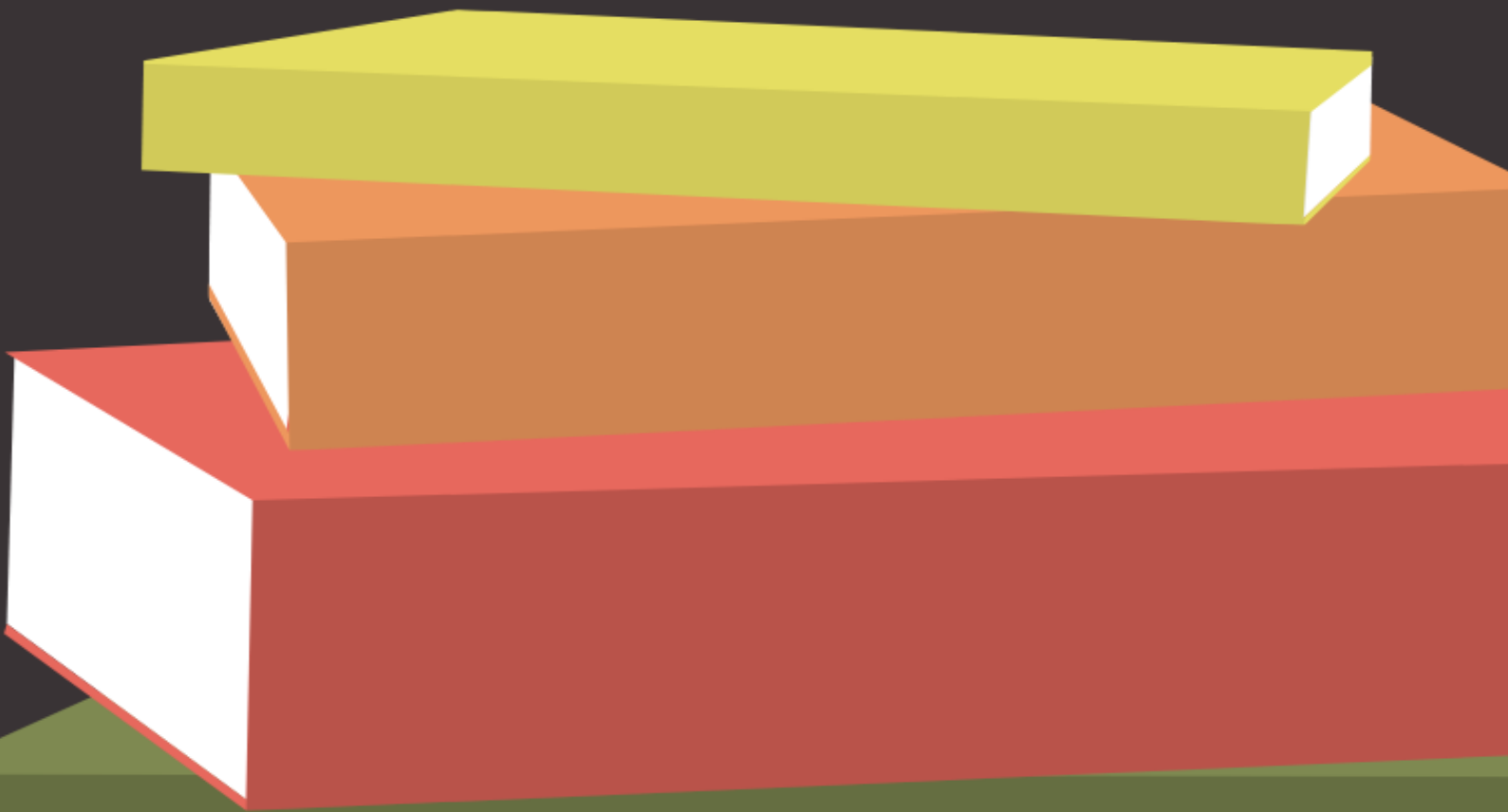


Monthly GK Digest March 2019



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MONTHLY GK DIGEST: MARCH 2019

QRSAM SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED FROM CHANDIPUR, ODISHA

- India has successfully test-fired two indigenously developed Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air missiles (QRSAM) from the Chandipur test range off the Odisha coast.

DETAILS:

- QRSAM was test fired from a rotatable truck-based launch unit at Chandipur in Odisha's Balasore district.
- The two missiles tested for different altitude and conditions successfully demonstrated robust control, aerodynamics, propulsion, structural performance and high maneuvering capabilities.

ABOUT QUICK REACTION SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE:

- The missile is an all-weather, all-terrain missile with electronic countermeasures against jamming by aircraft radars.
- QRSAM uses solid-fuel propellant and has a range of 25-30 km.
- QRSAM has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in association with Bharat Electronics Limited and Bharat Dynamics Limited as a replacement to Osa-AK and Kvadrat missile systems.

THREE BANKS REMOVED FROM PCA FRAMEWORK BY RBI

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has removed three banks- Dhanlaxmi Bank, Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank from the PCA framework by moving them out of its weak-bank watchlist.

DETAILS:

- The Government has infused fresh capital into various banks including some of the banks currently under the PCA framework.
- As part of the capital infusion, Corporation Bank had received Rs 9086 cr and Allahabad Bank had received 6896 cr.
- Capital Infusion to both of these banks has shored up their capital funds and also increased their loan loss provision to ensure that the PCA parameters were complied with.
- Dhanlaxmi Bank was taken out of the PCA framework, subject to certain conditions and it would be under continuous monitoring, as the bank is found to be not breaching any of the 'Risk Thresholds' of the PCA framework.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Earlier in the year, the RBI had removed the Bank of India (BoI), Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) from the PCA framework.
- With the removal of Allahabad Bank and Corporation Bank from the list, five PSBs which includes- United Bank of India, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank and Dena Bank remain under the PCA framework.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The PCA framework had become a bone of contention between the Government and the RBI.
- **In India, PCA kicks in when banks breach any of the three key regulatory trigger points namely- Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio, Net Non-Performing Assets (NPA) and Return on Assets (RoA) whereas globally PCA kicks in only when banks slip on a single parameter of capital adequacy ratio.**
- The Government and Independent Directors of the RBI board, like S Gurumurthy, are in favour of this practice being adopted for the domestic banking sector as well.

BRITAIN ADVISED BY THE ICJ TO RETURN DIEGO GARCIA TO MAURITIUS

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has advised Britain to return the Diego Garcia (Chagos Archipelago) to Mauritius as rapidly as possible.

DETAILS:

- The ICJ has said that Britain must give Mauritius control of the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean.
- **The advisory has been issued by the ICJ on the request of the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to look into the issue.**

OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE ICJ:

- **In a majority opinion the court noted that the decolonisation of Mauritius was not lawfully complete when it attained independence because Britain carved away the Chagos Archipelago from it and retained control over it.**
- Britain is under an obligation to bring an end to its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible.

MORE DETAILS:

- **Mauritius was the colony of erstwhile British Empire.**
- **When the calls of decolonisation grew stronger, the British granted independence to the Island nation Mauritius.**
- **But the British cut off the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 before granting it independence in 1968.**
- Also, the residents of the Chagos Archipelago were forcibly removed and the Chagos Archipelago was handed over to the US.
- **The US established its strategic Indian Ocean military base at the Chagos Archipelago.**
- Both the UK and the US had vehemently opposed the UN resolution which referred the matter to ICJ saying it was a bilateral matter with Mauritius.
- UK is not represented in the ICJ Bench and the sole dissent judgement was by the American Judge.
- Hence it is unlikely that the UK would accept the advisory.
- The possibility of any challenge to the US Diego Garcia base from Mauritius is also unlikely.
- Hence by and large status quo would be maintained.

CM OF TAMIL NADU UNVEILS MGR CENTENARY ARCH IN CHENNAI

- The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu K Palaniswami has unveiled MGR Centenary Arch on Kamaraj Salai of Chennai.

ABOUT THE MGR CENTENARY ARCH:

- The MGR Centenary Arch has been built at an estimated cost of 2.52 crore, from the State Secretariat.
- The Centenary Arch 66 feet wide and 52 feet height was proposed to commemorate the birth centenary of the late Chief Minister MG Ramachandran.
- The division bench of Madras High Court had passed an interim order restraining the state government from inaugurating the arch, off the famous Marina beach, till disposal of public interest litigation petition opposing it last year.
- The Madras High Court had permitted the Tamil Nadu Government to unveil the arch but without any ceremony.

WHY WAS THE CENTENARY ARCH CHALLENGED?

- It was alleged that the arch was constructed by encroaching on arterial Kamarajar Salai and its pedestrian space meant for public use was in total violation of various legislations.
- The Tamil Nadu Highways Act does not permit any permanent structure can be constructed either on the middle or the pathway of a road.

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.
- He has been also honoured with the Bharat Ratna.

CREATION OF A NEW RAILWAY ZONE ANNOUNCED FOR ANDHRA PRADESH

- Union Minister for Railways Piyush Goyal has announced the creation of a new railway zone for Andhra Pradesh- 'Southern Coast Railway Zone' to be headquartered in Visakhapatnam.

ABOUT THE SOUTHERN COAST RAILWAY ZONE:

- The Southern Coast Railway Zone would comprise of existing Guntakal, Guntur and Vijayawada divisions that currently fall under the South Central Railway.
- The South Central Railway will then consist of the Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Nanded divisions.
- Waltair division under the East Coast Railway Zone, covering the northern districts of Andhra Pradesh, parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha will be split into two.
- One part will be incorporated in the new zone and merged with the neighbouring Vijayawada division, the remaining portion will be converted into a new division, headquartered at Rayagada, under the East Coast Railway (ECoR).

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Under item 8 of Schedule 13 (Infrastructure) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014 Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor state of Andhra Pradesh.
- Southern Coast Railway Zone is a step forward in this direction.
- The establishment is largely seen as a political move since the Railway Minister has given assent to the creation of the new zone despite the internal report of the Railway Board calling it "catastrophic".
- The report had said that creation of a new zone in Andhra Pradesh would be "like putting many nails in the coffin of the Indian Railways".
- **The South Coast Railway Zone would be an 18th Railway zone in the country.**
- Currently, India has 17 zones and a total of 73 divisions.

ASSAM GOVT ANNOUNCES PRANAM COMMISSION

- The Chief Minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal has announced a PRANAM Commission to look after the issues related to the Parents Responsibility and Norms for Accountability and Monitoring (PRANAM) Bill.

ABOUT THE PRANAM BILL:

- The bill makes it mandatory for State Government employees to look after their parents and unmarried differently abled siblings who do not have their own sources of income.
- The bill proposes that if any complaints related to ignorance towards parents or unmarried differently abled siblings, then 10 or 15 per cent of the employee's salary will be deducted by the Government and paid to the parents or differently abled siblings.
- The Government has said that it aims to cover the Employees of private companies and the Central Government working in the state at a later stage.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The PRANAM Bill is an effort from the State Government to protect elderly parents and unmarried differently abled siblings and give them financial security.
- The bill is first of its kind in the country and is an effort to protect elderly parents of Government employees and unmarried differently abled siblings in their times of need.

TATA STEEL RECOGNISED AS ONE OF WORLD'S MOST ETHICAL COMPANIES

- Tata Steel has been recognised as one of World's Most Ethical Companies by the Ethisphere Institute for 2019.

DETAILS:

- Ethisphere Institute is a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices.
- For the eighth time, Tata Steel has got the recognition in the 'Metals, Minerals and Mining' category.

FURTHER DETAILS:

- 128 companies are recognized for exemplifying and advancing corporate citizenship, transparency and the standards of integrity in the year 2019.
- The honorees are from 21 countries and 50 industries.
- The list includes 16 first-time honorees and eight companies that have been named to the list every year since 2007.

ABOUT ETHISPHERE'S ETHICS QUOTIENT:

- The companies are listed World's Most Ethical Companies based on their score in the Ethisphere's Ethics Quotient which collects and objectively scores self-reported data in five weighted categories **namely:**
 - Leadership and Reputation
 - Ethics Compliance Programme
 - Culture of Ethics
 - Corporate Citizenship and Responsibility
 - Governance

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The other Indian company to find a place in the list of World's Most Ethical Companies 2019 is Wipro.

THAAWARCHAND GEHLOT LAUNCHES 2ND EDITION OF ISL DICTIONARY

- Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot launched the 2nd Edition of Indian Sign Language (ISL) Dictionary in New Delhi.

ABOUT THE ISL DICTIONARY:

- The Dictionary was brought about by Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre (ISLRTC) under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **The second edition dictionary includes total 6000 words under the categories of academic, legal, medical, technical and everyday terms against the first edition which had about 3000 words.**
- **The ISL Dictionary is also available on ISLRTC's YouTube channel.**
- The dictionary is intended to serve as a resource for ISL teachers, ISL learners, teachers of the hearing impaired, interpreters, parents of hearing-impaired children and researchers.
- **The dictionary was prepared with the involvement of the hearing impaired community, by giving due consideration to their suggestions and understanding.**
- The dictionary videos contain the sign, the English term for the sign and pictures where relevant and word list is also given with the English and Hindi equivalents of the signs.
- National Workshops were conducted with hearing-impaired participants from all over India to provide feedback and suggestions on ISLRTC's Dictionary.

- The videos recorded in the workshops have also been included as regional signs in the Dictionary.
- **Most of the hearing impaired people use Indian Sign Language to communicate.**
- The aim of the dictionary is to help spread the use of ISL which could result in better education and employment opportunities for hearing impaired persons.

STARS SCHEME LAUNCHED ON NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

- Union Human Resource Minister Prakash Javadekar launched the STARS scheme on National Science Day (28th February).

ABOUT THE SCHEME:

- STARS is an acronym for "**Scheme for Translational and Advanced Research in Science**" and this scheme is launched to fund Science projects.
- The scheme will be implemented at the cost of Rs 250 crores.
- Under the scheme, 500 science projects will be funded whose selection will be made based on competition.
- IISC will be the coordinator of the scheme.

ABOUT NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY:

- The National Science Day is celebrated on 28th February every year in the memory of Indian physicist and a Nobel laureate Sir C.V. Raman.
- The National Science Day is celebrated to commemorate the discovery of "Raman Effect" for which Sir C.V. Raman was awarded Nobel Prize in the year 1930.
- The theme of the 2019 National Science Day is "Science for People and People for Science".

WHAT IS THE RAMAN EFFECT?

- Raman Effect refers to the inelastic scattering of a photon by molecules which are excited to higher vibrational or rotational energy levels.
- Part of the light beam after passing through transparent medium gets scattered and the wavelength of these scattered rays is different from that of the incident rays of light.
- This phenomenon of scattering of light is termed as Raman Scattering and the cause of scattering is called the Raman Effect.

ATAL INNOVATION MISSION AND ADOBE PARTNER TO COLLABORATE

- Atal Innovation Mission and software major Adobe have signed a Statement of Intent to collaborate on enhancing digital literacy and creativity skills in India.

DETAILS:

- Under the agreement, Adobe would implement the Digital Disha Programme across 100 schools under Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) initiative.
- Teachers and Children across these 100 schools would benefit from the creative learning resources via free access to Adobe Spark premium.
- This would empower them with new age skills to thrive in the current digital era and preparing them for long term success.

ABOUT ATAL TINKERING LABS:

- Atal Tinkering Labs is the flagship initiative undertaken by NITI Aayog under the Atal Innovation Mission.
- Atal Tinkering Labs are aimed at inculcating the values of innovation, technology and entrepreneurship amongst India's youngsters.
- Atal Tinkering Labs are dedicated works spaces where students (Class 6th to Class 12th) learn innovation skills and develop ideas that will go on to transform India.

ABOUT ADOBE DIGITAL DISHA PROGRAMME:

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has partnered with Adobe to launch Adobe Digital Disha Programme.
- Under the Adobe Digital Disha Programme, Adobe would provide Adobe Spark application, a fun and frictionless storytelling Creative Cloud application free of charge for education and skill development.

MAINAMATI MAITREE EXERCISE 2019 CONCLUDED BETWEEN INDIAN BSF AND BGB

- Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) concluded a three-day Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019 as a part of confidence-building measures between the two border guards.

ABOUT MAINAMATI MAITREE EXERCISE 2019:

- The exercise was named after Mainamati hill range situated 8 km west of Comilla Township in Bangladesh, which is home to an ancient Buddhist archaeological site in the region.
- The exercise was held in areas near Srimantapur in Sipahijala district, bordering Comilla district in Bangladesh.
- The objective of Mainamati Maitree Exercise 2019 was to plan and conduct anti-smuggling and anti-criminal activity related operations with an aim to achieve better joint operational efficiency and border management in the area.
- The exercise involved joint patrolling, anti-smuggling drills, simulated raids on suspected places in both the countries and checking of goods and identity at international check posts.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- After the Standoff between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) around 31 Rohingya people who were found crossing the international border into Bangladesh in January, series of

joint exercises and exchanges are being held in the Tripura-Bangla frontier as part of the confidence-building measure.

BILATERAL SWAP ARRANGEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN RBI AND BANK OF JAPAN

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Bank of Japan have signed a Bilateral Swap Agreement.** The agreement was negotiated during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tokyo last year.

ABOUT THE BILATERAL SWAP AGREEMENT:

- The Swap agreement will provide India access to 75 billion US dollars against the 50 billion US Dollars under earlier BSA.
- Under the agreement, India can access 75 billion US Dollars for its domestic currency, for the purpose of maintaining an appropriate level of balance of payments or short-term liquidity at its discretion.
- Currently, India has a comfortable level of foreign exchange.
- The bilateral swap agreement will provide India to access the reserves if at any point of time when the need arises.

BENEFITS OF THE SWAP AGREEMENT:

- 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 confidence in the Indian market.

HOW WILL THIS SWAP AGREEMENT WORK?

- **As part of the agreement, the Bank of Japan (Japanese central bank) will accept Rupees and give US Dollars to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).**
- **Similarly, RBI will take the Yen and give US Dollars to the Bank of Japan to stabilize each other's currency.**
- Since the Japanese Yen is one of the five currencies included in the IMF's SDR basket and is counted as global hard currency, the central part of the agreement boils down to Japanese commitment to exchange US Dollar for Rupee from India.

USHA THORAT PANEL CONSTITUTED BY RBI

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a panel under the former Deputy Governor Usha Thorat to examine issues related to offshore Rupee markets and recommend policy measures to ensure the stability of the external value of the domestic currency.**

ROLE OF THE PANEL

- The panel will study the causes behind the development of the offshore rupee market and examine the effects of the offshore markets on the Rupee exchange rate and market liquidity in the domestic market.
- The panel will also recommend measures to address concerns, if any, arising out of offshore Rupee trading besides proposing measures to generate incentives for non-residents to access the domestic market.
- The panel will recommend measures to generate incentives for non-residents to access the domestic market and examine the role if any, International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) can play in addressing these concerns.

MORE DETAILS:

- The members of the Usha Thorat panel will include a nominee from the Department of Economic Affairs, nominee from the Securities and Exchange Board of India, Ajit Ranade- Chief Economist of the Aditya Birla Group, Sajjid Chinoy- Chief Economist: JPMorgan, Surendra Rosha- CEO India HSBC Adviser-in-charge, Department of Economic Policy and Research, RBI, and Chief General Manager- Financial Markets Regulation Department RBI.

CABINET APPROVES ₹1,450 CRORE FOR SHARE CAPITAL OF RBI IN NHB

- The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Rs 1,450 crore for the share capital of Reserve Bank of India in the National Housing Bank (NHB).
- The authorized capital of NHB stood at Rs 2000 crore of which Rs 1450 crore was subscribed by RBI.

ABOUT THE TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP FROM THE RBI TO THE GOVERNMENT:

- The Finance Bill 2018 amended the National Housing Bank Act, 1987 to transfer RBI's stake in the NHB to the Government.
- The amendment was in accordance with the recommendations of the Narasimhan Committee.
- The committee had recommended the transfer of RBI's stake in State Bank of India, NABARD and NHB to the government to differentiate the central bank's role as the owner of banks and the sector regulator.
- Now the ownership of the NHB would be vested with the Central Government.
- This change in ownership will strengthen funding support to housing finance scenario in the country.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL HOUSING BANK (NHB):

- National Housing Bank (NHB) was established under the act of parliament viz. the National Housing Bank Act, 1987 based on the recommendations of the Rangarajan committee.
- NHB was set up as the apex institution for housing finance and operates as a principal agency to promote housing finance institutions both at local and regional levels.
- NHB provides financial and other support to such housing finance institutions.

IRCTC LAUNCHES PAYMENT AGGREGATOR IRCTC iPAY

- Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched its own payment aggregator system, IRCTC iPay.
- This a step towards promoting the Government's Digital India initiative.

ABOUT IRCTC iPAY:

- IRCTC iPay is a prepaid card cum wallet.
- With IRCTC iPay, IRCTC will have full control of the payment system because of its direct relationship with acquiring banks, card networks and other partners.
- This direct and full control will eventually lead to a substantial reduction in payment failures.
- Further in case of an online transaction is unsuccessful or some other error occurs, IRCTC can directly get in touch with the bank instead of relying on an intermediate source which usually delays the process.
- With IRCTC iPay passengers will not need any third-party platforms as the IRCTC iPay provides payment options like credit card, debit card, UPI-Unified Payment Interface and International Card.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The exclusive digital payment gateway will provide an improved online digital payment convenience and ease of doing business to passengers availing online travel-related services through the IRCTC website.

INDIA WINS GOLD AT THE MAKRAN CUP BOXING IN IRAN

- India has won one gold and five silver medals at the Makran Cup Boxing in Iran.

DETAILS:

- The only Gold Medal for India was won by National Champion Deepak Singh in the 49kg category.
- Even though five Indians along with Deepak Singh had entered summit clash, only Deepak Singh made the golden finish.

THE SILVER MEDALISTS ARE:

- P Lalitha Prasad in the 52kg category.
- Manish Kaushik in the 60kg category.
- Duryodhan Singh Negi in the 69kg Category.
- Sanjeet in the 91kg category.
- Satish Kumar in +91kg category.

THE BRONZE MEDALISTS:

- Rohit Tokas in the 64kg category and Manjeet Singh Panghal in the 75kg category lost in the semifinal bouts and signed off with bronze medals.

WORLD RECORD SET IN MODERN ARTIFICIAL LIMBS (LEGS)

- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has set a new world record.

DETAILS:

- The department had undertaken the Modern Artificial Limbs (Legs) implantation in Gujarat's Bharuch.
- The implantation was carried out for 260 people in record eight hours.
- This was the seventh world record set by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:

- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities was created as a separate department on May 12, 2012, to give focused attention to Policy issues and meaningful thrust to the activities aimed at welfare and empowerment of the Persons with Disabilities.
- The department was renamed as Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on 08.12.2014
- The Department serves as a nodal agency for matters pertaining to disability and Persons with Disabilities including effecting closer coordination among different stakeholders: related Central Ministries, State/UT Governments, NGOs etc. in matters pertaining to disability.
- The vision of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is to build an inclusive society in which equal opportunities are provided for the growth and development of Persons with Disabilities so that they can lead productive, safe and dignified lives.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES GETS BHAGWAN LAL SAHNI AS CHAIRMAN

- Bhagwan Lal Sahni has been appointed as the Chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes.
- Also, Kaushalendra Singh Patel and Acharya Talloju have been appointed as the members of the commission.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES:

- National Commission for Backward Classes is a Constitutional body set up through the 123rd constitutional amendment bill 2018 and 102nd amendment act under the provisions of Article 338B of Indian Constitution.
- The commission consists of one Chairman and five Members with the term of three years.
- The National Commission for Backward Classes is vested with the responsibility of considering inclusions in and exclusions from the lists of communities notified as backward for the purpose of job reservations.
- The commission tenders the needful advice to the Central Government on the issues related to the backward classes and the commission has the powers of a civil court.
- The National Commission for Backward Classes is not yet empowered to look into the grievances of persons of Other Backward Classes.
- This responsibility continues to be vested with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

- National Commission for Backward classes is the successor of the National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC).

ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY CELEBRATED BY UNAIDS

- Zero Discrimination Day is annually celebrated by the UN and other international organisations on March 1st.

DETAILS:

- Zero Discrimination Day is celebrated to promote and celebrate everyone's right, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, skin colour etc.
- Zero Discrimination Day aims to raise the voice for the right to live life with dignity, despite one's choices, beliefs, profession, education, disability or even illness.
- A butterfly is the symbol of the Zero Discrimination Day and it is widely used by people to share their stories and photos as a way to end discrimination and work towards positive transformation.

MORE DETAILS:

- Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated on March 1, 2014, and was launched by UNAIDS Executive Director at Beijing after UNAIDS launched its Zero Discrimination Campaign on World AIDS Day in December 2013.
- Zero Discrimination Day is particularly noted by organisations like UNAIDS that combat discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS since HIV related stigma and discrimination is pervasive and exists in almost every part of the world.
- From India, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) joins the campaign every year to generate awareness on discrimination and pertinent policies that will help mitigate stigma.

PRESIDENT OF SENEGAL MACKY SALL WINS RE-ELECTION

- President of Senegal Macky Sall has won the re-election with 58.27% of votes cast. More than 50% votes to a candidate imply that there would be no second round voting under the election system of Senegal.

ABOUT SENEGAL:

- Senegal lies on the west coast of Africa.
- Senegal is bordered by Mauritania in the north, Mali to the east, Guinea to the southeast, and Guinea-Bissau to the southwest.
- Senegal also borders the Gambia which occupies a narrow sliver of land along the banks of the Gambia River.
- Senegal also shares a maritime border with Cape Verde.
- Dakar is Senegal's economic and political capital.
- Senegal was the colony of Portuguese and later the French.
- Senegal gained independence from France in 1960.

- Senegal is the Muslim majority country and it has successfully escaped the jihadist attacks which have destabilised neighbours such as Mali.
- Senegal has witnessed two peaceful power transfers, in 2000 and 2012, and has never experienced a coup even though election campaigns are typically stained by charges of corruption, disinformation and bouts of violence.
- **Diplomatic relations between India and Senegal were established at the ambassadorial level with the establishment of a resident Indian mission in Dakar in 1962.**
- Senegal is often referred to as the biggest Indophile of West Africa since it is greatly influenced by a range of Indian cultural elements ranging from Hindi cinema to the concept of caste and outcaste.

CABINET APPROVES SETTING UP OF A CENTRE FOR DISABILITY SPORTS

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for setting up of a Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR DISABILITY SPORTS:

- The Centre for Disability Sports, Gwalior will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 170.99 crore, spread over a period of 5 years.
- The Centre of Disability Sports would be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- **The centre would create an improved sports infrastructure to ensure effective participation of persons with disabilities in sports activities and also enable them to compete at national and international levels.**
- **The centre would aid in developing a sense of belonging in 'Divyangjan' to facilitate their integration in society.**
- A governing body consisting of not exceeding 12 members would be set up for overall superintendence and supervision of the Centre with representation for experts from National Level Sports Federations apart from experts in Para Games.

MORE DETAILS:

- The announcement for setting up of Centre for Disability Sports was made in the Budget of 2014-15.
- The centre would aid in achieving the objective under the Section 30 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 which enjoins the Government to take measures to ensure effective participation of Persons with Disabilities in sports activities which inter-alia, includes a provision of infrastructural facilities for sports activities for them.

P K BEZBARUAH REAPPOINTED AS THE CHAIRMAN OF TEA BOARD

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industries has approved the re-appointment of P K Bezbaruah as the Chairman of Tea Board for a second tenure.
- He was the first non-IAS chairman of the Tea Board.

ABOUT HIS FIRST TENURE:

- He has been urging the Indian Tea Industry to explore export opportunities in the vast Chinese market.
- He was instrumental in initiating a revamp of the old electronic auctioning system in association with the IIM Bengaluru.

ABOUT THE TEA BOARD:

- The origin of the Tea Board can be traced to 1903 when the Indian Tea Cess Bill was passed to provide for levying a cess on tea exports.
- The proceeds of the cess were to be used for the promotion of Indian Tea both within and outside India.
- The Current Tea Board was constituted on 1st April 1954 under section 4 of the Tea Act 1953.
- Tea Board is functioning as a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries.

WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF THE TEA BOARD?

- Providing financial and technical assistance for cultivation, manufacture and marketing of tea.
- Export Promotion
- Undertaking Research and Development activities for augmentation of tea production and improvement of tea quality.
- Providing financial assistance in a limited way to the plantation workers and their wards through labour welfare schemes.
- To encourage and assist both financially and technically the unorganised small grower's sector.
- Collection and maintenance of Statistical data and publication.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Tea Board Consists of 31 members drawn from Members of Parliament, tea producers, tea traders, tea brokers, consumers, and representatives of Governments from the principal tea producing states, and trade unions and the Board is reconstituted every three years.

OSDMA WINS THE SKOCH AWARD, 2018

- Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has won the SKOCH Award, 2018 for its remarkable achievements in the field of disaster management.

DETAILS:

- The award was presented at the 56th SKOTCH Summit held at New Delhi.
- The SKOCH Award is being presented since 2003 to individuals and institutions having done meritorious works in the field of governance, finance, banking, disaster management, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth by Skoch Group.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF OSDMA:

- OSDMA had received 'Order-of-Merit' in the Gold category for constructing 879 multipurpose cyclone and flood shelters which played a key role in saving human lives during Cyclone Phailin in 2013.
- OSDMA had received Order-of-Merit' in the Silver category for constructing disaster resilient houses for about 17,000 Phailin affected families by relocating them to safer places.
- 'Order-of-Merit' in the Bronze category was given to the OSDMA for its Early Warning Dissemination System for different hydro-meteorological disasters across the coastline of Odisha which will benefit 1,205 villages in 22 blocks of six coastal districts.
- OSDMA had received ICHL award, 2013 for Excellence in Humanitarian Action in the field of Disaster Management and many certifications for effective management of disasters.

AIAA CONFERS MISSILE SYSTEMS AWARD 2019 UPON DRDO CHIEF

- Aerospace scientist and Chief of the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO), G Satheesh Reddy has been conferred the Missile Systems Award 2019 by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

MORE DETAILS:

- Satheesh Reddy shares the award with Rondell J. Wilson, a former Principal Engineering Fellow of Raytheon Missile Systems.
- He is the first Indian and first person outside the USA to be awarded this prestigious award in nearly four decades.

ABOUT SATHEESH REDDY:

- Satheesh Reddy is the Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and is considered the architect of advanced missile technologies and smart guided weapons technologies in India.
- Satheesh Reddy was the Project Director for the design and development of the country's first 1,000 kg class guided bomb which has enhanced precision strike capabilities.
- Satheesh Reddy is also the first scientist from India to receive the Silver Medal from the Royal Aeronautical Society, London.
- Satheesh Reddy has also played a key role in the development of some key systems, including tactical missile systems such as the quick reaction surface-to-air missile, the portable anti-tank guided missile and the HELINA and NAG anti-tank weapons.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF AERONAUTICS AND ASTRONAUTICS:

- American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) is a professional society of Aerospace Engineers.
- AIAA aims to ignite and celebrate aerospace ingenuity and collaboration, and its importance to our way of life.
- The Missile Systems Award recognises excellence in developing or implementing missile systems technology, including significant technological accomplishments or for inspired leadership of missile systems programmes.

INDIAN WRESTLERS SHINE AT THE DAN KOVLOV 2019 WRESTLING EVENT

The medal winners for India at the Dan Kovlov 2019 wrestling event are:

- Bajrang Punia won gold in the Men's freestyle wrestling 65kg category.
- Pooja Dhanda claimed gold in the Women's 59kg category.
- Sakshi Malik claimed silver medal in the Women's 65kg category.
- Sandeep Tomar claimed silver medal in the Men's 61kg category.
- Vinesh Phogat claimed silver medal in the Women's 53kg.

ONE MUST KNOW:

The Wrestling event was held at Ruse, Bulgaria.

ABOUT DAN KOVLOV:

- The Wrestling event is named after wrestling legend Doncho Kolev Danev better known by the ring name Dan Kolov.
- Dan Kolov was a Bulgarian wrestler and he was the first European freestyle wrestling champion from Bulgaria.
- Dan Kovlov had between 1,500 and 2,000 fights and won almost all of them and he has registered only three losses in official matches.

PM MODI LAYS THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR AK-203 RIFLE

MANUFACTURING UNIT

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for AK-203 rifles manufacturing unit in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh.

DETAILS:

- On the occasion of laying the foundation stone, PM Modi thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for making the venture possible in such a short time.
- The message of the Russian President Vladimir Putin was read out by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on the occasion.

ABOUT THE AK-203 RIFLE MANUFACTURING UNIT:

- The rifles will be manufactured in Amethi as a joint venture between India and Russia.
- In the Amethi Manufacturing facility, world-famous Kalashnikov assault rifles of the newest 200 series would be manufactured.
- This unit envisions full localisation of production over a period of time.
- This new Kalashnikov assault rifles will fulfil the needs of national security agencies in this category of small arms, resting upon advanced Russian technologies.
- The agreement for the joint venture was reached during the visit of President Putin to India last October.

- The rifle manufacturing unit in Amethi symbolises the military and technical cooperation between India and Russia which has been the key areas of the strategic partnership between Russia and India.

ABOUT THE KALASHNIKOV RIFLES:

- **Kalashnikov Rifles were developed in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Kalashnikov.**
- The rifles were officially accepted by the Soviet Armed Forces in the year 1949.
- Even after seven decades, the model and its variants remain the most popular and widely used assault rifles in the world because of their substantial reliability under harsh conditions, low production costs compared to contemporary Western weapons, availability in virtually every geographic region and ease of use.

CISF AT YAMUNA EXPRESSWAY CREATES WORLD RECORD

- **The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) created a new Guinness World Record for the longest single moving line bicycle parade at the Yamuna Expressway.**

ABOUT THE WORLD RECORD:

- **The world record was attempted to commemorate 50 years of the paramilitary force CISF.**
- **For creating the World Record the personnel of the central force rode 1,327 bicycles non-stop with a uniform distance between bicycles in a single line.**
- **The bicycle parade covered 3.2 km distance non-stop.**
- The CISF personnel displayed a high degree of discipline as the entire formation had to keep moving, keeping in mind that the distance between two cycles should not exceed the length of three, for the world record to be broken.
- **The CISF broke the earlier record of Hubballi bicycle club of India which had 1,235 bicycles in a single chain.**

ABOUT THE CENTRAL INDUSTRIAL SECURITY FORCE:

- **The CISF came into existence in 1969 with a modest three battalions, to provide integrated security cover to the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) which had occupied the commanding heights of the economy in those days.**
- In a span of five decades, the Force has grown several folds to reach one lakh forty-eight thousand and three hundred seventy-one personnel.
- With India embracing globalization and liberalization, CISF is no longer a PSU-centric organization.
- Instead, it is now a premier multi-skilled security agency of the country, mandated to provide security to major critical infrastructure installations of the country in diverse areas.
- **CISF is currently providing security cover to nuclear installations, space establishments, airports, seaports, power plants, sensitive government buildings, heritage monuments and even private entities.**

INDIA BANGLADESH JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE- 'SAMPRITI 2019' BEGINS

- **Sampriti 2019, eight edition of India Bangladesh joint military exercise began on 3rd March 2019.**
- The joint exercise is aimed to increase mutual cooperation, bonhomie and camaraderie between the armies of India and Bangladesh.

ABOUT SAMPRITI 2019:

- **Sampriti 2019 is hosted by Bangladesh at Tangail and will be held till March 15.**
- **Bangladesh is represented by 36 East Bengal Battalion and the Indian side is represented by 9th Battalion of the Rajputana Rifles.**
- The Sampriti 2019 will see contingents from both sides honing their tactical and technical skills in countering the insurgency, counter-terrorism and aiding civil authorities for disaster management in the UN Peacekeeping scenarios involving a combined deployment at a battalion level.
- The exercise is aimed at increasing mutual cooperation, bonhomie and camaraderie between the two armies through interoperability and joint tactical exercises.

HISTORY OF SAMPRITI EXERCISE:

- **The military exercise Sampriti began in 2009 as a platoon-level exercise and graduated to a company-level exercise from 2015 onwards.**
- During the exercise, both sides jointly train, plan and execute a series of well developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered during simulated UN peacekeeping operations.
- During the joint military exercise experts from both sides also hold discussions to share each other's experiences in varied topics for mutual benefits.

PSBLOANSIN59MINUTES.COM BECOMES INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE LENDING PLATFORM

- **PSBloansin59minutes.com which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018 has emerged as the country's largest online lending platform, with loan sanctions exceeding over Rs 35,000 crore.**

SALIENT FEATURE OF THE PORTAL:

- **The portal provides credit up to Rs 1 crore to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in just 59 minutes or less than an hour.**

BENEFITS THAT HAVE BEEN SEEN OF THE ONLINE PORTAL:

- The online portal has reduced the turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes and upon approval, the loan is disbursed in 7-8 working days.
- The automated loan processing system together with ease has helped in fostering transparency.
- **The online portal has aided in eliminating the discretion at the bankers' end, as in-principle approval of loans does not require human intervention.**

- 62 lakh MSME units have been given in-principle approvals, while 1.12 lakh have got a final nod, since the launch.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Through the Portal, the MSMEs apply for a loan using their GST registration as the portal is integrated with GST server at the back-end as well as IT, credit bureaus and banks.
- The portal then quickly scores the applicant on individual models of lenders.
- Borrowers then select the lender and branch which is willing to grant "in-principle" approval.
- The approval is then presented to the branch selected along with necessary documents.

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY OBSERVED ON 3RD MARCH

- World Wildlife Day 2019 was observed on March 3rd with the theme "Life below water: for people and planet".

OBJECTIVES OF WORLD WILDLIFE DAY:

- To provide an opportunity to celebrate the beautiful and varied forms of wild flora and fauna.
- To raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that conservation provides to people.
- To remind the world of the urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime and human-induced reduction of species, which have a wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impact.

ABOUT THIS YEAR'S THEME:

- The theme of World Wildlife Day 2019 "Life below water: for people and planet" complements the Goal 14 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG14) which aims to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development".

WHY MARCH 3RD WAS CHOSEN AS WORLD WILDLIFE DAY?

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on its 68th session on 20 December 2013 decided to proclaim 3rd March as World Wildlife Day.
- March 3rd is the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- World Wildlife Day also complements the efforts under the Sustainable Development Goal #15 which focuses on halting biodiversity loss.

CREW DRAGON CAPSULE OF SPACE X SUCCESSFULLY DOCKED

- The Crew Dragon capsule of Space X has successfully docked with the International Space Station.

DETAILS:

- The demonstration mission was named as **Demo-1**.
- It was a test mission before it can begin taking US astronauts into space.
- After the successful docking, the crew members of International Space Station opened the hatch of the space capsule and, for the first time, penetrated its interior in space.
- The Dragon Capsule had carried Ripley, a test dummy named after the heroine from Alien Movies, an untethered plush toy, 400 pounds (about 181 kg) of supplies and experiments to the ISS.
- During the mission, Flight computers guided the spacecraft directly into a docking port, unlike the previous cargo Dragon spacecraft that was attached to the space station after captured by a robotic arm.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Demo-1 was a dress rehearsal to demonstrate that the vehicle is reliable and safe so that NASA can resume manned flights from US soil this year and reduce its reliance on Russia to ferry its astronauts to the space station since the end of the US space shuttle program in 2011 after a 30-year run.

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 mi) 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).

CRICKET WILL BE RE-INTRODUCED IN 2022 ASIAN GAMES IN CHINA

- The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has decided to reintroduce Cricket in the 2022 Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou, China.

DETAILS:

- Earlier Cricket had featured in 2010 and 2014 Asian Games but was dropped from the 2018 Asian Games held at Incheon of Indonesia.
- **In all probabilities mostly T20 version of cricket would be introduced in the Asian Games.**
- In 2014, Sri Lanka and Pakistan won the men's and women's gold and in 2010 Bangladesh and Pakistan claimed the top honours.
- Indian Cricket Teams did not participate in both the editions.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- In another major decision, the OCA has agreed to invite Oceania countries including Australia to compete at the 2022 Asian Games.
- Oceania athletes participation is limited to sports which qualify for the 2024 Olympics through Asia, including volleyball, beach volleyball, basketball, soccer and fencing.

ABOUT THE ASIAN GAMES:

- Asian Games, also known as Asiad is a multi-sport event held every four years among athletes from all over Asia.
- Asian Games are organised by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) in association with the host nation.
- Asian Games are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and are described as the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.
- The first Asian Games were held at New Delhi, India in 1951.

PM MODI LAUNCHES NATIONAL COMMON MOBILITY CARD

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC), which can be used to make payments across public transport anywhere in the country, including Metro, bus and suburban railways, for toll and parking, and for retail like any credit or debit card.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMON MOBILITY CARD:

- The National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) was envisaged as part of the National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP) in 2006 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Referred to as "One Nation One Card" this inter-operable transport card would allow the holders to pay for their bus travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.
- It runs as on RuPay card and automates the fare collection system.
- This eliminates the need to carry change and cash while travelling in the metro, bus or train, or for toll and parking.
- The gate and reader prototype for the NCMC has been developed by government-owned Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in compliance with the Make in India initiative.
- These cards would be issued by all public and private banks the same way credit, debit, and prepaid cards are issued.
- NCMC provides a value proposition for customers as they need not carry multiple cards for different usage and the super-quick, a contactless transaction will improve the seamless experience.
- A pilot project for the NCMC ecosystem was launched on January 31 with the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC).
- The first-level trials were successfully completed in collaboration with CDAC, BEL, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and State Bank of India.

YUVA VIGYANI KARYAKRAM PROGRAMME LAUNCHED BY ISRO

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched the Young Scientist Programme (Yuva Vigyani Karyakram) to impart basic knowledge on space technology, space science and applications to the young ones to arouse their interest in space activities.

ABOUT THE YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME:

- For the Young Scientist Programme, ISRO will select over 100 students from across India and give them practical experience of how satellites are built.
- Three Students will be selected from each state/union territory to participate in the programme each year covering CBSE, ICSE and state syllabus on the basis of their academic performance and extracurricular activities.
- The Young Scientist Programme will involve a two-week residential training programme held each year during summer holidays for students from across the country who have completed class 8 and are studying in class 9.
- The students selected under the programme will also visit ISRO centres, interact with senior scientists, and will have access to research and development facilities.
- The students from rural areas will be given special weightage in the selection and all the expenses of travelling and boarding will be funded entirely by ISRO.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- ISRO will also launch Six incubation centres which will be established in various parts of the country- North, South, East, West, Centre and North-East to allow students to use these centres for R&D purposes.
- The first such centre was established in Agartala, Tripura.

AZAADI KE DIWANE MUSEUM INAUGURATED AT RED FORT

- The 'Azaadi ke Diwane' museum dedicated to the unsung heroes of our country's freedom struggle was inaugurated at the Red Fort premises.

ABOUT THE AZAADI KE DIWANE MUSEUM:

- The Museum is built by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- The Museum pays homage to hundreds of freedom fighters who do not find mention in popular culture.
- The Museum has attempted to document these unsung hero's contributions to India's Freedom Struggle.
- The Museum pays tribute to the selfless sacrifices of the revolutionaries, brave women freedom fighters and valiant children.
- The Museum is part of Kranti Mandir Series to inspire the younger generation and to let them know the cost of freedom that the great fighters achieved by sacrificing their lives.
- Azaadi ke Diwane is a digitised and interactive museum with a state-of-the-art, informative and educational exhibition allowing the visitors to engage with the exhibits through multi-sensor technology.

ABOUT THE KRANTI MANDIR SERIES:

- Kranti Mandir is India's tribute to the revolutionary zeal and courage of the great freedom fighters.

- Other Museums which are part of the Kranti Mandir series are Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Museum, Yaad-e-Jallian Museum and Museum on 1857- India's first war of Independence were inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the eve of Republic Day.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA LAUNCHES JALAMRUTHA SCHEME

- The Government of Karnataka has launched the water conservation scheme- Jalamrutha. The scheme focuses on drought-proofing measures, including protection and rejuvenation of water bodies.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SCHEME:

- The scheme will be implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj of Karnataka.
- Under the scheme, scientific approaches will be deployed for water budgeting, water harvesting and water conservation through the use of geospatial data, satellite imagery, topographical and geological data.
- The scheme is community drive and will be implemented by key line departments of the government, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and private sector institutions.
- The water conservation strategy under the scheme comprises of four components viz. water literacy, rejuvenation of waterbodies, creation of new waterbodies as well as the development of watersheds and afforestation activities.
- The scheme will operate on a four-tier institutional structure with planning and execution committees being set up at village, taluk, district and state levels.
- A State-level committee headed by the Chief Minister will be established for strategic monitoring, convergence, policy and programmatic guidance and the committee will design water conservation strategies for the State in consultation with all stakeholders.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Emphasising on water conservation the Government of Karnataka has announced 2019 as the 'Year of Water' to emphasise the importance of water becoming a scarce commodity and the need to conserve it.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA GETS P.V RAMESH AS DIRECTOR-GENERAL

- The Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of P V Ramesh as the Director-General of the National Archives of India.
- Currently, he is serving as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Rural Electrification Corporation.

ABOUT NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA:

- The genesis of National Archives of India can be traced to the report of Sandeman, the Civil Auditor who had stressed the need of relieving the offices of congestion by the destruction of the papers of routine nature and transfer of all valuable records to a 'Grand Central Archive'.

- In 1889 Professor G.W. Forrest of Elphinstone College, Bombay entrusted the job of examining the records of the Foreign Department of the Government of India made a strong plea for transferring all records of the administration of East India Company to a Central Repository.
- This led to the establishment of Imperial Records Department (IRD) on 11 March 1891 in the Imperial Secretariat Building at Calcutta (Kolkata).
- In 1911 the IRD was shifted to Delhi.
- After the Independence, the Government of India rechristened IRD as the National Archives of India with Director of Archives as its head and in the year 1990 the office of the Director of Archives was redesignated as Director General of Archives.
- At present National Archives of India is an attached office under the Ministry of Culture and has a Regional Office at Bhopal and three Records Centres at Jaipur, Puducherry and Bhubaneswar.

PRESIDENT OF INDIA NOMINATES JUSTICE SA BOBDE AS EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF NALSA

- President Ram Nath Kovind has nominated Justice SA Bobde of the Supreme Court as the Executive Chairman of National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

ABOUT NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (NALSA):

- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is a statutory body constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society.
- NALSA fulfils 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.
- The Chief Justice of India is the Patron-in-Chief and the Senior most Judge of the Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF NALSA?

- To legally empower the marginalized and excluded groups of the society by providing effective legal representation, legal literacy and awareness and bridging the gap between the legally available benefits and the entitled beneficiaries.
- To strengthen the system of Lok Adalats and other Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanisms in order to provide for the informal, quick, inexpensive and effective resolution of disputes and minimize the load of adjudication on the overburdened judiciary.

MORE DETAILS:

- 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 various levels.

- NALSA works in close coordination with the 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 fostering a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.

INDIA NOMINATES RAMESH CHAND FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO

- India has nominated member of NITI Aayog, Ramesh Chandra to head the Food and Agricultural Organisation.

DETAILS:

- Ramesh Chand's candidature is challenged by Qu Dongyu of China, Medi MounGUI of Cameroon, Catherine Geslain-Laneelle of France and Davit Kirvalidze of Georgia.
- To get elected to the post of Director-General of FAO, the candidate needs to secure a simple majority of the 194 members.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The only Indian to head the FAO is Binay Ranjan Sen, who was the Director-General from 1956 to 1967.

ABOUT THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations which leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- FAO aims to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active healthy lives.
- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was established as the specialised agency in 1945 in the first session of the United Nations and the temporary headquarters of the FAO were located at Washington in the US and the headquarters were moved to Rome, Italy in the year 1951.

PRIORITY AREAS OF FAO IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER ARE:

- Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.
- Reduce rural poverty.
- Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems.
- Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- FAO report notes that almost 800 million people are always hungry and 2 billion suffer from deficiencies in micronutrients in their diet that leads to health problems.

- The report also notes that the world would have to feed a global population that is expected to reach about 10 billion by 2050.
- FAO integrates the two key areas of gender and governance in tackling the challenges through priority areas.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO GET A \$250-MILLION LOAN FROM THE WORLD BANK

- The World Bank will provide a \$250-million loan for the National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP).
- National Rural Economic Transformation Project is a new sub-component under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) of the Ministry of Rural Development.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL RURAL ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION PROJECT:

- NRETP supports enterprise development programmes for rural poor women and youth by creating a platform to access finance including start-up financing options to build their individual and/or collectively owned and managed enterprises.
- The project also involves developing financial products using digital financial services to help small producer collectives scale-up and engage with the market.
- It also supports youth skills development, in coordination with the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana.
- The key focus of the project is to promote women-owned and women-led farm and non-farm enterprises across value chains, enabling them to build businesses that help them access finance, markets and networks; and generate employment.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The \$250-million loan from the World Bank has a 5-year grace period and a final maturity of 20 years.

US MAY END TRADE BENEFITS GIVEN TO INDIA UNDER GSP

- President Trump notified the Congress his intent to terminate trade benefits for both India and Turkey under the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) eligibility criteria.

INDIA AND GSP:

- About 2,000 products, including auto components and textiles, can enter the US duty-free if the beneficiary developing country meet the eligibility criteria.
- India was the largest beneficiary of the GSP programme in 2017 with \$5.7 billion in imports to the US given duty-free status.

WHY THE US IS PLANNING TO WITHDRAW GSP FOR INDIA?

- President Trump has accused India of failing to ensure the US of "equitable and reasonable" access to its markets.
- The US is pressing India to reduce US trade deficits and has repeatedly called out India for high tariffs.
- Withdrawal of GSP is part of President Trump's plan to redress what he considers to be unfair trading relationships.

WHAT IS INDIA'S PROPOSAL TO THE US?

- India has sought talks with the US to avoid the withdrawal of the trade benefits under the GSP.
- **India has offered a trade package to the US which promises of about Rs 35,000 crore annually in oil and gas imports from the US and another Rs 1,00,000 lakh crore in defence orders in the coming years.**

JAPANESE ARCHITECT ARATA ISOZAKI RECIEVES THE PRESTIGIOUS PRITZKER PRIZE

- Japanese Architect Arata Isozaki has received the Pritzker Prize 2019.

DETAILS:

- He is the **46th laureate and eighth architect from Japan to win the Pritzker Prize.**
- Arata Isozaki will be awarded the prize of \$100,000 (£76,000) and a bronze medallion in May at a ceremony at the Château de Versailles in France.

HIS MAJOR WORKS:

- Some of his major works include Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Palau Saint Jordi indoor sporting arena in Barcelona, the Allianz Tower in Milan, Italy, Qatar's National Convention Centre, Kitakyushu's Central Library in Japan, Thessaloniki concert hall's second auditorium- M2 in Greece, Nara Centennial Hall in Japan etc.

ABOUT THE PRITZKER PRIZE:

- Pritzker Prize is an annual award to honour a living architect or architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision, and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.
- **The award constituted by Pritzker family of Chicago through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979 is often referred to as "architecture's Nobel" and "the profession's highest honour."**
- **Earlier awardees of the coveted prize include India's Balkrishna Doshi, Jorn Utzon who designed the Sydney Opera House, Oscar Niemeyer of Brazil and the British-Iraqi designer, Zaha Hadid.**

WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER LAUNCHES YUVASHREE ARPAN SCHEME

- The Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee has unveiled a new scheme Yuvashree Plan- II or Yuvashree Arpan to encourage entrepreneurship among youth.

ABOUT YUVASHREE ARPAN SCHEME:

- Under the Yuvashree Arpan Scheme around fifty thousand Youths who have passed out of ITI or other polytechnic institutes will be eligible to get financial support of Rs. One Lakh from the state MSME department to set up their own business initiative.

ABOUT YUVASHREE- I:

- Yuvashree- I was launched by the labour department of the state of West Bengal.
- Under the scheme, an unemployment allowance of Rs 1500 per month was provided per month to 1,00,000 unemployed youth.

ANOTHER THING TO KNOW:

- The Chief Minister of West Bengal has laid the foundation stone for the state's first Hindi University at Arupara, Howrah.

GOOGLE LAUNCHES AN APP- 'BOLO'

- Tech giant Google has unveiled a new app- 'Bolo' that aims to help children in primary school learn to read in Hindi and English.

ABOUT THE BOLO APP:

- It is a free to use app and can be accessed through the Google Play Store.
- The app uses Google's speech recognition and text-to-speech technology.
- Through an animated character Diya, the app encourages children to read stories aloud.
- The app also helps if the child is unable to pronounce a word.
- It lauds the reader when he/she completes the reading.
- The app also works offline.
- Once downloaded the user will have access to 100 stories in Hindi and English that the children can read out loud and improve their reading skills.

MORE DETAILS:

- Google has already piloted the Bolo App in about 200 villages in Uttar Pradesh.
- Google cites the early results as encouraging with 64 per cent of children showing an improvement in reading proficiency in just three months.
- Google is now planning to collaborate with non-profit groups to enhance the reach of the app.

ISRO AND CNES SIGN KEY AGREEMENTS

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Space Agency of France CNES have agreed to collaborate on Maritime Surveillance and Training for Gaganyaan project.

ABOUT THE AGREEMENT ON MARITIME SURVEILLANCE:

- **ISRO and CNES have signed an agreement to set up a maritime surveillance centre in the country.**
- The agreement intends to supply an operational system for detecting, identifying and tracking ships in the Indian Ocean, provides for a maritime surveillance centre to be set up in India, sharing of capacity to process existing satellite data and joint development of associated algorithms.
- **ISRO and CNES will build a constellation of satellites for maritime surveillance intended to identify and track ships in the Indian Ocean.**

ABOUT THE AGREEMENT ON TRAINING FOR GAGANYAAN PROJECT:

- **ISRO and CNES have signed an agreement to train Indian Scientists for the 'Gaganyaan' project at the Toulouse Space Centre in France.**
- Indian Scientists will also be trained at CADMOS, the centre for development of microgravity applications and space operations, and the MEDES Space Clinic in France.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **India has also signed an agreement with Russia for the Gaganyaan Project.**

AJIT KUMAR MOHANTY APPOINTED AS THE DIRECTOR OF BARC

- **The Ministry of Personnel has notified the appointment of Ajit Kumar Mohanty as the Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre for the period of three years.**
- Currently, he is the Director, Physics Group in BARC and Director, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics.

ABOUT THE BHABHA ATOMIC RESEARCH CENTRE:

- **The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is India's premier nuclear research facility headquartered in Trombay, Mumbai, Maharashtra.**
- The Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET) was established by the Government of India in 1954 to consolidate all the research and development activity for nuclear reactors and technology under the AEET.
- As a result, all the scientists and engineers engaged in the fields of reactor design and development, instrumentation, metallurgy and material science etc. were transferred with their respective programmes from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) to AEET, with TIFR retaining its original focus for fundamental research in the sciences.
- **After the demise of Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha in 1966, AEET was renamed Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).**
- Over the years, BARC has emerged as the multi-disciplinary research centre with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development.
- Its R&D covers the entire spectrum of nuclear science, engineering and related areas.
- BARC's core mandate is to sustain peaceful applications of nuclear energy, primarily for power generation.

PM INAUGURATES IOC's LNG IMPORT TERMINAL AT ENNORE

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Indian Oil Corporation's (IOCs) LNG terminal at Ennore.

ABOUT THE ENNORE LNG TERMINAL:

- Ennore terminal is an ambitious terminal for storage and re-gasification of imported LNG, built by the nation's largest fuel retailer Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL), at a cost of Rs 5,151 crore inside Kamaraj Port at Ennore.
- The project was commissioned by the IOC through its joint venture company IndianOil LNG Pvt Ltd.
- The capacity of the LNG terminal is 5-million tonnes per annum (MMTPA).
- The LNG terminal was commissioned through the shipload of LNG from Swiss trader, Gunvor carried from Qatar.
- Ennore LNG terminal is part of India's plan to raise the share of natural gas in the country's energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030.
- Together with associated pipeline infrastructure, the projects cumulatively accounts for Rs 9,000 crore.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TERMINAL:

- The imported LNG at the terminal will meet the requirements of Chennai Petroleum Corp Ltd, Madras Fertilisers Ltd, Tamil Nadu Petroproducts and Manali-Thiruvallur-Puducherry-Nagapattinam-Madurai-Trichy-Tuticorin-Ramnathpuram and a separate line will go to Bengaluru through Hosur.

PM NARENDRA MODI INAUGURATES NAGPUR METRO

- After PM Modi inaugurated Nagpur Metro, Nagpur has become the second city of the state of Maharashtra after Mumbai to get a Metro Rail.

ABOUT THE NAGPUR METRO:

- PM inaugurated a 13.5-kilometre stretch comprising of five stations from Khapri to Sitabuldi.
- The Nagpur Metro consists of two corridors with a total length of 38 kilometres.
- The two corridors will comprise of 38 stations, two depots and a fleet of 69 metro cars.
- To emphasise on Women Safety and empowerment each train will comprise of a special "Nari Shakti" women's coach.
- Nagpur Metro is also hailed as the green Metro since 65% of its electricity consumption is from solar energy.
- Nagpur Metro has earned ₹51 crore from stamp duty and ₹6.87 crore from Transfer of Development rights even before the start of passenger operations.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The population of the city of Nagpur is projected to double by 2050.
- Hence it was imperative to equip the city with 21st-century infrastructure, and the Metro Rail is one step in that direction.

INDIA SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA FOR LEASING THE CHAKRA III

- India has signed an agreement with Russia for the leasing of a nuclear-powered attack submarine (Chakra III) for the Indian Navy for a period of 10 years.

DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT:

- Russia will be delivering the Akula class submarine, to be known as Chakra III, to the Indian Navy by 2025.
- India had earlier leased two nuclear submarines from Russia- the first INS Chakra was leased in 1988 under a three-year lease and the second INS Chakra was taken on lease in 2012 for a period of 10 years.
- Russia will lease the Akula class submarine for the period of 10 years at the cost of USD 3 billion.
- Chakra III will be equipped with Indian communication systems and sensors, including the indigenously-developed USHUS integrated sonar system and Panchendriya sonar.
- Chakra III get a unified submarine sonar and tactical control system, which are already in use on the INS Arihant.
- The Chakra III will also get a refurbished hull.
- Chakra III weighing around 8,140-ton will have a submerged speed of 30 knots and an operating depth of 530 meters and will be capable of carrying a crew of 73.
- Chakra III will also be loaded with four 650-millimetre and four 533-millimetre launch tubes for firing Type 65 and Type 53 torpedoes with both of these torpedoes made in Russia.
- Chakra III will be powered with 190 mW nuclear reactor.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Addition of a nuclear-powered submarine is an attempt to bolster the naval prowess of the country as a counter to attempts being made by China to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean region.
- India has already commissioned French Scorpene submarine INS Kalvari and is in the process of inducting another French Scorpene submarine INS Khanderi.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITNESSED WORLDWIDE CELEBRATIONS ON 8TH MARCH

- International Women's Day is celebrated on 8th March every year to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities.
- International Women's Day celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

MORE DETAILS:

- The theme of the International Women's Day 2019 is "**Think equal, build smart, innovate for change**".
- The theme focuses on innovative ways in which we can advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly in the areas of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

- Trends indicate a growing gender digital divide, as a result women are under-represented in the field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and design.
- This prevents Women from developing and influencing gender-responsive innovations to achieve transformative gains for society.
- From mobile banking to artificial intelligence and the internet of things, it is vital that women's ideas and experiences equally influence the design and implementation of the innovations that shape our future societies.
- To bring focus on these challenges "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change" is chosen as the theme of the International Women's Day 2019.

HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:

- International Women's Day (IWD) is being celebrated for well over a century, with the first IWD gathering in 1911 supported by over a million people in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.
- Prior to 1911, the Socialist Party of America, the United Kingdom's Suffragists and Suffragettes, and other groups campaigned for women's equality.
- The United Nations began celebrating International Women's Day in the International Women's Year, 1975.
- In 1977, the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace.

UTTARAKHAND LAUNCHES MUKHYAMANTRI ANCHAL AMRIT YOJANA

- The Government of Uttarakhand has launched the Mukhyamantri Anchal Amrit Yojana to provide milk at the Anganwadi Centres.

DETAILS:

- Under the Mukhyamantri Anchal Amrit Yojana, the Government would provide 100 ml milk twice a week for 2.5 lakh children at 20,000 Anganwadi Centres in the state.
- Under the scheme flavoured, sweet and skimmed milk powder will be made available to the 20,000 Anganwadi Kendras.
- Children under six years of age in every Anganwadi centre will be provided milk under the Aanchal Amrit scheme.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The scheme will come handy in tackling malnutrition and building of fit and healthy children by providing them with a balanced diet as there are about 18,000 children suffering from malnutrition in Uttarakhand.

WHY MILK IS IMPORTANT?

- Milk as a source of Protein, Calcium, Vitamins provides benefits like building and maintaining bone and teeth, improving the performance of the nervous system, helping in growth, improving the digestion process, boosting the immunity, treating dehydration and providing the body with energy.

MADHYA PRADESH TO INCREASE THE OBC QUOTA

- The Government of Madhya Pradesh has announced the increase of the reservation quotas for the OBCs and has stated that it would also implement 10 per cent quota for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) under the General Category.

DETAILS:

- The state government has proposed to increase the reservation for OBCs from the current 14% to 27%.
- Madhya Pradesh already has 36% reservation for scheduled castes and tribes.
- The increase in the reservation for OBCs and 10% reservation for EWS will take the reservation in the state to 73%.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL CHALLENGES?

- Since the reservations, breaches the 50 per cent cap set by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case judgement, the proposed reservation module is said to be legally untenable.
- Even though states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh have reservations breaching the cap of 50%, they were implemented well before the Indra Sawhney case judgement.
- Earlier states like Rajasthan and Maharashtra had announced reservations exceeding 50 per cent but they couldn't implement it.
- Even the 10 per cent quota for EWS proposed by the Central Government was already questioned in the Supreme Court, therefore, the decision of the Madhya Pradesh Government is bound to face legal challenges.

PRIYANKA DUBEY NAMED FOR CHAMELI DEVI JAIN AWARD

- The bilingual correspondent with BBC Priyanka Dubey has been named for the Chameli Devi Jain Award for an Outstanding Woman Journalist for the year 2018.

DETAILS:

- The jury honoured Priyanka Dubey for her multi-faceted, investigative and interrogative reportage which took up the burning and complex social and political issues and uncovering the reality underlying them showing them to be layered, complex, and variegated.

ABOUT CHAMELI DEVI JAIN AWARD AND FREEDOM FIGHTER CHAMELI DEVI JAIN:

- The "Chameli Devi Jain Award", awards women journalists for their exceptional contribution to the cause of journalism upholding standards of excellence through a sustained body of work.
- The Chameli Devi Jain Award is named after the freedom fighter Chameli Devi Jain who held demonstrations against the foreign goods on the call of Gandhiji and got arrested.
- She was a Gandhian and spun charkha.
- She would attend meetings with other women on matters of community reform, like widow remarriage.

RAGHURAM RAJAN TO RECIEVE YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN NATIONAL AWARD 2018

- Raghuram Rajan, former governor of RBI has been chosen for the 'Yashwantrao Chavan National Award 2018' by Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan for his contribution to economic development.
- Raghuram Rajan will be presented with the award at the 106th birth anniversary of Yashwantrao Chavan on March 12.

ROLE OF RAGHURAM RAJAN IN THE HISTORY OF INDIAN ECONOMY:

- Raghuram Rajan is credited with steering Indian economy during turbulent times during the post-global financial crisis period.
- He is credited for positioning Indian currency as among the best-performing emerging markets amid a global currency rout against the dollar as emerging markets witness a major capital flight not seen since the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008.
- During his tenure in RBI, he oversaw some key reforms in monetary policy management and in the administration of the central bank.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Raghuram Rajan had also served as the chief economist of IMF and had famously predicted the 2008 financial crisis in 2005.

ABOUT YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN:

- Yashwantrao Chavan was the first Chief Minister of State of Maharashtra and has also served as Deputy Prime Minister of India in the cabinet of Prime Charan Singh between 1979-1980.
- Born on 12 March 1913 in Devrashtre village of Satara District of Maharashtra, Yashwantrao Chavan was largely influenced by the Indian freedom struggle movements.
- He had participated in the Non-cooperation movement and Quit India movement.
- During the course of time, he become closely associated with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel.
- After Independence, he held several important positions in the Government of Maharashtra and in the Government of India.
- Yashwantrao Chavan died of a heart attack on 25 November 1984.
- After the death of Yashwantrao Chavan, Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan was constituted by his followers and associates to take forward his works.

ABOUT THE YASHWANTRAO CHAVAN NATIONAL AWARD:

- The Yashwantrao Chavan National Award constituted by the Yashwantrao Chavan Prathisthan honours individuals and institutions for their outstanding contribution to national integration, and social & economic development.

INDIA OMAN MILITARY EXERCISE "AL NAGAH III"

- "Al Nagah III" is the third in the series of the bilateral joint military exercise between India and Oman.
- It will be held between March 12 to March 25 at Oman.

ABOUT AL NAGAH III:

- Al Nagah III will be held at the Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman.
- The 14-day exercise will see both the armies exchanging expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing.
- The exercise is aimed to enhance interoperability in counterterrorist operations in semi-urban mountainous terrain.
- The Indian Army contingent is going to be represented by 10th Battalion of the Garhwal Rifles.
- Similar strength is also to be fielded by Jabel Regiment of the Royal Army of Oman.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Al Nagah I was held at Muscat, Oman in January 2015 and Al Nagah II at Himachal Pradesh, India in March 2017.
- The India-Oman bilateral security ties have continued to evolve and the joint military exercise will go a long way in enchainning understanding of capabilities and strengthening camaraderie between both the Armies.

MARAYUR JAGGERY GETS GI TAG STATUS

- After the persistent efforts of the Intellectual Property Rights cell of the Kerala Agriculture University, the Marayur Jaggery which is largely produced in the regions of Marayur and Kanthallur grama panchayats of Kerala has got the GI tag.

ABOUT MARAYUR REGION:

- Marayur in the Idukki district of Kerala is known for its tensive sugarcane cultivation.
- In the regions of Marayur and Kanthallur, more than 2500 acres of land is under sugarcane cultivation.
- The peculiar geographical location of Marayur amid the forests of the Western Ghats gives the sugar cane a distinct geographical identity.

ABOUT MARAYUR JAGGERY:

- The local people have integrated the age-old tradition have imparted age-old specialized skill to make Marayur Jaggery a distinct product in itself.
- The distinct features of the Marayur Jaggery are high sweetness with less saltiness, high content of iron and less sodium.
- The produce is free of impurities and the sugar cane fields are free of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.
- The Marayur Jaggery is produced without adding any chemicals has always been known for its high quality.

- Eyeing the market of the traditional Marayur Jaggery fake jaggery with a salty taste was being marketed as Marayur jaggery.
- **The GI tag will now enable to initiate legal action against fake jaggery being sold as Marayur Jaggery.**

WHAT IS GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION?

- Geographical Indication (GI) is a name or sign used on products which correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
- **Geographical Indication act as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods or enjoys a certain reputation, due to its geographical origin.**

PM MODI INAUGURATES PANDIT DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the new Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.**
- On the occasion, he also unveiled the statue of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya at the campus and visited the Deendayal Museum in the Institute campus.

ABOUT THE PANDIT DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY:

- Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology is a state-of-the-art institution spread over 25 acres and built at an estimated cost of Rs. 289 crore.
- **The Institute comprises of an auditorium with a seating capacity of 1000 people, an open-air theatre and an Archaeological Museum.**
- The Institute is an academic wing of the Archeological Survey of India under the Ministry of Culture.
- **The Institute provides students with the necessary supportive, enthusiastic and challenging academic atmosphere which enables them to achieve their full potential in the field of Archaeology.**

ABOUT THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (ASI):

- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage in India.**
- The genesis of systematic archaeological pursuits in India can be traced to the efforts of Sir William Jones, who put together a group of antiquarians to form the Asiatic Society on 15th January 1784 in Calcutta.
- The first legislative attempt to make the government intervene in case of risks to monuments was through Bengal Regulation XIX of 1810.
- ASI regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

UNIVERSITY FOR PEACE CONFERS HONORARY DOCTORATE ON VICE PRESIDENT VENKAIAH NAIDU

- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu was conferred Honorary Doctorate from the UN established University of Peace.

DETAILS:

- The university has stated that the degree of "Doctor Honoris Causa" (Doctor of Philosophy) was conferred on the Indian Vice President recognising his contribution to the Rule of Law, Democracy and Sustainable Development in India.
- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu is the first Indian to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Peace.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PEACE:

- The University of Peace was established in accordance with the Resolution 35/55 passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1980.
- The main campus of the University of Peace is located in Costa Rica, a country of Central America.
- The University of Peace aims to be a forward-thinking, transformational and inspirational educational institution dedicated to the goals of quality teaching, research and service for serving humanity in building a peaceful world.

MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PEACE:

- The stated mission of the University of Peace is to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace and with the aim of promoting, among all human beings, the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among people and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations.

HASMUKH ADHIA APPOINTED AS THE CHANCELLOR OF GUJARAT CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

- President Ram Nath Kovind has approved the appointment of former finance secretary Hasmukh Adhia as the Chancellor of Gujarat Central University.

DETAILS:

- Hasmukh Adhia will hold the post for a period of five years.
- Hasmukh Adhia was a Gujarat cadre IAS officer and was appointed as the secretary in the Department of Financial Services by PM Modi in 2014.

CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA:

- The Central Universities were established by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development to address regional imbalances in higher educational facilities in states and 16 states were identified for the establishment of central universities.
- Central Universities were established in India under the Central Universities Act 2009.
- The Act provided for the establishment of one new central university each in Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.
- The act also sought to convert Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyala in Chhattisgarh, Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya in Sagar (Madhya Pradesh) and Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University in Uttarakhand into Central Universities.
- Further, through the Central Universities Amendment Act 2014, another central university was established in Bihar and a central university was also established in Andhra Pradesh in 2018.

INDIA BAGS FIRST PRIZE IN THE CATEGORY OF "TV CINEMA SPOT"

- The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has won the First Prize in the category of TV Cinema Spot at the prestigious international Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2019.
- Following promotional films/television commercials produced as part of Incredible India 2.0 Campaign by the Ministry of Tourism have received the awards:
 - Yogi of the Racetrack
 - The Reincarnation of Mr. and Mrs. Jones
 - Sanctuary in Paris
 - Maharani of Manhattan
 - The Masala Master Chef

ABOUT THE GOLDEN CITY GATE TOURISM MULTI-MEDIA AWARDS:

- Golden City Gate Tourism Multi-media Awards are the annual awards for the various categories related to the Tourism and Hospitality sectors.
- The patron of the award is the Federal Association of German Film and AV Producers in Wiesbaden.
- The awards are presented at the ITB Berlin, the world's leading tourism trade show.
- The awards are given to countries, cities, regions and hotels in various categories.

ABOUT THE INCREDIBLE INDIA 2.0 CAMPAIGN:

- Incredible India 2.0 Campaign is a campaign of the Ministry of Tourism to promote Indian Tourism.
- The 2.0 campaign marked a shift from generic promotions across the world to market specific promotional plans and content creation.
- Thematic promotions on different niche tourism products have been produced and are being used in the campaign, to cater to diverse consumer interests.
- These thematic promotions include Commercials on Yoga, Wellness, Wildlife, Luxury and Cuisine.

- The thematic commercials are produced in English with voice-overs in 9 international languages, viz. German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Arabic.

LONG MARCH ROCKET SERIES OF CHINA SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES ITS 300TH LAUNCH

- China's Long March Rocket Series which is the mainstay of its space programme since 1970 has successfully completed its 300th launch by putting a new communication satellite into orbit through the Long March-3B Rocket.

ABOUT CHINA'S LONG MARCH-3B ROCKET SERIES:

- China's indigenously built Long March rockets have sent more than 500 spacecrafts into space.
- The rocket series built by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation was responsible for about 96.4 per cent of all the launch missions in China .
- The Long March rockets have also provided launch services for countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, including Algeria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.
- The Long March-1 carrier rocket launched the country's first satellite, Dongfanghong-1, into orbit on April 24, 1970.
- The success rate of the 300 launches of the Long March rockets stood at 96 per cent.
- The Long March rockets completed 37 consecutive successful launches, ranking a global first for the highest number of successful launches in 2018.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- A total of 17 types of Long March carrier rockets have been developed and put into use since 1970, ensuring the implementation of a series of key space projects including manned space program, lunar exploration, BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS) and the Gaofen Earth observation project.

TIBETAN ACTIVISTS MARK NATIONAL UPRISING DAY ON 10TH MARCH 2019

- Hundreds of Tibetan activists staged a protest and submitted a memorandum to the Office of United Nations India to mark the 60th anniversary of their National Uprising Day.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL UPRISING DAY OF TIBET:

- March 10 which commemorates the 1959 Tibetan Uprising is observed as the National Uprising Day by Tibetan activists.
- On March 10 1959, thousands of Tibetans took to the streets of Lhasa rising up against Communist China's occupation of their homeland.
- Tibet was invaded by China in 1951.

- Tibetans had enthroned Dalai Lama, chosen at the age of two in 1937 as the 14th incarnation of Tibetan Buddhism's supreme religious leader.
- Coexistence of Beijing authorities and Dalai Lama at the Tibetan plateau led to tensions.
- The Chinese Authorities summoned him to an event without his bodyguards on March 10 but the Tibetans feared a trap that could endanger their leader.
- Fearing for the life of Dalai Lama, Tibetans surrounded the Potala Palace, the home of the Dalai Lama, to protect his life and to uphold the cause of Tibetan nation.
- As Chinese soldiers opened fire thousands of activists lost their life.
- On the night of March 17, the Dalai Lama escaped into exile across the Himalayas into India.

PINAKA GUIDED WEAPONS SYSTEM INDIGENOUSLY DEVELOPED BY DRDO

- The indigenously developed Pinaka Guided Weapons System was successfully test fired in Pokhran desert in Rajasthan.

DETAILS:

- The successful test trial gives a boost to the artillery capability of the Indian Army.
- Pinaka Guided Weapon System is equipped with a guidance kit comprising an advanced navigation and control system.

MORE ABOUT THE PINAKA GUIDED WEAPONS SYSTEM

- Pinaka rocket systems are developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The rocket system is named after Pinaka, the bow of Lord Shiva.
- Pinaka was initially a 30 to 40 km range rocket. Its range was increased 70 to 80 km with Pinaka Mark II.
- Pinaka rockets were used in the Kargil War with Pakistan.
- With the increased range there came a need for a more accuracy.
- To fulfil this requirement guided version of the Pinaka is being developed by DRDO.

ABOUT THE TEST TRAIL:

- During the test trial, the Pinaka Guided Weapon System successfully impacted the intended targets with high precision and achieved desired accuracies.
- Telemetry systems were used to track and monitor the vehicle all through the flight path.
- The weapon systems impacted the intended targets with high precision and achieved desired accuracies.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORD SET BY VASTRADAN CAMPAIGN

- Vastradan Campaign initiated by the erstwhile royal family of Udaipur has set the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of clothes for donation.
- The campaign had collected more than 3 lakh items of clothing.

MORE ABOUT THE VASTRADAN CAMPAIGN:

- Through the Vastradan Campaign, over 3,29,250 pieces of clothing from over 76,000 donors were collected and distributed to the needy.
- The campaign reached out to over 120 schools, 15 colleges and around 30 NGOs.
- The certificate for the Guinness World Record was handed over to Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar, a descendant of Rajput ruler Maharana Pratap.
- The campaign was started as an innovative exercise of giving clothes by reaching out to the citizens rather than organizations.
- The campaign highlighted the empathy of the citizen's especially young boys and girls.

DRDO DEVELOPS A RANGE OF COMBAT CASUALTY DRUGS

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed a range of Combat Casualty Drugs that can extend the 'golden hour' till the trooper is shifted to hospital.
- This range of drugs can bring down the death toll during the unfortunate instances like the recent Pulwama Terrorist Attack.

ABOUT COMBAT CASUALTY DRUGS

- The spectrum includes bleeding wound sealants, super absorptive dressings and glycerinated salines, all of which can save lives in the event of warfare in jungle and high altitude areas as well as in terror attacks.
- These medicines ensure that soldiers do not suffer from unwanted blood loss while being taken to better healthcare from war zones.
- Glycerated saline is a battlefield intravenous fluid that do not freeze till -18 degrees Celsius and is useful in handling trauma cases in high altitudes.
- Glycerated saline has life-saving capacities as it gives more time to the medical personnel to shift the wounded patient to a higher care facility.

AIM OF COMBAT CASUALTY DRUGS:

- This range of casualty drugs are aimed at enhancing the chances of survival and minimum disability by providing effective first aid care which is given within the golden hour.

KAVINDER SINGH BISHT WINS GOLD AT THE 38TH GEEBEE BOXING TOURNAMENT

- The 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament was held at Helsinki, Finland.
- The Indian medal winners from the tournament are listed below:
- The lone gold medal for India was won by Kavinder Singh Bisht.
- He won against Indian counterpart Mohammed Hussamuddin in summit clash in the 56kg category.
- Mohammed Hussamuddin settled for silver.

- Other Silver medals for India were won by Govind Kumar Sahani (49kg), Shiva Thapa (60kg) and Dinesh Dagar (69kg).
- Bronze Medallists were Sachin Siwach (52kg), Sumit Sangwan (91kg) and Naveen Kumar (+91kg) after their respective semi-final loss.

SUMMARY:

- India signed off from the 38th GeeBee Boxing Tournament with one gold, four silver and three bronze medals.

INDIAN ASTRONOMERS IDENTIFY A NEW POPULATION OF ULTRAVIOLET STARS

- Astronomers from Thiruvananthapuram and Mumbai have identified a new population of ultraviolet stars in the globular cluster NGC 2808 using the Indian multi-wavelength space observatory AstroSat, launched in September 2015.

ABOUT ASTROSAT:

- AstroSat is India's dedicated multi-wavelength space observatory which endeavours for a more detailed understanding of our universe.
- ASTROSAT observes the universe in the optical, ultraviolet, low and high energy X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- Major astronomy institutions and some universities in India are participating in these observations.

ABOUT NGC 2808:

- Globular clusters are collections of thousands to millions of stars, moving as one unit.
- These stars are tightly held together by the gravity of the cluster itself and are believed to have formed together at roughly the same time.
- The globular cluster contains stars with a variety of masses but with similar chemical composition.
- NGC 2808 is one of the massive globular clusters and is located at a distance of 47,000 light years from us.
- Recent studies have shown that many globular clusters may well host more than one population of stars contrary to popular belief that all stars in such clusters are of the same age.
- Observations suggest that NGC 2808 may have at least five different populations of stars.

SOCIAL MEDIA GIANT FACEBOOK HAS LAUNCHED "FACEBOOK HUBS"

- Social media giant Facebook has launched "Facebook Hubs" to foster innovation and offer support for budding entrepreneurs.

ABOUT FACEBOOK HUBS:

- Facebook Hubs will provide support for the start-up community by hosting mentor hours and conducting trainings, workshops, discussions across 20 locations in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune, Navi Mumbai and in Goa.
- Facebook has collaborated with 91springboard, an office space rental firm, for a year-long programme to help start-ups and entrepreneurs scale their businesses.
- Facebook Hubs also encompasses co-working community hosting, planning and organising structured activities such as learning and skill development programs for budding entrepreneurs.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Facebook Hubs aims to be part of a global network for training and mentoring facilities for not just start-ups, but also developers, small and medium businesses, creators, and job seekers.

EUROPEAN UNION INCLUDES 10 MORE COUNTRIES TO ITS "TAX BLACKLIST"

- The European Union has expanded its Tax Blacklist by including 10 more countries to it.

DETAILS:

- The list now has 15 countries.
- The list was first drawn up by EU in 2017 in the wake of several scandals, including the Panama Papers and LuxLeaks, that pushed the EU into doing more to fight tax evasion by multinationals and the rich.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE ADDED TO THE LIST?

- Seven countries- Aruba, Belize, Bermuda, Fiji, Oman, Vanuatu and Dominica were moved from greylist to blacklist due to their inability towards reform commitments.
- Three other countries added into the list are Barbados, the United Arab Emirates and the Marshall Islands.

TAX HAVENS:

- Tax Havens provide taxpayers with opportunities for tax avoidance, while their secrecy and opacity also serve to hide the origin of the proceeds of illegal and criminal activities.
- Features of these Tax Havens include low or zero taxation, fictitious residences (with no bearing on reality) and tax secrecy.

EU'S INITIATIVE:

- EU initiated the naming and shaming tactics through Tax blacklist or Tax havens as a tool for securing a level playing field and as an external strategy for effective taxation by assessing, screening and listing third-country tax jurisdictions which are non-cooperative in tax matters.

WORLD KIDNEY DAY 2019 OBSERVED ON 14TH MARCH

- **World Kidney Day 2019 was observed on 14th March.**
- **The theme of the World Kidney Day 2019 is "Kidney Health for Everyone Everywhere."**
- The theme emphasizes on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for prevention and early treatment of kidney disease.

ABOUT WORLD KIDNEY DAY:

- **Second Thursday of March every year is observed as World Kidney Day** as a global health awareness campaign focusing on the importance of the kidneys and reducing the frequency and impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems worldwide.
- **World Kidney Day calls for everyone to advocate for concrete measures in every country to improve kidney care by:**
 - Encouraging to adopt healthy lifestyles.
 - Making screening for kidney diseases a primary healthcare intervention by providing access to identification tools (e.g. urine and blood tests).
 - Ensuring kidney patients receive basic health services they need to delay disease progression without suffering financial hardship.
 - Call for transparent policies governing equitable and sustainable access to advanced health care services and better financial protection as more resources become available.
 - Breaking down socioeconomic barriers and expanding access to comprehensive services in order to meet the needs of the population is essential to guarantee equitable kidney care and increase in quality of the care.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- World Kidney Day is an initiative of the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) and the International Federation of Kidney Foundations (IFKF).

UNITED KINGDOM HONOURS PROFESSOR STEPHEN HAWKING

- The United Kingdom has commemorated Professor Stephen Hawking on a new 50p coin.
- The coin has references to the late physicist's pioneering work on black holes.

ABOUT THE BLACK HOLE COIN:

- The commemorative coin aims to celebrate the life and "ground-breaking" achievements of Hawking, who passed away in 2018.
- It is a commemorative coin and not for circulation as currency.
- The coin features Hawking's name in capital letters above a rippling drawing of concentric circles, intended to represent a black hole.
- The coin was designed by British engraver and printmaker Edwina Ellis.
- The coin is available in gold, silver and a double thickness silver version called a piedfort.
- The coin also features the formula of arguably Hawking's most important scientific contribution.

- The coin is on sale in silver and gold forms for a price range between 55 and 795 pounds on the Royal Mint's website.
- The coin has been released by UK's Royal Mint.

CHINA AGAIN BLOCKS THE BID IN THE UNSC TO DESIGNATE AZHAR MASOOD AS A GLOBAL TERRORIST

- China has again blocked the bid to designate Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Azhar Masood as a global terrorist in the United Nations Security Council 1267 list.

DETAILS:

- The proposal was moved by France the UK and the US on February 27, on the backdrop of Pulwama Terror Attack.
- Just before the deadline for filing of the objections was about to end, China which is the permanent member of the United Nations Permanent Council filed the objection.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LISTING BY THE 1267 SANCTIONS COMMITTEE:

- The 1267 and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee was established under the UNSC resolution 1267.
- The listing would have resulted in:

Assets freeze

- The Asset Freeze mandates all states to freeze without delay the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities.

TRAVEL BAN

- The travel ban implies preventing the entry of designated individuals into or transit by all states through their territories.

ARMS EMBARGO

- Arms embargo requires all states to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale and transfer from their territories or by their nationals outside their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of arms and related material of all types, spare parts, and technical advice, assistance or training related to military activities, to designated individuals and entities.

MORE DETAILS:

- The mandatory restrictions would have severely impacted and curtailed the activities of the Azhar Masood who is the head of the banned outfit JeM and would have forced Pakistan to act against him.

- Reports also note that China is aiming to maintain the status quo and truce with the JeM by blocking the list in an attempt to secure the China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

INDIAN EMBASSY IN NEPAL AWARDS 200 SCHOLARSHIPS TO NEPALI STUDENTS

- The Indian Embassy in Nepal has announced 200 scholarships to meritorious Nepali students for continuing various undergraduate courses at colleges and universities. The scholarships were granted under the Golden Jubilee Scholarship Scheme.

ABOUT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME:

- Golden Jubilee Scholarship Scheme was initiated by the Indian Embassy in Nepal to mark the completion of 50 years of India-Nepal Economic Cooperation.
- Initially started by providing scholarships to 50 students, the scholarship scheme has grown over the years.
- This year the scholarship programme covered 36 undergraduate courses including MBBS, BDS, BE, BSc and BBA.
- The recipients of the scholarships represent 50 districts of Nepal.
- Under the scheme, an MBBS/BDS student receives NRs. 4,000/- per month for five years, a BE student receives NRs. 4,000/- per month for four years and a student studying in other under-graduate courses receives NRs. 3,000/- per month for three years.
- Those provided scholarship included 45 per cent girls and 8 per cent differently-abled students.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The scholarship is scheme is part of the Indian Government's effort to support human resource development along with the overall socio-economic development of Nepal and its people.

INDIA GETS FIRST TIR SHIPMENT VIA CHABAHAR PORT FROM AFGHANISTAN

- The first shipment under the United Nations 'Transports Internationaux Routiers' (TIR) convention has arrived in India from Afghanistan through the Chabahar Port of Iran.

WHAT IS THE TRANSPORTS INTERNATIONAUX ROUTIERS' CONVENTION?

- The Transports Internationaux Routiers is an international Convention aimed at harmonising the administrative formalities of international road transport.
- The goods being moved through the TIR convention requires the goods to be outlined in a TIR carnet and sealed in load compartments.
- The customs officials only verify the carnet and check the seal without requiring physical checking of the contents.
- This enables shipments to pass through countries without being opened at borders.
- Reciprocal recognition of customs controls is at the heart of the TIR Convention.

- The convention enables a facilitative and non-intrusive environment for multi-modal transport of goods through several countries.
- **India joined the TIR Convention in 2017.**

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE CONVENTION?

- The convention acts as a strong catalyst for moving goods using the multi-modal transportation route like Chabahar and International North-South Transport (INSTC) Corridor.
- **The convention offers a great opportunity for the landlocked countries by providing seamless border crossing facilitation and intermodal capabilities.**
- The convention further aids in the implementation of the Trade facilitation agreement of the World Trade Organisation.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- In India, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) has been appointed as the National Issuing & Guaranteeing Association.

AFTER AN 8 YEARS LONG PROCESS, ERODE TURMERIC FINALLY RECEIVES GI

TAG

- **Erode Turmeric has finally received GI tag from the Geographical Indication Registry after a long and cumbersome process which lasted for about 8 years.**
- Erode is the city in the state of Tamil Nadu.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ERODE TURMERIC THAT MAKES IT UNIQUE:

- Mean length of the fingers of Erode turmeric is about 4.15cm.
- Mean circumference is about 3.03cm.
- Mean bulb length of the mother rhizome is about 4.54cm.
- Mean circumference is 6.54cm.
- Erode Turmeric is golden yellow in colour with resistance to pests after boiling.
- Erode turmeric contains 2.5 to 4.5% of curcumin content. Erode Turmeric is grown in hot moist conditions prevalent in the area with temperature ranging from 20 degrees to 37.9 degrees Celsius with an average of 600 to 800 mm rainfall in an year.

ABOUT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION:

- Geographical Indication defines the goods as originating in the territory of a country or a region or locality in that territory, provided a given quality reputation or other characteristics of the product are attributable to its geographical origin.
- The product that is to acquire GI tag has to indicate that the product is of a particular origin has a certain quality or reputation or some other characteristics which are essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA PLANS FOR CLOUD SEEDING FOR THE MONSOONS

- Reeling under drought, the Government of Karnataka is planning for cloud seeding project to influence the upcoming monsoon and capture as much water as possible from the rain clouds.

DETAILS:

- The Government of Karnataka has called the tenders for cloud seeding operations to enhance rainfall during the monsoons of 2019 and 2020.
- The cost is expected to be Rs 50 cr per year.

ABOUT CLOUD SEEDING:

- Cloud Seeding is a process of intervening chemically to induce precipitation rain or snow from clouds.
- Rain occurs when moisture in the air reaches levels at which it can no longer be held.
- Cloud seeding aims to facilitate and accelerate the process by making available chemical 'nuclei' for condensation to take place.
- The agents used as nuclei are iodides of silver or potassium, dry ice (solid carbon dioxide), or liquid propane.

EARLIER EFFORTS OF KARNATAKA:

- Karnataka had undertaken a similar exercise through Project Varshadhare in 2017.
- The project was seen as a successful as the data suggested that rainfall was enhanced by 27.9% and there was an extra inflow of 2.5 tmcft into Linganamakki reservoir.
- This was a huge success because due to procedural delays and inconsistent monsoon season, the two planes could only fly for 37 days.
- Still, the results were able to address the scepticism about cloud seeding.

AFINDEX-19 TO BE CONDUCTED IN PUNE

- Africa-India Joint Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX-19) between the Indian Army and 16 African nations will be conducted in Pune from March 18 to 27.

ABOUT AFINDEX-19:

- 10 personnel, each from the participating nations from the African continent and personnel of Maratha Light Infantry of the Indian Army will participate in the joint exercise.
- The joint exercise would be held at Pune's Foreign Training Node at Aundh Military Station and College of Military Engineering in Kirkee.
- AFINDEX-19 aims to train the participating contingents in Humanitarian Mine Assistance (HMA) and Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) under the United Nations Charter through practical and comprehensive discussions and tactical exercises.

- Contingents from Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Namibia, Mozambique, Uganda, Niger & Zambia are part of the joint exercise together with officers from Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Madagascar as Observers.
- The joint exercise will also focus on achieving interoperability, learning each other's methodologies and tactics through synchronised operational level planning and tactical level training.
- The joint exercise will also cover the dynamics of raising a Mission headquarters, nuances of establishing military observer team sites in disturbed areas.

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM THIS JOINT EXERCISE?

- AFINDEX-19 is expected to greatly facilitate sharing of Indian Armed Forces experiences in United Nations Peace Keeping operations with countries in Africa and shall significantly enhance relations with the African continent.

THE FAMOUS SIRSI SUPARI OF KARNATAKA GETS THE GI TAG

- **Sirsi Supari of Karnataka has got the GI tag by the Registrar of Geographical Indications.**
- Sirsi Supari is the first product from the Arecanut sector to get a GI tag.

ABOUT SIRSI SUPARI:

- Sirsi Supari is cultivated in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsi taluks.
- Sirsi Supari is medium in size, somewhat flat and rounded in shape, somewhat ash coloured, and has a hard seed which makes it unique.
- The Arecanut grown in Yellapura, Siddapura and Sirsi taluks have unique features like a round and flattened coin shape, particular texture, size, cross-sectional views, taste, etc which are not seen in arecanut grown in any other regions.
- The average dry weight is 7.5 g and average thickness is 16 mm.
- Sirsi Supari has a unique taste due to differences in chemical composition and the total average flavonoids content in it is around 90 whereas in others it is around 80

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **The process to obtain the GI tag was initiated some 6 years ago in 2013 and it took six years to get it owing to scientific research proof to be submitted to prove its uniqueness.**

ABOUT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION:

- Geographical Indication defines the goods as originating in the territory of a country or a region or a locality in that territory, provided a given reputation or other characteristics of the product are attributable to its geographical origin.
- The product to acquire GI tag has to indicate that a product of is of a particular origin has a certain quality or reputation or some other characteristics, which is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.

ALL ENGLAND OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019

- **The Winners in the various categories of the All England Open Badminton Championships 2019 are:**
 - Men's Singles: Japan's Kento Momota
 - Women's Singles: China's Chen Yufei
 - Men's Doubles: Indonesia's Mohammad Ahsan & Hendra Setiawan
 - Women's Doubles: China's Chen Qingchen & Jia Yifan.
 - Mixed Doubles: China's Zheng Siwei & Huang Yaqiong

ABOUT THE ALL ENGLAND OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS:

- All England Open Badminton Championships held annually in England is the world's oldest badminton tournament.
- The genesis of the tournament can be traced to open tournament held in the English town of Guildford in 1898, the success of this tournament paved the way for the All England's inaugural edition, which was held at London's Horticultural Halls in 1899.

STUDENTS OF IIT DEVELOP AN IMAGE PROCESSING APPLICATION

- Students of IIT- Kharagpur have devised a code for a smartphone application to address the problem of detecting fake Indian currency.
- They displayed this solution at the Smart India Hackathon 2019.

ABOUT THE SOLUTION DEVELOPED BY THE STUDENTS:

- **Students of IIT- Kharagpur have developed an Image Processing Application which can detect counterfeit currency.**
- A user can upload a currency note image and the mobile app would verify its authenticity using 25 features extracted from the front and rear side of currency note.
- If the app finds the discrepancies with the features it reports about the failure checkpoints.

ABOUT SMART INDIA HACKATHON 2019:

- Smart India Hackathon 2019 organised by Ministry of Human Resource and Development in association with AICTE, i4c and Persistent Systems provided a unique Open Innovation Model for identifying new and disruptive technology innovations to solve the challenges faced in the country.

SMART INDIA HACKATHON AIMED TO:

- Harness creativity & expertise of students
- Spark institute-level hackathons
- Build funnel for the 'Startup India' campaign
- Crowdsource solutions for improving governance and quality of life
- Provide an opportunity for citizens to provide innovative solutions to India's daunting problems.

- Smart India Hackathon 2019 together with earlier editions in 2017 and 2018 proved to be extremely successful in promoting innovation, out-of-the-box thinking in young minds, especially engineering students from across India.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK REPORT

- The United Nations Environment Programme has released the Global Environment Outlook 2019.

THE REPORT MAKES THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ABOUT INDIA:

- India could save at least \$3 trillion (Rs 210 trillion approx.) in healthcare costs if India implements policy initiatives which are consistent with ensuring that the globe didn't heat up beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius by the turn of the century.
- Among India's commitments under INDC, India is on track to achieve the target of lowering the emission intensity of its GDP by 33-35% compared to 2005 levels by 2030 and increasing the total cumulative electricity generation from fossil-free energy sources to 40% by 2030.
- To achieve the goal to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, India needs to abandon plans to build new coal-fired power plants.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Paris Accord of 2015 aims to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- But there has been limited progress by countries since then in committing to greenhouse gas emissions cut.

WHOLESALE PRICE INFLATION ROSE IN FEBRUARY

- The Wholesale Price Index is released by the Office of Economic Advisor (OEA), Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

ABOUT THE WHOLESALE PRICE INDEX- FEBRUARY 2019:

- Inflation based on wholesale prices rose to 2.93% in February over January 2019 due to hardening of prices of primary articles, fuel and power.
- Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation stood at 2.76% in January 2019 and it was 2.74% during February 2018.
- Inflation of primary articles, which includes kitchen essentials like potato, onion, fruits, and milk increased to 4.84 per cent during the month, as against 3.54 in January.
- Wholesale-based price inflation for 'fuel and power' segment increased to 2.23 per cent in February as against 1.85 per cent in January 2019.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Base year for the calculation of the Wholesale Price Index is 2011-12.
- In the WPI index, Primary Articles have a weightage of 22.62 per cent, Fuel and Power have a weightage of 13.15 per cent and Manufactured Products have a weightage of 64.23%.

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATED WITH THE THEME OF "TRUSTED SMART PRODUCTS"

- March 15 every year is celebrated as World Consumer Rights Day.

DETAILS:

- The theme of the World Consumer Rights Day 2019 is "**Trusted Smart Products**".
- The theme aims to highlight what consumers want and need from a connected world and how important it is to put them at the heart of the development of these digital products and services.

GENESIS OF THE WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY:

- The genesis of the World Consumer Rights Day can be traced to the special message to the US Congress on 15th March 1962 by President John F Kennedy.
- The special message was probably the first formal address about consumer rights by a World Leader.
- The first World Consumer Rights Day was celebrated at 1983 and since then every year March 15 is celebrated as World Consumer Rights Day.
- World Consumer Rights Day aims to highlight that rights of all consumers are respected and protected and to protest against market abuses and social injustices which undermine those rights.

CONSUMER RIGHTS IN INDIA:

- The Consumer Protection Act 1986 gives 6 basic rights to the consumers:
 - Right to choose the product.
 - Right to be protected from all kind of hazardous goods.
 - Right to be informed about the performance and quality of all products.
 - Right to be heard in all decision-making processes related to consumer interests.
 - Right to seek redressal, whenever consumer rights have been infringed.
 - Right to complete consumer education.

PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND INAUGURATED FINE IN GUJARAT

- The Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (FINE) was inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind at Grambharti near Gandhinagar in Gujarat.
- On the occasion, the President conferred 10th Biennial National Grassroots Innovation Awards.

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL OF INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

- The Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship is an initiative of the Office of the President of India to recognise, respect and reward grassroots innovations and foster a supportive ecosystem.
- The Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship is organised by the President's office in association with National Innovation Foundation-India and Department of Science & Technology.
- The Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship aims to provide a platform to the innovators for building the linkages with potential stakeholders whose support can improve their prospects in the coming years for the larger social good.
- The Festival helps in promoting lateral learning and linkages among the innovators to enrich the ecosystem for new India.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Festival of Innovation & Entrepreneurship provides a window to the creative and innovative solutions for social development through grassroots innovations, student ideas and other technologies for agriculture, rural development, sanitation, health, women and child development, biotechnology and medical innovation for grassroots by providing a large number of open technological and other solutions for the developing and developed world.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES INAUGURATED IN ABU DHABI

- The Special Olympics World Games 2019 were inaugurated in Abu Dhabi, capital of U.A.E.

DETAILS:

- The Special Olympics World Games 2019 are being hosted by the cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.
- **For the first time, the Special Olympics are being held in the Middle East and North Africa region.**
- The host UAE had introduced the term "people of determination" as part of a new National Strategy for Empowering People with Disabilities.

ABOUT THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS:

- Special Olympics is a global movement of people creating a new world of inclusion, where every single person is accepted and welcomed, regardless of their ability or disability.
- **The Special Olympics are held every two years and alternates between summer and winter.**
- **Previous Special Olympics were held in Austria (2017) and the next Special Olympics will be held in Sweden (2021).**
- The motto of Special Olympics "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt.", embodies what every athlete wants to pursue in life by dispelling the myth that children with intellectual disabilities must be confined behind the walls of unique and uncommon societies.

GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS REGISTRY APPROVES GI TAG FOR COFFEE VARIETIES

- The Geographical Indications Registry has approved the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for coffee varieties viz. Coorg Arabica Coffee, Wayanad Robust Coffee, Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee, Araku Valley Arabica Coffee and Bababudangiri Arabica Coffee.

ABOUT COORG ARABICA COFFEE:

- Coorg Arabica Coffee is grown specifically in Kodagu district in Karnataka.
- Kodagu district of Karnataka is famous for Coffee cultivation.
- The Arabica coffees from Coorg are lightly acidic with a mild flavour and strong aroma.
- The unique biotic and abiotic conditions provide uniqueness to the Coffee grown in the region of Kodagu.
- The broader landscape provides it with a unique aroma and flavour to the coffee when roasted.

ABOUT WAYANAD ROBUSTA COFFEE:

- Wayanad Robusta Coffee is grown both as a pure crop and as mixed crop along with pepper in the Wayanad region of Kerala.
- Wayanad produces almost around 90% of Kerala's Coffee produce and forms the backbone of the coffee economy of Kerala.

ABOUT CHIKMAGALUR ARABICA COFFEE:

- Chikmagalur Arabica Coffee is grown in Chikmagalur district, Karnataka.
- It is the region in India where the coffee cultivation first began.
- About Bababudangiri Arabica Coffee:
 - Bababudangiri Arabica Coffee is grown in the Bababudangiri region of Karnataka.
 - Bababudangiri in Chikmagalur District of Karnataka is where the coffee was first grown in India.
 - The coffee grown here is known for its unique flavour and aroma.
 - Selectively hand-picked and processed by natural fermentation, the cup exhibits full body, acidity, mild flavour and striking aroma with a note of chocolate which makes it unique.

ABOUT ARAKU VALLEY ARABICA COFFEE:

- Araku Valley Arabica Coffee has a pleasant acidity with a citrus note of grapefruit and a mild jaggery-like sweetness with light to medium strength.
- It is grown in the regions of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh and Koraput district in Odisha.

GOA CHIEF MINISTER PASSES AWAY AFTER BATTLE WITH PANCREATIC CANCER

National Mourning Today. Prime Minister Modi to attend Last Rites

- Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, a former defence minister who had been battling a pancreatic ailment for over a year, died at his private residence on Sunday.

DETAILS:

- Manohar Parrikar was 63.
- The health of Parrikar, a technocrat-turned-politician and BJP stalwart, took a turn for the worse in the past two days after his medical condition fluctuated for over a year.
- The four-term chief minister was flown to the US for treatment in March last year.
- A widower, Parrikar is survived by his two sons and their families.
- The Central Government announced National Mourning on Monday.
- Several top leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nitin Gadkari, Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh will be in Goa on Monday to attend Manohar Parrikar's last rites.
- PM Modi condoled the death of Parrikar, hailing him as an "unparalleled leader".

ABOUT MANOHAR PARRIKAR:

- Born on December 13, 1955 into a middle-class family, his political career began as an RSS pracharak and he continued working for the Sangh even after graduating from IIT-Bombay as a metallurgical engineer.
- Parrikar entered electoral politics in 1994 when he won on a BJP ticket from Panaji constituency.
- He was the defence minister from November 2014 to March 2017 during the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Manohar Parrikar was a leader who enjoyed acceptance from all sections of the BJP and beyond.
- He played a key role in making the BJP a force to reckon with in Goa, which remained for long a Congress bastion, with regional outfits having pockets of influence.

IIT KHARAGPUR SIGNS AN MoU WITH C-DAC

- IIT Kharagpur has signed an MoU with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to set up a 1.3 Petaflop high-performance computing facility and data centre funded under the National Supercomputing Mission.

DETAILS:

- The new supercomputing system would be used for specific challenge domains like cryptography, chemistry, molecular dynamics, drug discovery, artificial intelligence and data sciences where the new system would be utilized.

WHAT IS PETAFL0P?

- PetaFlop is the measurement of computing power based on the frequency of mathematical calculations that can be done per second.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SUPERCOMPUTING MISSION:

- National Supercomputing Mission initiated in 2015 is being implemented and steered jointly by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) at an estimated cost of Rs.4500 crore over a period of seven years.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL SUPERCOMPUTING MISSION:

- The Mission envisages empowering India's national academic and R&D institutions spread by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- To bring supercomputing within the reach of the large Scientific & Technology community in the country.
- To provide a significant qualitative and quantitative improvement in R&D and higher education in the disciplines of Science & Technology.
- To enable the country with a capacity of solving multi-disciplinary grand challenge problems.

FIRST WORKSHOP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IEMF ORGANIZED

- NITI Aayog in association with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organized the first workshop on the development of the India Energy Modelling Forum (IEMF).
- The workshop was organized under the Sustainable Growth Pillar of the India-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership.

ABOUT THE INDIA ENERGY MODELLING FORUM:

- IEMF is envisaged as a pan-stakeholder platform for debating ideas, scenario-planning & discussing India's energy future.
- IEMF seeks to provide a platform for leading experts and policymakers to study important energy and environmental issues and ensure the induction of modelling and analysis in the informed decision-making process.
- IEMF aims to improve cooperation and coordination between modelling teams, the Government of India, knowledge partners and think-tanks, build the capacity of Indian institutions, and identify issues for joint modelling activities and future areas of research.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The workshop featured eight expert sessions which saw discussions around the various aspects of setting up an India-centric energy modelling platform and was attended by various Central Government Ministries and Agencies.

ABOUT THE INDIA-U.S. STRATEGIC ENERGY PARTNERSHIP:

- India-U.S. Strategic Energy Partnership affirms the strategic importance of energy cooperation to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship and sets the stage for deeper and more meaningful engagements through government and industry channels.
- **Under the Strategic Partnership, the United States and India will pursue four primary pillars of cooperation:**

- Oil and Gas
- Power and Energy Efficiency
- Renewable Energy and Sustainable Growth
- Coal

A CASE OF WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN KERELA

- **A seven-year-old in Kerala has been detected with the West Nile Virus.** The Central Government has sent the team to the state and is monitoring the case closely.

ABOUT THE "WEST NILE VIRUS":

- **West Nile Virus is a viral infection which typically spread by mosquitoes and results in neurological disease as well as death in people.**
- The Virus is the member of the flavivirus genus and belongs to the Japanese encephalitis antigenic complex of the family Flaviviridae.
- **It was first detected in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937 and was later identified in birds (crows and Columbiformes) in the Nile delta region in 1953.**

HOW IS THE DISEASE SPREAD?

- The disease spreads through mosquito bites.
- Mosquitoes are infected when they feed on infected birds.
- The virus then circulates in blood and multiplies.
- The virus also travels to salivary glands from where it is injected into humans as well as animals through mosquito bites.
- There have been no reports of human-to-human transmission through casual contact till date.
- But a small proportion of human infections have reported through organ transplant, blood transfusions and breast milk while one case of transplacental.

SYMPTOMS OF WEST NILE VIRUS:

- People infected with WNV suffer from fever, headache, fatigue, body aches, nausea, vomiting, occasionally with a skin rash (on the trunk of the body) and swollen lymph glands.
- In case of severe West Nile disease, the patient suffers from headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, stupor, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness and paralysis.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- One in 150 persons infected with the virus will develop a severe form of the disease, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- There are no vaccines to prevent or medications to treat the infection.

RUSSIAN SOYUZ SPACECRAFT SUCCESSFULLY DOCKED AT ISS

- Russian Soyuz spacecraft carrying NASA Astronaut Nick Hague and Christina Koch, and Cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin successfully docked at the International Space Station.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Russian Crew members are called as Cosmonauts.

ABOUT THE SOYUZ SPACECRAFT:

- Soyuz is a Russian Spacecraft that carries people and supplies to and from the International Space Station.
- Soyuz Spacecrafts also function as lifeboats and one Soyuz spacecraft is always docked to the space station, so that in case of emergency the crew can return to earth through the spacecraft.
- After the retirement of the space shuttle in 2011, the Soyuz spacecraft has become the sole means of transportation for crew members going to or returning from the orbiting laboratory.

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 re-boost 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).
- The ISS serves as a microgravity and space environment research laboratory in which crew members conduct experiments in biology, human biology, Physics, Astronomy, meteorology, and other fields.

SBI, ICICI, HDFC BANK WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN D-SIBs

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that SBI, ICICI and HDFC Bank would continue as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) for 2018.

ABOUT D-SIBs:

- The recognition as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) implies that banks are too big to fail and this creates an expectation of government support for them in times of financial distress.
- As a result, these banks enjoy certain advantages in funding markets.
- Inclusion in the list gives additional comfort to investors that these banks won't be allowed to fail and therefore, borrowing costs of these banks from the markets are cheaper than their peers.
- Inclusion in D-SIB also implies that the failure of any of these banks would have a cascading effect on the Indian financial system.
- These D-SIBs are required to maintain an additional common equity requirement based on the bucket in which a D-SIB is placed.

- SBI in the third bucket was setting aside 0.45 per cent of its assets as an additional capital requirement and have to set aside 0.60 per cent of its risk-weighted assets now.
- ICICI Bank and HDFC which are in the fifth bucket are required to set aside 0.20 per cent Bank's capital requirement from the current 0.15 per cent.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- RBI had initiated the recognition as D-SIBs from 2015 and places these banks in appropriate buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SISs).

PINAKI CHANDRA GHOSE TO BE THE FIRST LOKPAL OF INDIA

- The name of former Supreme Court Judge Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose has been cleared by the **Lokpal Selection Committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- The notification for the appointment is expected to be released soon.
- **Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose would be the first Lokpal of India.**

FEATURES OF THE LOKPAL ACT 2013:

- **The Lokpal Act provides for setting up of an anti-corruption ombudsman called Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta at the State-level.**
- The Lokpal would consist of a chairperson and a maximum of eight members of which 50 per cent shall be judicial members.
- **50 per cent of members of Lokpal shall be from SC/ST/OBCs, minorities and women.**
- The ambit of Lokpal would cover all categories of public servants, including the Prime Minister with the exception of armed forces.
- The Lokpal Act mandated the states to institute Lokayukta within one year of the commencement of the Act.
- **Lokpal will also have powers of superintendence and direction over any investigation agency including CBI for cases referred to them by the Lokpal.**
- **Lokpal is appointed based on the recommendation of the five-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition the Chief Justice of India and an eminent jurist nominated by the President.**
- President would appoint the eminent jurist based on the recommendations of the other members of the panel.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The government has proposed an amendment to the Lokpal Act 2013 to enable the leader of the largest Opposition party to be the member of the selection panel in the absence of the leader of Opposition.
- To designate the leader as Leader of Opposition the largest opposition party must have a strength of at least 10% of the total members in the House none of the parties managed to cross this mark in 2014 general elections.

PRAMOD SAWANT OF BJP TAKES OATH AS GOA CHIEF MINISTER

- Pramod Sawant of BJP took oath as the Chief Minister of Goa in a ceremony held at 2am, as the saffron party managed to keep its allies together after hectic negotiations all through the day.

MORE DETAILS:

- The 45-year-old takes over from former defence minister and four-time CM of Goa Manohar Parrikar, who was cremated at the Miramar beach on Monday.
- The crucial transition of power in the coastal state necessitated by Parrikar's death on Sunday capped frenzied political developments, with the Congress too staking claim to power.
- The new government has two deputy chief ministers, Goa Forward Party chief Vijai Sardesai and Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party MLA Sudin Dhalavikar, from the two small parties backing BJP in the coastal state.
- Michael Lobo, currently the deputy speaker, will be speaker till a new one is elected.
- Sawant, along with union minister Nitin Gadkari, went to stake claim to form the government after midnight as power-sharing talks with the alliance partners continued till late.

AFGHANISTAN REGISTERS ITS FIRST TEST CRICKET WIN

Tim Murtagh of Ireland also makes a unique world record!

- Afghanistan's cricket team claimed a historic first Test win on Monday as they beat Ireland by seven wickets.

DETAILS:

- Rahmat Shah and Ihsanullah Janat scored fifties for the war-torn country as they chased down 147 for victory on day four in Dehradun, India.
- Afghanistan were steered to their target by a 139-run partnership between Shah, who made 76, and debutant Janat, who hit an unbeaten 65.
- Shah, a top-order batsman, registered his second fifty of the match after making 98 in Afghanistan's first innings score of 314.
- With three needed to win, Afghanistan lost Shah and then Mohammad Nabi in successive deliveries before Hashmatullah Shahidi came to the crease and hit the winning boundary to trigger celebrations in the Afghanistan camp.
- Ace spinner Rashid Khan, who is second in the ICC one-day international rankings, had played a key role in the historic win by taking five wickets on Sunday's day three to help dismiss Ireland for 288 in their second innings.
- It was Afghanistan's second Test outing after making their debut last year when they lost to India inside two days in Bangalore.

INTERSTING TO KNOW:

- For Ireland, **Tim Murtagh** stood out with scores of 54 not out and 27 batting at number 11, making him **the only number 11 batsman in the history of test cricket to score more than 25 runs in two innings of a test match.**

SBI BRINGS CARDLESS ATM WITHDRAWAL WITH 'YONO CASH'

- India's largest Bank State Bank of India (SBI) has announced the launch of YONO Cash through which customers can withdraw money from ATMs without using a card.

HOW DOES THE CARDLESS CASH WITHDRAWAL WORK?

- This Cardless Cash Withdrawal process works with two-factor authentication and eliminates the risk of skimming and cloning.
- The customers have to set a 6-digit Yono PIN for withdrawing cash through the Yono app.
- Once the process is initiated the customer will receive a 6-digit reference code via SMS, which will then have to be entered into a Yono Cash Point.
- The cash withdrawal must be completed within the next 30 minutes at an ATM using both the PIN and the reference number.
- ATMs enabled with this service will be termed as Yono Cash Point.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS INITIATIVE:

- This cardless cash withdrawal will address the concerns over using debit cards at ATMs for cash withdrawals by eliminating the possible associated risks and also maximizes convenience and enhances the banking experience for its customers.

INDIAN WRITER RAGHU KARNAD WINS WINDHAM-CAMPBELL PRIZE

- Indian Writer Raghu Karnad has won the Windham-Campbell Prize of \$165,000 in the non-fiction category for his debut book- *The Farthest Field: An Indian Story Of The Second World War*.

MORE DETAILS:

- Karnad is one of the eight winners chosen across four categories- fiction, non-fiction, drama and poetry.
- The other awardee in the non-fiction category was American writer Rebecca Solnit for the diverse body of work she has produced over her career.
- **Raghu Karnad is the second Indian to receive the award.**
- Earlier in 2016, Jerry Pinto had won the award for his novel- *Em And The Big Hoom*.

ABOUT THE WINDHAM-CAMPBELL PRIZE:

- The Windham-Campbell Prize is administered by the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in the US and was established in 2013.
- The award was constituted with the generous gift from writer Donald Windham in memory of his partner Sandy Campbell.

- The jury selects two winners each for each of the category- fiction, non-fiction, drama and poetry.

SCO TO HOLD ITS FIRST JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE 'SARY-ARKA-ANTITERROR 2019'

- The SCO member states China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan will participate in a joint counter-terrorism exercise 'Sary-Arka-Antiterror 2019' to be held in the grasslands of Kazakhstan in the Sary Arka region.

DETAILS:

- The decision to hold Sary-Arka-Antiterror 2019, the first joint military exercise of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was announced at during the 34th meeting of the RATS council held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- The meeting also announced holding of the first joint border operation- Solidarity 2019-2021.

ABOUT THE RATS COUNCIL:

- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a permanent organ which serves to promote cooperation of member states against three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- RATS established in June 2004 is engaged in furthering cooperation and ties between member countries on concerns of terrorism, security, drug trafficking, crime and cyber warfare.

ABOUT THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION:

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organization aimed at:

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states.
- Promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research, technology and culture as well as in education, energy, transport, environmental protection, and other areas.
- Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

A LOOK IN THE HISTORY:

- The genesis of the SCO can be traced to the Shanghai Five mechanism created in 1996 of which the China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members.
- Later Uzbekistan was admitted to the grouping.
- In 2001 the declaration of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was signed.
- In 2015 India and Pakistan were admitted to the grouping and they joined the grouping officially in 2017.

NGT DIRECTS CPCB TO PREPARE NOISE POLLUTION MAPS

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Central Pollution Control Board(CPCB) to prepare a noise pollution map and remedial action plan to solve the issue of noise pollution across the country.

About the NGT Order:

- CPCB has been directed to prepare a noise pollution map and identify hotspots and categorise the cities with specified hotspots and propose a remedial action plan.
- Noting the establishment of the noise monitoring mechanism in seven cities, NGT asked CPCB to consider setting up of such mechanisms in all cities where noise pollution is beyond permissible limits.
- Further, the police departments of all the States and Union Territories are asked to obtain the noise monitoring devices within a period of three months and specification of such devices may be finalised in consultation with the respective state PCBs and pollution control committees.
- NGT asked for setting up of public address systems with equipment that can monitor the noise pollution parameters and alert authorities once the prescribed limits are crossed.

NGT'S OBSERVATION:

- NGT noted that the absence of implementation of noise pollution norms affects the health of citizens, especially infants and senior citizens.

BRITISH ARMY TO CREATE A SPECIALISED GURKHA INFANTRY BATTALION

- The British Army has announced that it would create a new Specialised Infantry Battalion by recruiting more than 800 Nepalese Gurkha servicepersons.
- Gurkhas have completed 200 years of service in the British Army and currently, they comprise up to 3% of the British Army.

GURKHA AND THE BRITISH ARMY:

- During the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-16, Gorkha Kingdom had inflicted heavy casualties on the British Army even though they had lost the war.
- British India decided to recruit these soldiers starting in 1815 and the Gurkhas have fought on the side of the British Empire in almost every war, including both World Wars.
- After the Indian Independence in 1947, as per the Britain-India-Nepal Tripartite Agreement 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, and 10th Gurkha Rifles regiments were assigned to India, and the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 10th were assigned regiments to Britain.
- Further India created 11th Gurkha Rifles regiment to accommodate the Gurkhas who refused to depart with the now-British regiments.
- British later amalgamated the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 10th battalions into Royal Gurkha Rifles (RGR) regiment.
- The Gurkhas are recruited every year by the British Army and Gurkhas are held in high esteem in the British Army.

- Khukri, the signature weapon of Gurkhas forms part of the Gurkha regimental insignia in Britain as well as in India.
- Gurkhas have the same service conditions as the regular British Army, with the option of British citizenship upon retirement.

UP BEGINS CENSUS OF OTTERS IN THE PILIBHIT TIGER RESERVE

- For the first time, Uttar Pradesh is taking a census of Otters in its protected areas. The census has begun in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR).

SIGNIFICANCE OF OTTERS

- Otters live on fish and spend much of its time in or close to water bodies.
- A thriving population of Otters means a healthy ecosystem.
- A growing or healthy population of Otters means the water bodies are pollution-free.
- Clean water bodies mean a healthy ecosystem of the forest.
- Otters thriving and getting sufficient food to eat means the water bodies in the reserve are in a fine state and the aquatic life in them is healthy.

INDIA IS HOME TO 3 OF THE 13 SPECIES OF OTTERS FOUND WORLDWIDE:

- Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) - IUCN status: Near Threatened.
- Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) - IUCN status: Vulnerable.
- Small-clawed Otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) - IUCN status: Vulnerable.

ABOUT PILIBHIT TIGER RESERVE:

- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve spreads across Pilibhit district, Lakhimpur Kheri District and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh.
- The Northern edge of the reserve lies along the India-Nepal border while the southern boundary is marked by the river Sharada and Khakra.
- Pilibhit Tiger Reserve is home to habitat for over 127 animals, 326 bird species and 2,100 flowering plants.
- The reserve is home to a myriad of wild animals including the endangered tiger, swamp deer, Bengal florican, hog deer, leopard, etc.
- The large carnivores are supported by a very large prey base consisting of cheetal, sambar, wild boar, hog deer, swamp deer, blue bull, etc.
- The bird life is very rich and diverse and hundreds of species of birds can be seen around.

TO STOP FAKE NEWS, WHATSAPP TO WORK WITH NASSCOM

- WhatsApp and National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) have decided to work together to impart digital literacy for curbing the menace of fake news before the general elections.

WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?

- Fake News are the stories which appear to be news, spread on the internet or other social media, usually created to influence political views or as a joke.

TRAINING FOR IMPARTING DIGITAL LITERACY TO CURB FAKE NEWS:

- **WhatsApp and NASSCOM Foundation will train nearly 1,00,000 Indians to spot false information and provide tips and tricks to stay safe on WhatsApp.**
- The training curriculum involves real-world anecdote tools that can be used to verify a forwarded message and actions that users can take including reporting problematic content to fact checkers and other law enforcement agencies will be disseminated in multiple regional languages.
- The training is aimed at educating people throughout India to be mindful of the messages they receive and to verify the facts before forwarding.
- **The training will be imparted by volunteers from NASSCOM Foundation through "each one teach three" campaign that mandates every volunteer to share their learnings with three more persons leading to a network effect.**
- Further to enhance the reach of the campaign volunteers will post their takeaways from the workshops on their social media handles.

OVERALL AIM OF THE INITIATIVE:

- The initiative is aimed at eliminating the miscreants who entice anger and hatred by spreading false and doctored information through technology platform.

SAIL HAS LAUNCHED 'SMART GARBAGE BINS'

- **Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) has launched smart garbage bins made of stainless steel which integrates technology for smart waste management.**

ABOUT THE SMART GARBAGE BINS:

- **The Smart Garbage Bins will send signals to the garbage collection vehicle about the 'fill-up' position of the bin. This provides for better cleaning and lower human intervention.**
- **These Smart Garbage Bins made up of SAIL SALEM stainless steel will be installed in underground Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) pits at the Smart Garbage Station. This will help prevent the spread of stink and diseases.**
- There will be separate bins for recyclable and non-recyclable wastes.
- The pits will be covered with a pit cover fabricated out of stainless steel slip-free sheets.
- Suitable openings on the pit cover will be provided to allow the sanitation crew to dump the collected garbage into the stainless steel bins placed underground.

- IOT (Internet of Things) enabled Gazelle sensors on the pit cover will transmit signals to the collection vehicle about the "fill-up" position.
- Compactor will lift the stainless steel bins from the underground pits and empty the garbage into the compactor vehicle.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Initially, these Smart Garbage Bins will be placed at one each at Kamala Nagar in North and Bhikaji Cama Place in South Delhi.
- SAIL is looking for other municipalities as well as metro cities to take this initiative further.
- SAIL is looking to take up production of stainless steel garbage bins on a commercial scale depending upon the response.

INDIA AND US WILL SIGN AN AGREEMENT TO FACILITATE THE EXCHANGE OF CbC REPORT

- Both India and the US will sign an agreement to facilitate the exchange of country-by-country (CbC) reports filed by the ultimate parent corporations based in either of the countries.

WHAT DOES COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY REPORTS REQUIRE?

- The Country-By-Country Reports requires multinational companies to provide information about:
- The name of each country where it operates.
- The names of all its subsidiaries and affiliates in these countries.
- The performance of each subsidiary and affiliate, without exception.
- The tax charge in its accounts of each subsidiary and affiliate in each country.
- Details of the cost and net book value of its fixed assets in each country.
- Details of its gross and net assets for each country.

MORE DETAILS:

- Section 286 of the Income-tax Act, 1961 requires Indian subsidiaries of multinational companies to provide details of key financial statements from jurisdictions where they operate.
- This provides the I-T Department with a better operational view of such companies, primarily with regards to revenue and income tax paid.
- The proposed agreement will enable both India and the US to exchange CbC Reports filed by the ultimate parent entities of International Groups in the respective jurisdictions.
- As a result, Indian constituent entities of international groups headquartered in the USA, who have already filed CbC Reports in the USA, would not be required to do local filing of the CbC Reports of their international groups in India and vice versa.

KAREN UHLENBECK BECOMES FIRST WOMAN TO WIN THE PRESTIGIOUS ABEL PRIZE

- US Mathematician Karen Uhlenbeck has been chosen for the Abel Prize 2019 for her fundamental work in geometric analysis and gauge theory, which has dramatically changed the mathematical landscape.

DETAILS:

- Karen Uhlenbeck's theories have revolutionised the understanding of minimal surfaces, such as those formed by soap bubbles, and more general minimization problems in higher dimensions.
- **Karen Uhlenbeck is the first woman to win the prestigious Abel Prize.**
- With this feat, women took another step forward in the still male-dominated world of science.

ABOUT THE ABLE PRIZE:

- Able Prize established by the Oslo government in 2002 honour outstanding scientific work in the field of mathematics, a discipline not included among the Nobel awards.
- Able Prize is named after the 19th-century Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel.
- Able Prize comes with a monetary award of 6 million Norwegian Kroner (NOK).
- The sole Indian recipient of the Able Prize is Indian American mathematician S. R. Srinivasa Varadhan.
- He was awarded for his fundamental contributions to probability theory and in particular for creating a unified theory of large deviation.

JAPANESE SPACECRAFT HAYABUSA2 PROBES ASTEROID RYUGU

- Japanese spacecraft, Hayabusa2 has surveyed asteroid Ryugu's surface and landed multiple robotic probes on its rocky terrain.

FINDINGS OF THE PROBE:

- Asteroid Ryugu is far drier than expected.
- Ryugu is quite young (by asteroid standards), at around 100 million years old, this suggests its parent body was much largely devoid of water, too.
- Ryugu has an oblate "spinning top" shape, which suggests that the rocky body may have once spun at twice its current rate.
- Hayabusa2 has completed the touchdown manoeuvre to collect samples from Ryugu's surface, which will be brought back to Earth in a return capsule in late 2020.

ABOUT HAYABUSA2:

- Hayabusa2 is an asteroid sample-return mission of the Japanese space agency, JAXA.
- It is the successor of Hayabusa which had returned asteroid samples in 2010.

- Hayabusa2 arrived at Ryugu on 27 June 2018 and would survey the asteroid Ryugu for a year and a half during which time it will also collect samples.
- The mission plan is expected to depart in December 2019 and return the samples to Earth in December 2020.

ABOUT ASTEROID RYUGU:

- Asteroid Ryugu is a near-Earth object and a potentially hazardous asteroid of the Apollo group.
- Asteroid Ryugu is a primitive carbonaceous near-Earth asteroid. Asteroid Ryugu is expected to preserve the most pristine materials in the Solar System, a mixture of minerals, ice, and organic compounds that interact with each other.
- The studies of Asteroid Ryugu is expected to provide additional knowledge on the origin and evolution of the inner planets and, in particular, the origin of water and organic compounds on Earth and all relevant to the origin of life on Earth.

INDIA AND SRI LANKA TO CONDUCT JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE

- India and Sri Lanka will conduct joint military exercise Mitra Shakti VI from 26 March to 8 April in Sri Lanka.

ABOUT MITRA SHAKTI VI:

- At the military exercise Mitra Shakti VI, India would be represented by the Bihar Regiment. Gemunu Watch Battalion of Sri Lankan Army will be representing the Sri Lankan side.
- The exercise aims to build and promote close relations between armies of both the countries and to enhance the ability of joint exercise commander to take military contingents of both nations under command.
- The exercise also involves tactical level operations in an international counter insurgency and counter terrorist environment under the United Nations mandate.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MITRA SHAKTI:

- Mitra Shakti exercise conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of the two countries will go a long way in further cementing the relationship between both the nations and act as a catalyst in bringing synergy and cooperation at grassroots levels between both the armies.

20TH MARCH CELEBRATED AS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS 2019

- The International Day of Happiness 2019 was celebrated on March 20th with the theme "**Happier Together**", focusing on what we have in common, rather than what divides us.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS:

- International Day of Happiness recognises the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.
- The concept of International Day of Happiness was conceptualised and materialised by UN special advisor Jayme Illien to inspire and spread a happiness movement globally and the first ever International Day of Happiness was observed on March 20, 2013.

- Further to take forward the agenda of Happiness the United Nations has launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet which are the three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness.

WHY MARCH 20TH?

- **March 20th was chosen for International Day of Happiness 2019 for its significance as the March equinox.**
- March equinox is a universal phenomenon felt simultaneously by all of humankind, and which occurs the moment when the plane of Earth's equator passes through the centre of the Sun's disk.

KAZAKHSTAN RENAMES ITS CAPITAL AFTER ITS EX-PRESIDENT

- **Kazakhstan has renamed its capital Astana to Nursultan to honour outgoing leader Nursultan Nazarbayev.**

DETAILS:

- The announcement regarding this was made by the new president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and was approved by the parliament of Kazakhstan.
- **Nursultan Nazarbayev served nearly 30 years as leader of the oil-rich nation.**
- The decision of the Nursultan Nazarbayev to step down came as a surprise when he made an announcement regarding this through a television address.
- **He was the first president of Kazakhstan and lead Kazakhstan since it emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.**
- It was Nursultan Nazarbayev who moved the capital of Kazakhstan's capital from the southern city of Almaty near the Kyrgyz border, to northern Astana, which translates to "the capital" in Kazakh and Astana boomed from a minor provincial steppe town into a futuristic city.
- Although proposals were made earlier to rename the city as Nursultan earlier, Nursultan Nazarbayev had himself rejected such proposals.

EVIDENCE OF WATER, PARTICLE PLUMES DISCOVERED ON ASTEROID BENNU

- **NASA's OSIRIS-Rex mission discovers evidence of water, particle plumes on asteroid Bennu among numerous other findings.**

ABOUT ASTEROID BENNU:

- **Bennu is only slightly wider than the height of the Empire State Building and it is expected to contain unaltered material from the very beginning of our solar system.**
- Bennu has a more rugged surface than expected.
- This posed a challenge for the mission team and forced it to alter its flight and sample collection plans, due to the rough terrain.
- Few of the particles ejected out of Bennu orbited it as satellites before returning to the asteroid's surface.

- Benu is a carbonaceous asteroid in the Apollo group and is a potentially hazardous object.

ABOUT THE OSIRIS-REX MISSION:

- NASA's Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer (Osiris-REx) mission is aimed at studying Benu Asteroid and Osiris-Rex mission began orbiting the asteroid on December 31 last year.
- The Osiris-Rex mission is expected to return samples to Earth in 2023 and before attempting to obtain a sample from the asteroid, it will map out Benu's surface in detail and orbit the asteroid to calculate its mass.

SPICEJET BECOMES FIRST INDIAN BUDGET CARRIER TO JOIN IATA

- Indian low-cost airlines SpiceJet has joined the International Air Transport Association (IATA). SpiceJet is the first Indian budget carrier to join the IATA, which has over 290 airlines as members.
- The membership of IATA will allow SpiceJet to explore and grow its collaborations with international member airlines of IATA through interlining and code shares and also enables to seamlessly expand the network options for its passengers in future.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (IATA):

- International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines and represents some 290 airlines which contribute to about 82% of total air traffic.

FUNCTIONS OF IATA:

- IATA helps airlines to operate safely, securely, efficiently, and economically under clearly defined rules.
- IATA provides professional support is provided to all industry stakeholders with a wide range of products and expert services.
- IATA aims to assist airlines by simplifying processes and increasing passenger convenience while reducing costs and improving efficiency.
- IATA also aims to improve understanding of the air transport industry among decision makers and increase awareness of the benefits that aviation brings to national and global economies.
- IATA advocates for the interests of airlines across the globe and challenges unreasonable rules and charges and strive for sensible regulation.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- IATA headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada supports airline activity and helps formulate industry policy and standards.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS 2019 OBSERVED ON MARCH 21ST

- International Day of Forests 2019 was observed on March 21st with the theme 'Forests and Education' to raise awareness on how sustainably managed forests provide a wide array of contributions.

DETAILS:

- International Day of Forests 2019 promotes education to '**Learn to Love Forests**'.
- The theme 'Forests and Education' underscores the importance of education at all levels in achieving sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation.
- Healthy forests mean healthy, resilient communities and prosperous economies.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS:

- **March 21st was established as International Day of Forests by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on November 28, 2012.**
- **International Day of Forests was observed for the first time on March 21, 2013.**
- International Forest Day celebrates and raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests.
- On the occasion of International Day of Forests, countries are encouraged to undertake local, national and international efforts to organize activities involving forests and trees, such as tree planting campaigns.
- The theme of the International Day of Forests provides an opportunity to highlight specific forest contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by considering topics of the annual sessions of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

US WILL RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER GOLAN HEIGHTS

- **US President Trump has announced that the US will recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.** This is a departure from the earlier stand of US where it treated Golan Heights as occupied Syrian territory, in line with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

WHAT IS THE DISPUTE OVER GOLAN HEIGHTS?

- **Until 1967, Golan Heights was part of Syria. Israel occupied the Golan Heights during the Six Day war (Third Arab Israeli war) held in 1967.**
- Israel annexed the region unilaterally in 1981.
- This unilateral annexation was not recognised by the international community and the Golan Heights was seen as Occupied Syrian Territory.

WHY ISRAEL WANTS GOLAN HEIGHTS?

- Israel argues that civil war in Syria demonstrates the need to keep the plateau as a buffer zone between Israeli towns and the instability of its neighbour.
- Israel also fears that Iran is seeking to establish itself permanently on the Syrian side of the border in order to launch attacks on Israel.
- Golan's water resources and naturally fertile soil.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

- United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) is stationed in camps and observation posts along the Golan.
- There is a 400-square-km (155-square-mile) "Area of Separation" called a demilitarized zone between the Israeli and Syrian armies.
- Further, Separation of Forces Agreement of May 31, 1974, created an Alpha Line to the west of the area of separation, behind which Israeli military forces must remain and a Bravo Line to the east behind which Syrian military forces must remain.
- 25 km beyond the "Area of Separation" on both sides is an "Area of Limitation" in which there are restrictions on the number of troops and kinds of weapons that both sides can have there.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

OBSERVED ON 21ST MARCH

- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2019 was observed on March 21st with the theme- Mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.

DETAILS:

- Racist extremist movements which promote populist, nationalist agendas are spreading in various parts of the world, fueling racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, often targeting migrants and refugees as well as people of African descent.
- The recent Christchurch Mosque Shootings in New Zealand is one such event.
- The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination aims to fight against all forms of racial intolerance.

WHY MARCH 21ST FOR THIS DAY?

- On March 21st, 1960 police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa.
- The United Nations General Assembly in 1966 proclaimed March 21st as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2019 and called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

NEW ZEALAND ANNOUNCES BAN ON MILITARY-STYLE SEMI-AUTOMATICS AND ASSAULT RIFLES

- New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced a ban on all military-style semi-automatic weapons, assault rifles and high-capacity magazines.

DETAILS:

- New Zealand has decided to overhaul gun laws in the country in the backdrop of the Christchurch mosque shootings.
- It is estimated that there are about 1.2-1.5 million guns in New Zealand which has a population of about 5 million people.
- There were no official data about the number of assault rifles in circulation and there are roughly 13,500 military-style semi-automatic weapons in New Zealand.

ABOUT THE CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUE SHOOTINGS:

- Christchurch mosque shootings refer to two consecutive terrorist attacks at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, during Friday Prayer on 15 March 2019.
- The first attack was at the Al Noor Mosque in the suburb of Riccarton at 1:40 pm and the second one was at the Linwood Islamic Centre at about 1:55 pm.
- The attacks were linked to white supremacy and alt-right extremism movements.
- New Zealand police are investigating a manifesto, the 28-year-old suspect allegedly wrote and posted on social media shortly before the shooting began.
- This manifesto espouses far-right and white nationalistic views, specifically targeting Muslims and immigrants and praises mass murderers Dylann Roof, who attacked a historically black church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, and Anders Breivik, who killed dozens of young people at a summer camp for Norway's left-leaning political party.

JAPAN DONATES \$69 MILLION TO THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

- Japan has donated \$69 million to the United Nations World Food Programme to provide vital aid to 28 countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, with the biggest shares of the money being earmarked for Yemen and Iraq.

ABOUT THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME:

- World Food Programme is a leading humanitarian programme saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience.
- In the 1960 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Conference, there were calls for setting up a multilateral food aid programme
- In line with these demands, the World Food Programme was established in 1961 by the FAO and the United Nations General Assembly.
- The Food for Work programmes of the World Food Programme promotes environmental and economic stability and agricultural production.
- The World Food Programme strives to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, with the ultimate goal to eliminate the need for food aid itself.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME:

- Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies.
- Support food security and nutrition and (re)build livelihoods in fragile settings and following emergencies.
- Reduce risk and enable people, communities and countries to meet their own food and nutrition needs.
- Reduce under-nutrition and break the inter-generational cycle of hunger.
- Zero Hunger in 2030.

ONE MUST ALSO KNOW:

- World Food Programme also aims to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat disease, including HIV.

RBI DEFERS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDIAN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has deferred the implementation of new accounting rules, Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) for banks till further notice.

DETAILS:

- This is the second extension provided by the RBI.
- Earlier in April 2018, RBI had postponed the implementation of Ind AS by the banks by one year.
- RBI has reasoned that since the legislative amendments recommended by the RBI are under consideration of the government, it has been decided to defer the implementation of Ind AS till further notice.

ABOUT INDIAN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS:

- Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) is a set of accounting norms developed by Indian authorities, which converge with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).
- Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) shall not be required to apply Ind AS and shall continue to comply with the existing Accounting Standards.
- This delay in the implementation of Ind AS will give banks more time to prepare for the expected credit-loss model.
- Fitch Ratings estimated that India's state-run lenders would have had to increase provisions by as much as 1.1 trillion rupees (\$16 billion) in the fiscal first quarter ending June 30 if the rules had gone ahead.
- This huge capital requirement would have forced public sector lenders to raise substantial amounts of extra capital, beyond the estimated 1.9 trillion rupee infusion already committed by the government.

WORLD WATER DAY OBSERVED ON 22ND MARCH

- World Water Day 2019 was observed on 22nd March with the theme '**Leaving no one behind**'.

DETAILS:

- The World Water Day encourages people to focus towards marginalized groups as these are often overlooked and discriminated against when they try to access safe water.

- The theme 'Leaving no one behind' underscores the motto of 'water for all' which aims to ensure all including elderly, disabled, marginalized and poor people get access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation, as enshrined under Sustainable Development Goals.

ABOUT THE WORLD WATER DAY:

- World Water Day aims to draw attention to the importance of freshwater and advocates for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- As requested at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations General Assembly designated 22nd March World Water Day by passing a resolution.
- World Water Day celebrates water and each year World Water Day highlights a specific aspect of freshwater.

WORLD POETRY DAY OBSERVED ON 21ST MARCH BY UNESCO

- World Poetry Day is observed every year on March 21st by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- World Poetry Day aims to promote the reading, writing, publishing and teaching of poetry throughout the world.

DETAILS:

- The decision to observe March 21st as World Poetry Day was adopted by UNESCO during its 30th session held at Paris in 1999.
- **The session noted that:**
 - Poetry fulfils unfulfilled aesthetic needs in society.
 - Over the past 20 years, poetry has made a revival and the number of poets has increased.
 - The social has incited young people to return to their roots.
 - Poets are taking on new roles in society.
 - Poetry is part of the recognition of ancestral values and a return to speech as a means of socializing an individual.
 - Modern media has failed to take the poet serious and therefore action is needed to give poetry its rightful place in society.
- Therefore, UNESCO decided to observe March 21st as World Poetry Day to give fresh recognition and impetus to national, regional and international poetry movements

INDIA EXTENDS FINANCIAL AID TO NEPAL FOR CAMPUS BUILDING

- India has extended a financial grant of 35.5 million Nepalese Rupees for the construction of an educational campus in Nepal under the Development Partnership Programme.

ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME:

- **The Development Partnership Programme is administered by the Development Administration Partnership division in the Ministry of External Affairs.**
- India has a long history as a provider of development assistance and over the years and India's development assistance has started to cover a large number of countries over the last few years.
- Hence for streamlining the delivery of assistance and improving the effectiveness of such efforts Development Administration Partnership was established in January 2012.
- **India provides development assistance in one of three forms:**
 - Grant assistance
 - Lines of credit
 - Capacity-building

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Development Administration Partnership under the Ministry of External Affairs aims to provide for effective and efficient handling of all aid projects from the stages of concept, launch, execution and completion for the efficient implementation of projects, in close cooperation and facilitation of the partner countries.

107TH BIHAR DIWAS CELEBRATED ON 22ND MARCH

- **Bihar Diwas is celebrated on March 22nd across the state to commemorate the day when Bihar was carved out of the Bengal Presidency in the year 1912.**
- March 22nd 2019 was the 107th foundation day of the state.

ABOUT BIHAR AND BENGAL PRESIDENCY:

- The British East India Company emerged victorious in the Battle of Buxar fought against the combined army of Mir Qasim, the Nawab of Bengal; the Nawab of Awadh; and the Mughal King Shah Alam II.
- **After the Battle, Mughals, as well as the Nawabs of Bengal, lost the effective control over the territories which constituted the province of Bengal, which currently comprises Bangladesh and the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha.**
- The British East India Company was accorded the diwani rights to administer the collection and management of revenues of the province of Bengal.
- **In 1911 when the capital of then British India was shifted to Delhi, the Bengal Presidency was split into four sabhas Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Assam.**

ABOUT BIHAR DIWAS:

- **The government of Bihar which was looking for a commemorative event in Bihar's history that could become the state's official day of celebration, chose March 22nd the day Bihar was carved out of Bengal Presidency as Bihar Diwas.**
- **Bihar Diwas was first celebrated on a large-scale in 2010.**
- **Bihar Diwas was the brainchild of then as well as current Chief Minister of Bihar- Nitish Kumar.**

RESEARCHERS FROM IIT- MADRAS AND ESPNCRICINFO LAUNCH SUPERSTATS

- Researchers from Indian Institute of Technology- Madras (IIT-M), Gyan Data (an IIT-M incubated company) together with experts from ESPNcrinfo have launched Superstats, a new metric to analyse the game of cricket.

ABOUT SUPERSTATS:

- Superstats comprises of three metrics:
 - Luck Index
 - Forecaster
 - Smart Stats
- Superstats which is based on data science also ventures into new territories such as luck and forecasting to give a context to every event in a game during this IPL season.
- Taking into account score-cards i.e. ball by ball database of all IPL matches played in India in the last ten years, researchers have developed an algorithm based on machine learning system.
- This algorithm processes accurate, fast data and quantifies impact of luck and analyzes the real value of a player's performance in real-time.
- Superstats will provide the viewers with a new experience wherein match information, analysis and projection are backed with data science.

JUSTICE PINAKI CHANDRA GHOSE SWORN-IN AS LOKPAL

- President Ram Nath Kovind administered the Oath of office to Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as Lokpal.

DETAILS:

- Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose is the first anti-corruption ombudsman of the country.
- Country's first Lokpal has been appointed after a long delay of five years.
- The Lokpal Act had received the assent of the President on January 1, 2014.

ABOUT MEMBERS OF LOKPAL:

- The Lokpal act provides for a chairperson and a maximum of eight members in the Lokpal panel and of these, four need to be judicial members.

JUDICIAL MEMBERS OF LOKPAL

- Former Chief Justices of different high courts Justices Dilip B Bhosale, Pradip Kumar Mohanty, Abhilasha Kumari together with sitting Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh High Court Ajay Kumar Tripathi have been appointed as judicial members in the Lokpal.

NON-JUDICIAL MEMBERS

- The non-judicial members of the Lokpal are first woman chief of Sashastra Seema Bal Archana Ramasundaram, ex-Maharashtra chief secretary Dinesh Kumar Jain, former IRS officer Mahender Singh and Gujarat cadre ex-IAS officer Indrajeet Prasad Gautam.
- The chairperson and members will hold office for a term of five years or till they attain 70 years of age.
- The salary and allowances of the chairman are same as that of the Chief Justice of India.
- The salary and allowances of members are same as that of a judge of the Supreme Court.

NAVROZ CELEBRATED BY PARSIS ON MARCH 21ST

- Navroz is the Iranian New Year celebrated by several ethnolinguistic communities around the world irrespective of their religious background.
- In India Parsis who follow Zoroastrianism celebrate Navroz.
- Navroz is celebrated on March 21st.

DETAILS:

- The Navroz celebrations can be traced back to 6th Century BC, back when the Iranian community was homogeneously Zoroastrians.
- As the community got divided over the years people of Iranian origin worldwide continued following Zoroastrian traditions together with Iranian New Year as well.
- March 21 which is the first day of the Iranian calendar is also marked as the day when King Jamshid was crowned as the King of Persia.
- King Jamshid holds a great significance in Zoroastrianism and the day of his coronation is generally considered to be the beginning of the New Year among Iranian people.
- Navroz is also the day of the Spring equinox and rituals are performed based on the movements of the Sun during the course of the day.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 21ST

- March 21st was observed as World Down Syndrome Day.
- The theme of the 2019 World Down Syndrome Day is "**Leave no one behind**".

ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME:

- Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder which results in delayed physical and mental growth in individuals.
- The genetic disorder has been named after British doctor John Langdon Down who fully described the syndrome in 1866.
- In normal conditions, people have only two copies of Chromosome 21 whereas those with Down's syndrome there is a presence of a part or full of the third copy of chromosome 21.
- Even though Down's Syndrome is incurable, the quality of life of those suffering could be considerably improved by giving proper medical support and education.

ABOUT WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY:

- March 21st is observed as World Down Syndrome Day to increase global awareness about the syndrome by the United Nations since 2012.
- Since then March 21st is celebrated as World Down Syndrome Day by the governments, organisations and individuals to extend support to those suffering from Down's Syndrome.

WHY MARCH 21ST?

- March 21st is the 21st day of third month.
- March 21st was chosen to signify uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome which causes Down Syndrome.

SHAHEED DIVAS OR MARTYR'S DAY OBSERVED IN THE COUNTRY ON

MARCH 23RD

- On March 23rd, India observed Shaheed Divas or Martyr's Day as a tribute to Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru on their death anniversary.
- The supreme sacrifice of these revolutionaries continues to inspire generations in India.

ABOUT THE SACRIFICE OF THESE GREAT REVOLUTIONARIES:

- Bhagat Singh along with his associates Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru were hanged to death for the killing 21-year-old British police officer John Saunders on March 23rd 1931.
- The revolutionaries had mistaken Saunders for Superintendent James Scott, who was responsible for leading a lathi charge against Lala Lajpat Rai protesting against the Simon Commission.
- Lala Lajpat Rai famously referred to as the Lion of Punjab had died due to the attack during the protests against the Simon Commission.
- After escaping from the murder scene of Saunders, Bhagat Singh with his associate Batukeshwar Dutt had bombed the Delhi Central Assembly against the passing of two repressive bills, the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Dispute Bill.
- The bombs were designed to be harmless and aimed at drawing attention.
- Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt had surrendered themselves to police after the incident.

VICE ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH APPOINTED AS NEXT NAVY CHIEF

- The Defence Ministry has announced the appointment of Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Navy Chief.

DETAILS:

- He will succeed Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is retiring on 31st March.
- The government has once again broken the tradition of appointing the senior-most officer to lead the contingent forces by overlooking the seniority of Vice Admiral Bimal Verma.

- Earlier the government had appointed General Bipin Rawat as the Army Chief by overlooking the seniority.
- **General Bipin Rawat had earlier superseded two officers to occupy the post of Army Chief.**

ABOUT VICE ADMIRAL KARAMBIR SINGH:

- **Vice Admiral Karambir Singh was born in 1959 and was commissioned to Navy in July 1980.**
- **In his long carrier of 37 years, he has served as the Fleet Operations Officer of the Western Fleet.**
- He has served at Naval Headquarters as the Joint Director Naval Air Staff, and as Captain Air and Officer-in-Charge of the Naval Air Station at Mumbai.
- He has also served as a member of the Aircrew Instrument Rating and Categorisation Board (AIRCATS).
- He has commanded various ships, such as an Indian Coast Guard Ship Chandbibi, Missile Corvette INS Vijaydurg as well as two Guided Missile Destroyers INS Rana and INS Delhi.
- **Vice Admiral Karambir Singh has been honoured with Ati Vishist Seva Medal and Param Vishist Seva Medal (2018) for his service.**

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 23RD

- **World Meteorological Day 2019 was observed on March 23rd with the theme "The Sun, the Earth and the weather".**

DETAILS:

- The theme recognises the critical role the Earth's nearest star plays in what transpires on the planet.
- **The energy from the Sun is taken up by all life forms to perform their biological functions.**
- The Solar energy also regulates global climate, which, in turn, influences local weather conditions and the same energy is also absorbed by the oceans which carry it around the planet, creating further conditions for diverse marine life to exist.

ABOUT WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY:

- **World Meteorological Day is observed on March 23rd every year to commemorate the coming into force of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization on 23rd March 1950.**
- The World Meteorological Day showcases the essential contribution of National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to the safety and wellbeing of society and is celebrated with activities around the world.
- WMO provides world leadership and expertise for international cooperation in the delivery and use of high-quality, authoritative weather, climate, hydrological and related environmental services by its Members, for the improvement of the well-being of societies of all nations.

ITALY SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) WITH CHINA

- **Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Rome, endorsing the global infrastructure-building scheme of China.**

- Despite the warnings and pressure from the US and the European Union, **Italy has joined China's mega connectivity scheme and has become the first G7 country to do so.**
- Italy is the thirteenth European Union country and also the first from Western Europe to join China's Belt Road Initiative.

ITALY'S REASON FOR JOINING THE INITIATIVE:

- **Italy has stated that its participation in the initiative through a non-binding agreement was aimed to "rebalance an imbalance" in Sino-Italian trade.**
- There are a lot of 'Made in China' coming into Italy and too little 'Made in Italy' that goes into China.
- Italy hopes for a substantial and gradual increase in exports to balance out the trade imbalances.
- **The decision of Italy is seen as an attempt to address its financial woes which has onerous public debt.**
- Italy fell into recession at the end of last year.
- The agreement is seen as a trade off wherein Italy needs investment and China has those investments to provide to Italy.
- The agreement will aid Italy to underpin and strengthen its business ties with China.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The paper released by the EU's diplomatic arm referred to Belt Road Initiative as a "systemic rival" and has threatened to tighten regulations on Chinese investment in Europe.

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY OBSERVED ON MARCH 24TH

- World Tuberculosis Day 2019 was observed on March 24th with the theme "It's time". World Tuberculosis Day is celebrated to raise awareness about the devastating consequences of TB and how to end the global epidemic of this lung disease.

DETAILS:

- The theme of World Tuberculosis Day 2019 "**It's time**" draws attention towards the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to build accountability regarding TB and increase access of prevention and treatment of TB.
- As part of World World Tuberculosis Day, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has initiated "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB", a joint initiative with Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership under which communities, civil society organisations, governments and health-care providers come together to ensure that no one is left behind and everyone gets equal and fair information about tuberculosis, its causes, symptoms and risk factors.

WHAT IS TUBERCULOSIS?

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by bacteria *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (MTB).
- Tuberculosis affects the lungs and can also infect other parts of the body.
- Early symptoms of TB include bad cough which lasts for 3 weeks or longer.

- It causes pain in the chest and one might also end up coughing blood in case of tuberculosis.

WHY MARCH 24TH WAS CHOSEN AS WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY?

- March 24th is observed as World Tuberculosis Day because it was on March 24th 1882, TB bacterium was discovered by Dr Robert Koch.
- The discovery of TB bacterium marked the first step towards diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis.

PETER TABICHI WINS THE GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE 2019

- A science teacher from rural Kenya, Peter Tabichi has won the prestigious Global Teacher Prize 2019 which honours the world's best teacher.
- He was honoured for his achievements in a deprived school with crowded classes and a few textbooks.

ABOUT PETER TABICHI:

- Peter Tabichi is a maths and physics teacher at Keriko secondary school in Pwani Village, in a remote part of Kenya's Rift Valley.
- He gives away 80% of his income to help the poorest students at the poorly-equipped and overcrowded school who could not afford uniforms and books.
- Tabichi started a "talent nurturing club" and expanded the school's science club, helping pupils design research projects of such quality that many now qualify for national and international competitions.
- His students have taken part in international science competitions and won an award from the Royal Society of Chemistry after harnessing local plant life to generate electricity.
- Swaroop Rawal, an Indian teacher at Lavad Primary School, Gujarat and various other schools, was also there in contention for the award.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE:

- The Global Teacher Prize underlines the importance of educators and seeks to acknowledge the impacts of the very best teachers not only on their students but on the communities around them.
- The award was constituted in the year 2015 by the Varkey Foundation and the winners are awarded a US \$1 million award.
- The prize is awarded by the Varkey Foundation under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai.

MARCELO GLEISER WINS TEMPLETON PRIZE 2019

- Brazilian physicist and astronomer Marcelo Gleiser has been awarded the 2019 Templeton Prize for his work blending science and spirituality.

DETAILS:

- Marcelo Gleiser contends that science and religion are not only compatible, but that science is spiritual.

- The two realms of science and spirituality are intertwined for him.
- For Marcelo Gleiser, science is one part of the tripod of human questioning, and that philosophy and religion have asked these same questions for far longer than science has existed.
- The answers those different disciplines yield may be starkly different, but they are parallel pursuits and science has its own way of connecting to the spiritual side.

ABOUT THE TEMPLETON PRIZE:

- Templeton Prize awarded by the U.S.-based John Templeton Foundation honours a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension whether through insight, discovery, or practical works.
- Templeton Prize was established in 1972 by the late Sir John Templeton.
- The Prize aims to honour outstanding individuals who have devoted their talents to expanding our vision of human purpose and ultimate reality.
- The Prize celebrates no particular faith tradition or notion of God, but rather the quest for progress in humanity's efforts to comprehend the many and diverse manifestations of the Divine.
- The Prize is a monetary award in the amount of £1,100,000 sterling.

GOVERNMENT OF UAE LAUNCHES "LOSE TO WIN PROGRAMME"

- The Government of UAE has launched the "Lose to Win Programme" to assist the overweight employees in shedding extra kilos and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

ABOUT THE LOOSE TO WIN PROGRAMME:

- The Programme has been initiated by the Ministry of Health and Prevention of UAE.
- The programme team comprises nutritionists and health educators from the Ministry.
- The programme encourages those struggling with weight issues to learn how to induce positive changes in their lifestyle.
- The programme involves adopting a healthy diet and engaging in physical activity.
- It aims to help employees to loose excessive weight within eight weeks.
- The programme also includes a workshop on healthy nutrition where the participants are briefed on essential topics, including how to read food labels as well as explaining the make-up of balanced diets.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- In the current edition, the programme focuses on the employees of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development.

JOINT NAVAL EXERCISE BETWEEN INDIA AND AUSTRALIA- AUSINDEX

- Third Installment of the Joint Naval Exercise of India and Australia- AUSINDEX will be held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam from April 2 to 16.

- The joint exercise will focus on anti-submarine warfare, as part of efforts to ramp up bilateral naval cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean region.

ABOUT AUSINDEX 2019:

- **AUSINDEX 2019 will be held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam from April 2 to 16.**
- From the Australian side, HMAS Canberra (landing helicopter dock), Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment vessel, two frigates - HMAS Newcastle and HMAS Parramatta and P8I and P8 maritime patrol aircraft will be involved in the exercise.
- **A Kilo-class submarine, land-based Hawk aircraft that will provide the air attack element for the exercise, a Kamorta class anti-submarine vessel, besides a stealth destroyer will lead the Indian deployment for the exercise.**
- **The exercise will feature the deployment of Australian personnel on Indian ships and vice versa.**
- The area of the exercise will be within 200 miles of Vishakhapatnam.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **AUSINDEX 2019 will also witness the largest ever deployment of an Australian defence group to India, over 1000 Australian defence personnel will take part.**
- **To further strengthen the defence cooperation between India and Australia, Australia has also proposed logistics sharing pact with India.**

CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF ADMIRAL SUNIL LANBA INAGURATES NBCTF ABHEDYA FACILITY

- **Indian Navy's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Training Facility (NBCTF)- Abhedya, at INS Shivaji was inaugurated by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba.**

ABOUT ABHEDYA FACILITY:

- **NBCTF Abhedya will help train personnel of naval ships fitted with nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) detection and protection systems.**
- NBCTF Abhedya will provide realistic training to naval personnel in detection, protection against and decontamination of nuclear, biological and chemical agents.
- Abhedya will enhance the training capability of the Navy to deal with dangerous situations on warships, including an attack.
- **Abhedya is the maiden NBC simulator of the Indian Navy.**
- The facility will help to train personnel in tackling nuclear, biological or chemical attacks.

ABOUT INS SHIVAJI:

- **INS Shivaji is the Indian Navy's premier technical training facility.**
- **INS Shivaji is celebrating 2019-20 as the 'Platinum Jubilee Year'.**

- The Institute, which was commissioned as HMIS Shivaji in 1945, trains personnel of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and several friendly foreign countries.
- To commemorate the platinum jubilee of INS Shivaji, the Chief of Naval Staff also launched INS Shivaji website on the Indian Navy's portal and released the platinum jubilee logo with the theme 'Propelling the Indian Navy since 1945'.

REGISTRATION FOR YOUNG SCIENTIST PROGRAMME OPENED BY ISRO

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has opened the registration for recently launched Young Scientist Programme.

DETAILS:

- The programme also referred to as "YUva Vigyani KARYakram" (Yuvika) is aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications to the younger ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of Space activities.
- The Yuvika programme aims to catch them young by providing residential training of around two weeks duration during the summer holidays.

SELECTION FOR THE PROGRAMME:

- The selection for the programme is based on their performance from 8th Std marks.
- Those who have just finished 9th standard (in the academic year 2018-19) and waiting to join 10th standard (or those who have started 10th Std just now) are eligible for the programme and selection is based on both academic performance and extracurricular activities with special preference given to students from rural areas.
- A few seats are left for the programme and the interested students can register online with the link given in the ISRO official website between March 25 to April 3.
- Those interested can register through the link <https://yuvika.isro.gov.in/yuvika/>

CONSORTIUM OF IOC-BPRL ACQUIRES OIL BLOCK IN ABU DHABI

- The consortium of State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat PetroResources Ltd (BPRL), Urja Bharat Pte Ltd has acquired an oil block in Abu Dhabi, where the two will invest USD 170 million.

DETAILS OF THE ACQUISITION:

- Urja Bharat Pte Ltd has been awarded 100 per cent stake in the Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1 Concession.
- Both IOC and BPRL hold 50 per cent each in Urja Bharat Pte Ltd.
- Urja Bharat Pte Ltd will make an investment of USD 170 million for the exploration activities and the concession is awarded for the period of four years effective from the date of March 24, 2019.
- Onshore Block 1 covers an area of 6,162 square kilometres around Ruwais field and includes already discovered but undeveloped fields.

- This Onshore Block 1 is located in the Al Dhafra region around Ruwais City and the refining complex, including the coastal region to the west.
- There are two existing undeveloped oil and gas fields in the area, named Ruwais and Mirfa, which will be appraised by the consortium.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACQUISITION:

- The acquisition of the oil block by the consortium of State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat PetroResources Ltd (BPRL), Urja Bharat Pte Ltd marks the entry of IOC as a joint operator in the highly prospective UAE region.
- The acquisition is consistent with its strategic objective of adding high-quality exploration and production (E&P) assets to its existing upstream portfolio.

INDIAN AIR FORCE OFFICIALLY INDUCTS FOUR CHINOOK HEAVY-LIFT HELICOPTERS

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has formally inducted four Chinook heavy-lift helicopters made in the US.
- The Chinook helicopters ordered from Boeing in September 2015, were commissioned into the IAF's 126 Helicopter Unit.

ABOUT CHINOOK HELICOPTERS:

- Chinook is a multi-role, vertical-lift platform, twin-engine, tandem rotor helicopter which is used for transporting troops, artillery, equipment and fuel.
- Chinook would be deployed for humanitarian and disaster relief operations and in missions such as transportation of relief supplies and mass evacuation of refugees.
- The advanced multi-mission helicopter Chinook will provide the Indian armed forces with unmatched strategic airlift capability across the full spectrum of combat and humanitarian missions.
- Chinook helicopters can carry out military operations during the night too.
- Chinook helicopter gives India a tremendous capability, primarily in the inter-valley troop transfer since it eases the inter-valley troop transfer to take acclimatized troops from one valley to another valley.
- Chinook helicopters will give the IAF a quantum leap in terms of ability to transport cargo to precarious high altitude locations.

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE (IPL) WITNESSED ITS FIRST MANKADING IN HISTORY

- The mega celebration of Cricket, Indian Premier League (IPL) witnessed its first ever Mankading in its history in the match of Kings XI Punjab and Rajasthan Royals.

DETAILS:

- Rajasthan Royals opener Jos Buttler became the first victim of 'Mankading' in the history of the Indian Premier League (IPL).
- Kings XI Punjab skipper Ravichandran Ashwin dismissed the Rajasthan Royals opener Jos Buttler through mankading.

WHAT IS MANKADING?

- Mankading is a kind of dismissal witnessed in the game of cricket.
- Mankading is the situation where a bowler run out a non-striker by hitting the bails before bowling when the non-striker is outside the crease, with no warning.
- Even though it is a legal way of dismissing the batsmen, it is considered as unethical and against the spirit of the game.

REASON BEHIND THE NAME "MANKADING":

- The name Mankading is derived due to the fact that for the first time Indian bowler Vinoo Mankad had dismissed Bill Brown of Australia, by removing the bails when the latter was away from the crease during India's tour of Australia in 1947.
- Hence the dismissal is named after the Indian Cricketer Vinoo Mankad.

SHARDA PEETH CORRIDOR PROPOSAL IN POK APPROVED BY POK GOVERNMENT

- Pakistan government has approved a proposal to establish a corridor which would allow Hindu pilgrims from India to visit Sharda Peeth in the region of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Sharda Peeth Corridor will be the second corridor to be established after the Kartarpur Corridor which provides access to Gurudwara Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur in Pakistan.

ABOUT SHARDA PEETH:

- Sharda Peeth is an abandoned Hindu temple and an ancient centre of learning in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- The temple is dedicated to Goddess Sharada, the Hindu Goddess of learning.
- Sharada Temple is located at Sharada village and it is here that river Kishanganga and two streams Madhmati and Sargun meets.
- Goddess Sharada is the 'Kuldevi' of Kashmiri pandits.
- It is also one of the three famous tirthas, or holy sites, for Kashmiri Pandits, the other two being the Martand Sun Temple and the Amarnath Temple.
- Sharada Peeth is also revered as one of 18 Maha Shakti Peethas, or "Grand Shakti Peethas" which commemorates the location of fallen body parts of the Hindu Goddess Sati.

- Sharada Peeth is believed to be a foremost centre of learning Between the 6th and 12th centuries CE hosting scholars such as Kalhana, Adi Shankaracharya, Vairostana, Kumarajiva, and Thonmi Sambhota.
- The temple is about 130 Km from Srinagar and 150 km from Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK which is currently under the control of Pakistan.

RBI FINES PNB FOR VIOLATION OF COMPLIANCE IN SWIFT OPERATIONS

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fined Punjab National Bank (PNB) Rs 2 crore for violation of compliance with regulatory directions regarding SWIFT operations.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The RBI has toughened the stance against banks on all kind of regulatory norms post PNB fraud which put it to question the ability of the central bank.
- Earlier in March 2019, RBI had imposed a total monetary fine of Rs 8 crore on three banks- Karnataka Bank, United Bank of India and Karur Vysya Bank for not complying with the directions on the SWIFT messaging software.

WHAT IS SWIFT?

- SWIFT which stands for Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications is a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes.
- Under SWIFT, each financial organization has a unique code which is used for sending and receiving payments.
- SWIFT code is used when the transfer between two banks happens internationally as we use IFSC codes for the domestic transfers i.e. financial transactions within the geographical territory of India.

EXAMPLE:

- Suppose a customer of a Bank of America of New York Branch wants to send money to the ICICI bank account in Bengaluru, he can approach the Bank of America's New York Branch with the account number of ICICI to which the money needs to be deposited and ICICI Banks Swift Code for the Bengaluru branch.
- Bank of America's New York Branch will send the payment message to the ICICI Bengaluru branch over the secure SWIFT network.
- Once ICICI's Bengaluru branch receives the SWIFT message about the incoming payment, it will clear and credit the money to the account.

BOB TO DEVELOP AN AGRI-DIGITAL PLATFORM CALLED "BARODA KISAN"

Public sector Bank, Bank of Baroda has made an announcement about developing an agri-digital platform called "Baroda Kisan" to provide solutions for all major agricultural requirements.

ABOUT BARODA KISAN:

- The project aims to provide a holistic approach towards solving agricultural plights by means of providing reliable and customised information, inputs for use, the convenience of renting farm equipment and market linkage for sale of agri-produces.
- Bank of Baroda has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Six companies viz. Skymet Weather Services, Weather Risk Management Services, BigHaat, Agrostar India, EM3 Agri Services and Poorti Agri Services for the project.
- The agri-digital platform will be executed by IT Centre of Excellence (ITCoE) of Bank of Baroda in partnership with IBM India.
- Baroda Kisan initiative is part of the Bank of Baroda's initiative to keep up with the use of technology in the field of agriculture.
- Baroda Kisan aims to provide a dedicated platform for farmers to ease their requirements.

FACEBOOK LAUNCHES "CANDIDATE CONNECT" AND "SHARE YOU VOTED"

- Social Media giant, Facebook has launched two new India-specific tools viz. "Candidate Connect" and "Share You Voted" to boost civic engagement on its platform during the Lok Sabha elections 2019 that commence in April.
- Both these tools will be made available in 12 local languages.

ABOUT "CANDIDATE CONNECT":

- Candidate Connect feature will provide contesting candidates to upload 20-second videos in which they can introduce themselves and highlight how they will address outstanding challenges in their constituencies if elected to office.
- It will also let them highlight their past achievements.
- Voters will be able to watch these videos of candidates contesting from their respective constituencies and also from other constituencies.
- Candidate Connect feature aims to provide an opportunity for candidates to engage with the electorate.
- Facebook is working with a third-party non-partisan organisation to receive candidate names for the initiative.

ABOUT "SHARE YOU VOTED":

- Share You Voted feature will provide people with polling information and enable them to announce and celebrate the fact that they have voted.
- Facebook will send out reminders to people on polling dates in their constituencies under 'Share You Voted' tag.
- On Election Day, people can show that they voted by uploading a picture.
- Facebook will aggregate these pictures from users and prepare a collage of friends and show it on the timelines of people connected to them in a video format.
- The Share You Vote feature is aimed at amplifying the voting spirit.

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRES AN ANTI-SATELLITE (A-SAT) MISSILE

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India has successfully test-fired an anti-satellite (A-SAT) missile and shot down a live satellite.
- The project named as Mission Shakti was led by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and was aimed at strengthening India's overall security.

DETAILS ABOUT MISSION SHAKTI:

- DRDO-developed A-SAT system successfully destroyed a live satellite in the Low Earth Orbit.
- India is only the fourth country after the U.S., Russia and China to have the A-SAT technology.
- The PM Narendra Modi in his address has made clear that the intent of DRDO's "Mission Shakti" is to defend India's space assets and not to start an arms race in space.
- The indigenous development of the A-SAT technology will have many spin-offs that India can exploit for civilian commercial use.
- The test was carried out from the Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam Island launch complex off the coast of Odisha by the DRDO.
- Since the test was done in the lower atmosphere, whatever debris that is generated will decay and fall back onto the earth within weeks.
- Mission Shakti does not violate the 1967 Outer Space Treaty of which India is a signatory.
- The treaty prohibits only weapons of mass destruction in outer space, not ordinary weapons.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The ASAT test was not directed against any country.
- India's space capabilities neither threaten any country nor are they directed against anyone.
- But as an added advantage the capability achieved through the anti-satellite missile test provides credible deterrence against threats to our growing space-based assets from long-range missiles and proliferation in the types and numbers of missiles.

CROATIA HONOURS PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND WITH ITS HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD

- President Ram Nath Kovind has been honoured with Croatia's highest civilian award the Grand Order of the King of Tomislav.

DETAILS:

- The Indian President was honoured during his visit to Croatia to strengthen the bilateral ties.
- Croatia's highest civilian award the Grand Order of the King of Tomislav is awarded to heads of state for their important contribution towards the development of state relations between Croatia and their respective countries.
- President Kovind is the first-ever Indian head of state to visit Croatia.

ABOUT CROATIA:

- Croatia is located in the northwestern part of the Balkan Peninsula and its capital is Zagreb.
- Croatia was constituent of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia On 25 June 1991.
- Croatia is a republic governed under a parliamentary system is a member of the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, NATO, the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Union for the Mediterranean.

WORLD THEATRE DAY OBSERVED ON 27TH

- World Theatre Day is observed annually on March 27 with an aim to generate awareness about the importance of theatre arts, how they played an important role in the field of entertainment and the changes that theatre brings in the life.

ORIGIN OF WORLD THEATRE DAY:

- World Theatre Day was initiated by the International Theatre Institute in 1962.
- On World Theatre Day, the International Theatre Institute circulates messages issued by global celebrities in more than 50 languages, based on the theme "Theatre and a Culture of Peace"

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE:

- International Theatre Institute is the world's largest performing arts organization founded in 1948 by theatre & dance experts and UNESCO.
- The International Theatre Institute advances UNESCO's goals of mutual understanding and peace and advocates for the protection and promotion of cultural expressions, regardless of age, gender, creed or ethnicity.

FINTECH CONCLAVE 2019 ORGANIZED BY NITI AAYOG

- NITI Aayog organised a day-long FinTech Conclave 2019 in New Delhi.

DETAILS:

- The objective of the conclave was to shape India's continued ascendancy in FinTech, build the narrative for future strategy and policy efforts, and to deliberate steps for comprehensive financial inclusion.
- The conclave looked into various dimensions of the future of the FinTech, particularly the areas of:
 - Digital Onboarding of Customers and Merchants for Financial Inclusion.
 - Building Financial Products for Bharat.
 - Emerging Areas of FinTech.
 - Fast-tracking investment in FinTech industry.
 - Financial Inclusion of MSMEs.

FINTECH IN INDIA:

- Fintech or financial technology companies use technology to provide financial services such as payments, peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding, among others.
- India is one of the fastest growing fintech markets globally and it has been projected that \$1 trillion, or 60% of retail and SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) credit, will be digitally disbursed by 2029.
- The Indian fintech ecosystem is the third largest in the world and attracts nearly \$6 billion in investments since 2014.
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is encouraging banks to explore the possibility of establishing new alliances with fintech firms to further drive the agenda of financial inclusion through innovation.

RBI TO ISSUE GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP OF A REGULATORY SANDBOX

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will be issuing guidelines within two months for the fintech companies to test their new products on a small group of users before scaling up.
- This Regulatory Sandbox will help fintech companies to launch innovative products at a lower cost and in less time and enable fintech companies to conduct live or virtual testing of their new products and services.

WHAT IS A SANDBOX?

- A Sandbox is a framework set up by a regulator that allows FinTech start-ups to conduct live experiments in a controlled environment under supervision.

BENEFITS OF A REGULATORY SANDBOX:

- Regulatory Sandbox will provide a well-defined space for the companies to develop new products.
- Regulatory Sandbox allows for experimenting with their products and fintech solutions. In case of failure, the consequences would be contained and the reasons will be analysed for betterment.
- Regulatory Sandbox would benefit FinTech companies by way of reduced time to launch innovative products at a lower cost.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The RBI's working group on FinTech and digital banking in 2017 had recommended that a regulatory sandbox/innovation hub be introduced within a well-defined space and duration to experiment with FinTech solutions, where the consequences of failure can be contained and reasons for failure analysed.

DHANUSH HOWITZERS ARTILLERY GUNS INDUCTED INTO THE INDIAN ARMY

- Four indigenous Dhanush Howitzer guns were inducted into the Indian Army. The induction of Dhanush Howitzer guns gives major fire-power boost to the Indian Armed Forces.

DHANUSH HOWITZERS ARTILLERY GUNS:

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

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Dhanush makes outranged Pakistani artillery units more vulnerable to Indian counter-battery fire, while itself staying out of reach.
- Dhanush's longer range and high rate of fire will also make it useful in tackling localised Pakistan Army's offensives in sectors of the LoC where the terrain favours the Pakistani side.

TASHIGANG VILLAGE IN HP GETS THE DISTINCTION OF THE HIGHEST POLLING STATION

- Tashigang, a small Himachal Pradesh village has got the distinction of the highest polling station in the world.
- Tashigang is located at an altitude of 15,256 feet.

ABOUT TASHIGANG POLLING STATION:

- Tashigang polling station falls in Buddhist-dominated Lahaul-Spiti and forms part of the Mandi Lok Sabha seat.
- Tashigang is situated at about 29 km from the India-China border and the polling station covers two villages- Tashigang and Gete.
- The polling station has 48 voters, of which 30 are men and 18 women.
- **Even though Tashigang has all necessary facilities like power and water supply but lacks mobile connectivity and election officials will use a satellite phone during polls on May 19.**

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Initially, election officials had intended to set up the polling booth at Gete village but shifted it to Tashigang as the government school building there was not found safe.
- **Earlier the tiny settlement of Hikkim in Himachal Pradesh positioned at an altitude of about 14,400 ft, was the highest polling station in the country.**

PFC BECOMES INDIA'S SECOND LARGEST STATE-OWNED FINANCIAL FIRM

- State-Owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has completed the acquisition of majority stake in REC Ltd by transferring Rs 14,500 crore to the Government.

DETAILS:

- The merger of both the entities is expected to be completed in the next fiscal year in consultation with the government.
- This acquisition and merger will make PFC second-largest government-owned financial player in the country based on the current market capital after State Bank of India (SBI) and also PFC will be the third-highest profit-making financial player in India.

DETAILS OF THE ACQUISITION:

- PFC paid Rs 14,500 crore to the Union Government to buy a 52.63% stake in REC.
- This acquisition results in an \$80-billion lending giant by assets and potentially helps in faster resolution of stressed assets in India's power sector.
- The acquisition also helped the union government exceed its disinvestment target of Rs 80,000 crore for the fiscal year 2018-19.
- The consolidation will help in raising funds at competitive costs and lead to convergence of lending policies and rates.
- Further, it will also help in improving asset quality and impress upon state utilities to improve their performance.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- PFC taking over REC makes it a dominant player not only in the power sector but also in the entire financial market space.
- PFC's strategic importance to the government will further increase upon completion of the acquisition as the combined entity will become the biggest non-bank finance entity in which the government holds a controlling stake.
- Since PFC and REC have a robust presence in the consortium of lenders to power companies, the consolidation will help in the faster resolution of stressed assets.

LARUS LABS ENTERS WITH GLOBAL FUND FOR SUPPLY OF HIV TREATMENT

DRUGS

- Hyderabad-based pharma Larus Labs Limited has announced that it has entered into a strategic partnership agreement with Global Fund for a period of 3.5 years. The agreement gives Laurus Labs volume commitments for drugs from the Global Fund for the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

ABOUT "GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA":

- "Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria" was created in 2002 to raise, manage and invest the world's money to respond to three of the deadliest infectious diseases the world has ever known.
- The Global Fund was established with an objective to defeat these three diseases.
- AIDS, TB and malaria are all preventable and treatable.
- The tackling of these disease requires the commitment not only of world leaders and decision-makers but also of those working on the ground to help the men, women and children living with these diseases.
- The idea of Global fund was discussed in the G8 summit in Okinawa, Japan, in 2000 and the real commitment began to coalesce at the African Union summit in April 2001.
- The idea continued doing rounds at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session in 2001 and finally endorsed by the G8 at their summit in Genoa, Italy, in July 2001.
- The public sector contributions have constituted 95 per cent of all financing raised by the Global Fund and the remaining 5 per cent came from the private sector or other financing initiatives such as Product Red.
- Global Fund aims to attract, leverage and invest additional resources to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to support attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals established by the United Nations.

CREATION OF SIX ADDITIONAL POSTS IN THE NCLAT APPROVED BY THE UNION CABINET

- The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of six additional posts in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

DETAILS:

- The proposal involves the creation of three additional posts each for judicial members and technical members in the NCLAT.
- The creation of additional posts will help meet the mandate provided to NCLAT by the Finance Act 2017, the Companies Act 2013 and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMPANY LAW APPELLATE TRIBUNAL:

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was established under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- The current Chairperson of NCLAT is Hon'ble Justice Shri S.J. Mukhopadhaya, former Judge of the Supreme Court.
- NCLAT is the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).
- NCLAT hears appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) – as per the amendment brought to Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 by the Finance Act, 2017.

INDIA AND THE AFRICAN UNION SIGN MoU.

- India and the African Union have signed an MoU to initiate and strengthen the cooperation in the health sector in a structured and organised manner by establishing the India-Africa health sciences collaborative platform.

DETAILS:

- Following the deliberations at the first India-Africa Health Sciences Meet in 2016, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had taken up the mandate to initiate and strengthen the cooperation in the health sector in a structured and organized manner by establishing an India-Africa Health Sciences Collaborative Platform (IAHSP).
- The MoU signed aims to formalise this partnership by establishing a framework.
- The India-Africa Health Sciences Collaborative platform would focus on training and strengthening capacity of health professionals, researchers, regulators and industry staff, support research collaborations for developing preventive tools and improved diagnostics for diseases which are regional priorities in India and Africa.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN UNION:

- The African Union (AU) is a continental union consisting of 55 member states located in the continent of Africa.
- African Union was founded on 26 May 2001 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and launched on 9 July 2002 in South Africa.
- The African Union replaced the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established on 25 May 1963.
- The African Union was established for accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalisation.
- All UN member states based in Africa and on African waters are members of the African Union.

TURING AWARD 2018 AWARDED TO GEOFFREY HINTON, YANN LECUN AND YOSHUA BENGIO

- The Turing Award 2018 has been awarded to Geoffrey Hinton, Yann LeCun and Yoshua Bengio who have kickstarted an AI revolution by studying the learning abilities of large artificial neural networks.

DETAILS:

- The deep neural network uses layers of artificial neurons which mimics the structure of animal brains.
- Such AI is increasingly used in products that people use every day - from smart speakers to Facebook.
- This forms the backbone of Deep Learning.

WHAT IS DEEP LEARNING?

- **Deep learning involves building computer programs which mimics the structure of animal brains, with many layers of artificial neurons used for processing the data.**
- When the network of neurons digests data, each neuron has individual responses within each layer. These outputs are passed to the next layer until the network finally forms a decision or judgment about the input.
- This deep learning technology can be used to transcribe human speech or recognise a person's face in different photographs.

ABOUT THE TURING AWARD

- **Turing Award is an annual prize given by the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) for individuals who have contributed a lasting and major technical importance to the computer field.**
- **The Turing award is accompanied by a prize of US \$1 million, with financial support provided by Google.**
- **Turing Award is recognized as the highest distinction in computer science and is often referred to as the "Nobel Prize of computing".**

