:

- **The International Day of Education demonstrates the world's political will towards providing quality education to all and achieving sustainable development by 2030.**
- The celebration reiterates the importance of education for the world's social and economic development and will nudge the member countries of UN to improve the quality of education and protect the rights of the student community.
- This will aid in the attainment of sustainable development goals by 2030.
- The International Day of Education is aimed at underscoring the fact that education is not only a fundamental right but also a necessity to achieve sustainable development.

AUSTRALIA CELEBRATED 'AUSTRALIA DAY' ON JANUARY 26TH

Australia celebrates 26th January as Australia Day which marks the landing of the First Fleet, a convoy of 11 ships carrying convicts, at Port Jackson in 1788.

- It also marks the founding of the colony- New South Wales.

FACTS ABOUT AUSTRALIA DAY:

- On the 30th anniversary of the founding of the colony in 1818, the Governor of New South Wales celebrated the day with a 30-gun salute and a holiday for all government employees.
- Initially, the celebrations were confined to New South Wales.
- **The first founding day was celebrated on 1838, 50 years after the First Fleet arrived in New South Wales.**
- By 1926, almost all states of Australia were celebrating the Australia Day and it was being referred to as Anniversary Day in New South Wales.
- From 1946, January 26 was celebrated as Australia Day all over the country with the public holiday.

VIEW OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE FOR JANUARY 26TH:

- **It is said that there are two Australia's, one is the land occupied for more than 50,000 years**

by Indigenous people before the arrival of the First Fleet, and second is the Australia that was colonised in 1788.

- The colonisation of Australia led to disastrous consequences for the indigenous population.
- On 26th January 1938, the Aboriginal people gathered in Sydney to mark a 'Day of Mourning' to protest against the callous treatment done to them by the white men during the past 150 years.
- In 2008 then-prime minister Kevin Rudd formally apologised to Australia's Indigenous communities over historic government policies of forced child removal and Indigenous assimilation.
- There are now demands to change the date since the Australia Day should bring the country together not divide Australia.

U.P. GOVERNMENT APPROVES CONSTRUCTION OF GANGA EXPRESSWAY THAT WOULD BE WORLD'S LONGEST EXPRESSWAY

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has approved the construction of the Ganga Expressway.

- The government has said that it would be the longest expressway in the world.
- The expressway will provide for better connectivity of Prayagraj (Allahabad) to the western state.

ABOUT THE GANGA EXPRESSWAY:

- **This 600km Ganga Expressway would be constructed at an approximate cost of Rs 36,000 crores over 6,556 hectares of land.**
- The expressway starting from Meerut will pass through Amroha, Bulandshahr, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Farrukhabad, Hardoi, Kannauj, Unnao, Rae Bareli, Pratapgarh before reaching Prayagraj.

WHAT ARE EXPRESSWAYS?

- **Expressways are the highest class of roads in the road network in India.**
- National Expressways Authority of India under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is responsible for the construction and maintenance of **expressways**.
- Expressways are controlled-access highways, the highest-grade type of highways with access ramps, lane dividers, etc. for high-speed traffic.

PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA PROPOSES THREE MODELS TO STATES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SCHEME

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM JAY) proposed three models through which the states can implement the scheme.

These models are:

INSURANCE MODEL

Under this Model, the premiums are paid to the insurance company, which administers and pays the claim.

TRUST-BASED MODEL

Under this Model, each State forms its own trust to manage the scheme and claims will be disbursed from a corpus created from Central and State Government contributions.

HYBRID MODEL

Under this Model, a part of the claim comes under the insurance model while the balance gets processed under the trust.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI JAN AROGYA YOJANA (PM JAY):

- **Pradhan Mantri – Jan Arogya Yojana (PM JAY)** is a scheme of the government under Ayushman Bharat which aims to reduce the financial burden on poor and vulnerable groups arising out of catastrophic hospital episodes and ensure their access to quality health services was conceived.
- Under the PM-JAY scheme about 10.74 crore poor, deprived rural families and identified occupational categories of urban workers' families as per the latest Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data (approx. 50 crore beneficiaries) will have health benefit cover of Rs Five Lakhs per family per year at free of cost.
- The health benefit cover includes more than 1,350 medical packages covering surgery, medical and daycare treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
- PM-JAY seeks to accelerate India's progress towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal 3 which calls for ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER INAUGURATES AFRICA CENTRE FOR CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Africa Centre for Climate and Sustainable Development was inaugurated by the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in Rome.

- The centre has been opened by the Italian Government in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

DETAILS ABOUT THE CENTRE:

- The centre's origin can be traced to a declaration endorsed by the G7 meeting of the Environment Ministers in 2017.

- **The centre would facilitate coordination among the G7 and African countries on common initiatives in Africa to achieve the goals set by the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.**
- The Centre would contribute towards addressing the needs of Africa by providing a platform for G7 countries to steer their cooperation to contrast environmental degradation and promote sustainable economic growth in the region.
- The centre will provide a fast-track, demand-driven mechanism for African countries to access grant resources that support policies, initiatives, and best practices on climate change, food security, access to water, clean energy, and accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.
- The centre would be hosted by UNDP which would utilise its extensive country office network and programmatic hubs, and global expertise and knowledge, to enable the African countries to access the resources available through it.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Africa referred to as Dark Continent still has up to 330 million of its population living in poverty and up to 60% of unemployed Africans are young people.
- The centre will help to speed up progress and quickly resource national development priorities in the African countries to address these challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

CENTRAL BANKS OF THE UAE AND SAUDI ARABIA TO LAUNCH A COMMON DIGITAL CURRENCY CALLED "ABER"

The Central Banks of the UAE and Saudi Arabia will launch a common digital currency called Aber.

- Aber will be used for financial settlements between the two countries through Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers technologies.

BENEFITS OF THE DIGITAL CURRENCY:

- The digital currency would aid in studying the impact on the improvement and reduction of remittance costs and the assessments of risks.
- Aber will establish an additional means for the central financial transfer systems of the two countries and enable banks to directly deal with each other in conducting financial remittances.

ROADMAP OF THE DIGITAL CURRENCY:

- **Initially, the use of the digital currency will be restricted to a limited number of banks.**
- By studying the various technical, economic and legal requirements, the use of the digital currency would be expanded.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Digital Currency Aber relies on the use of a distributed database between the central banks and the participating banks from both sides.
- Digital Currency is part of the efforts to adopt new technologies like Blockchain, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, etc. in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution that is reshaping governments and corporates around the world.

NGT DISSATISFIED WITH THREE STATE GOVERNMENTS OVER CLEANING OF RIVER YAMUNA & ASKS FOR PERFORMANCE GUARANTEE

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked for a performance guarantee of Rs 10 crore each from the governments of Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh expressing dissatisfaction over the cleaning of river Yamuna.

- The order comes after the interim report filed by the monitoring committee comprising of expert member B S Sajwan and former Delhi Chief Secretary Shailaja Chandra.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE:

- A study to assess the environmental flow of the river Yamuna for the stretch between Hathankund and Okhla and notes that it would not be possible to rejuvenate it unless minimum environmental flow was provided.
- **Creating ponds and pits in various localities to facilitate idol immersion.**
- Building awareness about why the flood plains are sacrosanct and why they need conservation.
- Involvement of citizens by dissipating knowledge about why the river is important and why it is worth preserving and restoring.
- River Yamuna is a unique birding destination and there is a need for the Delhi Development Authority to preserve the birding hot spots.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL:

- The performance guarantee would be forfeited if the work was not carried out as per the recommendations of the monitoring committee.
- The monitoring committee was asked to expeditiously submit its final report.
- Steps to be taken by the three states at the earliest for disposal of municipal solid waste, cleaning of drains and ensuring cleaning of garbage.
- Haryana pollution control board to conduct a study of water quality and the flow of Yamuna at the point it enters Haryana, and submit the list of industries located in the catchment area.

ONE MUST KNOW:

NGT also noted that almost 67 per cent of the pollutants that enter the Yamuna would be treated by two sewage treatment plants at Delhi Gate and Najafgarh under the first phase of the Maili se Nirmal Yamuna Revitalisation project.

INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY DESIGNATED BY UN RESOLUTION OBSERVED ON JANUARY 27TH

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed every year on January 27th.

- January 27th marks the anniversary of the Allied liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland, where an estimated 1.1 million people died, including 1 million Jews.

MORE DETAILS:

- **The day is part of the efforts to educate about the dark phase of humanity and to deny any efforts to reject Holocaust.**
- The UN resolution which designated January 27 as "The International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust", calls for education programs on the Holocaust to help prevent genocide and rejects denials that the Holocaust occurred.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is celebrated every year since 2006.**
- Jewish groups, particularly in Israel observe Yom HaShoah, which is a day of mourning for Holocaust victims on the 27th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which falls in April or May of the Gregorian calendar.

