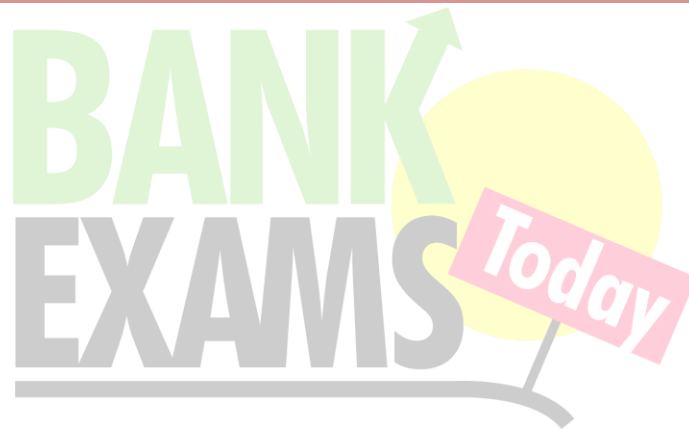


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Monthly GK Digest: June 2018



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MONTHLY GK DIGEST: JUNE 2018

DIA MIRZA LAUNCHED GAJ YATRA IN MEGHALAYA

- Dia Mirza, UN Environment's Goodwill Ambassador for India and brand ambassador of Wildlife Trust of India, launched Gaj Yatra from Tura, the principal town of Garo Hills.
- This initiative aims to secure 100 routes across the country for safe passage for elephants.

BACKGROUND

- In 2014, villagers in Meghalaya's Garo Hills set aside a part of their community-owned land to create village reserve forests, giving right of passage to elephants and to honour their gesture, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) inaugurated 'Gaj Yatra'.

OBJECTIVE AND INITIATIVE

- 'Gaj Yatra' is a "journey that celebrates India's national heritage animal by securing 100 elephant corridors in the country. Meghalaya homes four of these corridors including the Siju-Rewak corridor that some 1,000 elephants use to travel between the Balpakram and Nokrek National Parks in the State.
- The event involves taking an elephant mascot across districts frequented by jumbo herds for generating awareness among the people.

MANAGEMENT OF WIDOWS HOME: MINISTRY OF WCD SIGNS MOU WITH UP GOVERNMENT

- Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Uttar Pradesh for the management of Widow Home in Sunrakh Bangar, Vrindavan.

KEY FACTS

- The MoU which will be in force for two years and during this period of time Government of Uttar Pradesh shall be responsible for activities including setting up a mechanism for identifying beneficiaries, providing residential care to the widows, deploying staff as per norms with prescribed qualification and experience.
- The shelter which is a home for widows has a capacity of 1,000 inmates and it is built by Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- Uttar Pradesh government will visit and check the security staff periodically and monitor their performance. It also includes provisions for facilitating Aadhaar cards for all inmates and medical and geriatric care for them.

MINISTRY OF POWER LAUNCHES PRAAPTI APP FOR ELECTRICITY PAYMENTS

- Piyush Goyal, Minister of State for Power launched PRAAPTI App and web portal with an objective to bring transparency in power purchase transactions between Generators and Discoms.

REASON

- PRAAPTI that stands for Payment Ratification and Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators will capture the Invoicing and payment data for various long-term PPAs from the Generators. The web portal is designed to perform the same function

BENEFITS

- Knowing the payment details made by the Discoms to the power generation company and when they were made.
- Getting month-wise and legacy data on outstanding amounts of Discoms against power purchase
- Enabling the consumers to evaluate financial performance of their Discoms in terms of payments being made to the generation companies.
- Helping DISCOMs and GENCOs to reconcile their outstanding payments.
- Making transactions in the power Sector more transparent.

FACEBOOK TO OFFER DIGITAL LITERACY PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN

- Facebook and National Commission for Women (NCW) have joined hands to launch a digital literacy programme in association with the Cyber Peace Foundation (CPF). The sole purpose of this collaboration is to provide digital literacy to the women.

BACKGROUND

In the present era of internet, women are given more exposure to professional and entrepreneurial opportunities but this surge has led to the increasing number of cyber-crimes towards women. Cyber Peace Foundation (CPF) President Vineet Kumar said:

"Women are especially vulnerable to cybercrimes, false news, hate speech and other forms of cyber bullying which can have a disastrous effect on them,"

IMPLEMENTATION

- To protect women from falling into the trap of cyber-crimes, Facebook in collaboration with National Commission for Women and Cyber Peace Foundation (CPF) will conduct digital literacy campaign by conducting awareness programmes for 60,000 women in universities across major cities in Haryana, Delhi-NCR, Manipur, Sikkim, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu over a one-year period
- During these awareness programmes, women will be trained to understand the safe and responsible use of internet along with the knowledge to differentiate between credible and questionable information

ANDHRA PRADESH GETS SEPARATE STATE SYMBOLS

- After 4 years of bifurcation from its neighbouring state Telangana, Andhra Pradesh has received its official state symbols.

WHAT ARE THE STATE SYMBOLS?

- Neem: State Tree
- Black Buck: State Animal

- Jasmine: State Flower
- Rose-ringed Parrot: State Bird

DIFFERENCES OF TELANGANA AND ANDHRA'S STATE SYMBOLS

- **The State Bird:** Palapitta (Indian Roller or Blue Jay) was the state bird of undivided Andhra Pradesh but now Andhra has opted Rose-ringed Parrot while Telangana retained Palapitta as the state bird. Palapitta is now the state bird of Telangana, Odisha and Karnataka.
- **The State Animal :** AP has retained blackbuck (antelope cervicapra) or Krishna Jinka as the state animal. Telangana had dropped Krishna Jinka and adopted Jinka or spotted deer as its state animal.
- **The State Tree :** Neem (azadirachta indica) or Vepa Chettu, which was the state tree of undivided AP, has been retained in the divided state. The Telangana government had dropped vepa and adopted Jammi Chettu (prosopis cineraria), which has cultural significance in the region, as the state tree after the bifurcation.
- **The State Flower :** Though undivided AP had water lilly or Kaluva (nymphaeaceae) as the state flower, both divided AP and Telangana have dropped it. The Andhra Pradesh government has opted for jasmine as the state flower while Telangana government has adopted native Tangidi Puvvu (senna auriculata) as the state flower as it is widely used in the state's famous Bathukamma festival.

ENSEMBLE PREDICTION SYSTEMS (EPS): IMD'S NEW FORECAST MODEL

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) launched a new Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS) with an objective to offer more accurate and credible weather forecasts weather conditions down to the block level.

BENEFITS OF EPS

- The new system will accurately predict the rainfall in any particular helping farmers to farmers prevent damage to crops. Also, the new system will render help to the agencies in preparing for the harsh weather conditions. The system will overcome the problem of uncertainties in forecasts.
- With this new model, India joins the US with a model that predicts with a 12 km resolution. Only the 'European Center for Medium-Range Weather Forecast' of United Kingdom has a, better, nine-kilometre resolution.

ABOUT OF EPS

- Ensemble Prediction System is developed jointly by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting with the procurement of penta computers at a cost of Rs 450 crore.
- The system will help in generating newer forecasts predictions of a 12 km resolution compared to 23 kilometers in the earlier system. It involves the generation of multiple forecasts using slightly varying initial conditions. The accuracy level would be very high in the new system.

PROBLEM WITH OLD ENSEMBLING SYSTEM

- Indian Meteorological Department issues its forecast for the June-September monsoon season in April. These predictions are based which is based on the Ensemble Statistical Forecasting System that uses five predictors. The problem is that this method uses data from the past 100 years to come up with a forecast when many of the relationships between global climate factors have changed.

GOPABANDHU SAMBADIKA SWASTHYA BIMA YOJANA FOR JOURNALISTS

- The state government of Odisha has launched Gopabandhu Sambadika Swasthya Bima Yojana for working Journalists. The scheme is implemented from June 1, 2018.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In the first phase, as many as 3,233 working journalists will get health insurance coverage up to Rs 2 lakh a year. Five members of the journalists family will be covered under the scheme.
- The beneficiaries will get their health insurance card from the District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO) in their respective districts.
- The insurance coverage will be applicable for cashless treatment in government and private hospitals. The scheme will also cover the injuries and illness faced by journalists while performing their duties.

WHO WAS GOPABANDHU SAMBADIKA?

- Gopalbandhu Das was a prominent social worker, reformer, political activist, journalist, poet and essayist of Odisha. Odisha conferred him with the title of Utkalmani (jewel of Odisha). His contribution to journalism in the state was short but remarkable. He had launched a monthly literary magazine called Satyabadi through which he tried to educate the masses.

CENTRE FORMS CAUVERY WATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

- Adhering to the Supreme Court's verdict given on February 16, 2018, the central government of India has constituted Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.
- Ministry of Water Resources notified that a scheme was framed constituting the CMA and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee to give effect to the decision of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal as modified by the Supreme Court order.
- CMA has been created as per the Cauvery Management Scheme earlier framed by Centre and approved by Supreme Court.

CONSTITUTION OF THE CAUVERY WATER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

As per the official notification, the authority will comprise of

- (i) a chairman
- (ii) two whole time members appointed by centre
- (iii) part-time members appointed by four states
- (iv) secretary

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AUTHORITY

- Exercising power and discharge such duty for 'sufficient and expedient for securing compliance and implementation' of the Supreme Court order in relation to 'storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters'.

- Seeking help from the central government if it finds any government of the party states, namely Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Union territory of Puducherry do not cooperate in implementing the decision or direction of the tribunal,
- Taking action against any delay or shortfall is caused in the release of water on account of default of any party state
- Supervising operation of reservoirs and with the h regulation of water releases
- Supervising at the regulated release of water by Karnataka
- Determining the total residual storage in reservoirs at the beginning of the water year (June 1 each year)
- Advising the states to take suitable measures to improve water use efficiency, by way of promoting micro-irrigation (drip and sprinkler), change in cropping pattern, improved agronomic practices, system deficiency correction and command area development.
- Preparing an annual report covering the activities of the authority for the preceding year
- Meeting once in 10 days during the months of June and October when the south-west and north-east monsoon set in and again after the monsoon has set in
- The Centre will initially contribute a sum of Rs 2 crore for the functioning of the authority.

TAJ DECLARATION TO BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION ADOPTED IN AGRA

- With an objective to make the 500-metre area around the Taj Mahal plastic free, "Taj Declaration to beat plastic pollution" adopted ahead of World Environment Day (5 June)

PRESENCE

- The Declaration was adopted by Union Culture Minister Mahesh Sharma, who is also the Minister of State for Environment, United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director Erik Solheim and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador and actor Diya Mirza.

AIM

- The purpose of the declaration is to make the to rid Agra of plastic, in line with this year's theme for the World Environment Day -- "Beat Plastic Pollution".

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EVENT

- Before the adoption of the declaration, the Culture Ministry held a stakeholders' workshop focusing on the measures to curb plastic pollution around Taj Mahal
- Sharma, Solheim and Mirza also participated in a Clean Yamuna Programme on the river-front near the Taj.

BACKGROUND

- The WHO global air pollution database released in Geneva stated that Agra is the eighth most polluted city in India and due to this air pollution, Taj Mahal is turning yellow and green.
- Environmentalists and historians have long warned about the risk of soot and fumes from factories and tanneries dulling the ivory monument.
- Tiny insects from the drying Yamuna River into which the city pours its sewage crawl into the Taj Mahal, their excrement further staining the marble.

FINANCIAL LITERACY WEEK BEGINS WITH 'CUSTOMER PROTECTION' THEME

Reserve Bank of India launched Financial Literacy Week on June 4 with 'Customer Protection' as the theme. The event which will conclude on June 8 will aim at creating awareness among customers of banks about financial products and services.

FOUR CONSUMER PROTECTION MESSAGES

1. Know your Liability for unauthorized electronic banking transaction
2. Banking Ombudsman
3. Good practices for a safe digital banking experience
4. Risk Vs Return.

AIM

- Creating awareness among customers of banks about financial products and services, good financial practices and going digital
- Focusing on four consumer protection messages like 'know your liability' for unauthorised electronic banking transaction
- Teaching good practices for a safe digital banking experience.

ROLE OF BANKS

- The banks are directed to spread awareness among their customers using banners and posters that in case of an unauthorised digital transaction if a bank is informed within 3 days, the liability of the account holder is zero.
- Resolution of a complaint is to be done by the bank concerned within a period not exceeding 90 days from the date of receipt of the complaint, it said.
- Banks must create awareness about Banking Ombudsman scheme of the RBI
- Bankers, Financial Literacy Counsellors (FLCs) and other stakeholders will participate to create awareness

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

FAME BOOK

A booklet called FAME (Financial Awareness Messages) was released that offers basic financial literacy messages for the information of general public. It contains eleven institution/product neutral financial awareness messages, such as, documents to be submitted while opening a bank account (KYC), importance of budgeting, saving and responsible borrowing, maintaining a good credit score by repaying loans on time, banking at doorstep or at vicinity, knowing how to lodge complaints at the bank and the Banking Ombudsman, usage of electronic remittances, investing money only in registered entities, etc.

FINANCIAL LITERACY CONTENT

The RBI has developed tailored financial literacy content for five target groups' viz. Farmers, Small entrepreneurs, School children, Self Help Groups and Senior Citizens that can be used by the trainers in financial literacy programmes.

AUDIO VISUAL AIDS

Audio visuals have been designed for the benefit of general public on topics relating to Financial Literacy. These Audio visuals are on "Basic Financial Literacy", "Unified Payments Interface" and "Going Digital".

POSTERS

Two posters - UPI (Unified Payment Interface) and *99# (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) - explained these new concepts in digital payments space.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ASSOCHAM'S STUDY ON "ELECTRICALS & ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING IN INDIA"

- The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and a Japanese multinational NEC released a joint study on "Electricals & Electronics Manufacturing in India".
Key Highlights of the Study

INDIA CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE TOP FIVE ELECTRONIC E-WASTE GENERATORS.

- e-Waste generated in India is about 2 million TPA (tonnes per annum), the quantity that is recycled is about 4,38,085 TPA waste or e-waste producers in the world.
- The global volume of e-waste generated is expected to reach 52.2 million tons or 6.8 kg/ inhabitant by 2021
- Out of the total e-waste produced in 2016, only 20% (8.9 MT) is documented to be collected properly and recycled, while there is no record of the remaining e-waste.
- Maharashtra contributing a maximum of 19.8% e-waste in the country
- Tamil Nadu (13%) recycles about 52,427, Uttar Pradesh (10.1%) recycles about 86,130, West Bengal (9.8%), Delhi (9.5%), Karnataka (8.9%), Gujarat (8.8%) and Madhya Pradesh (7.6).
- Only 5% of India's total e-waste gets recycled due to poor infrastructure, legislation and framework
- Over 95% of e-waste generated is managed by the unorganised sector and scrap dealers in this market, dismantle the disposed of products instead of recycling it.
- The current rate of e-waste generation in India is 4.56 times greater than the annual e-waste processing capacity offered by the nation.

E-WASTE

- E-waste typically includes discarded computer monitors, motherboards, Cathode Ray Tubes (CRT), Printed Circuit Board (PCB), mobile phones and chargers, compact discs, headphones, white goods such as Liquid Crystal Displays (LCD)/ Plasma televisions, air conditioners, refrigerators and so on.

INDIA RECEIVES FIRST SHIPMENT OF CHEAPEST LNG FROM RUSSIA

- Indian received its first cheapest shipment of Liquefied Petroleum Gas from Russia's Gazprom. Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan was present to receive the shipment supplied from Gazprom in the carrier called LNG Kano under a 20-year import deal.

KEY POINT

- At current oil prices, the Russian rate is \$1.5 per one million British Thermal Units (mmBTU) less than the price at which Qatar, India's oldest supplier, delivered liquefied natural gas (LNG). Russian supplies are also cheaper by \$1-1.5 per mmBtu than the LNG sourced from Australia and the U.S.
- India will be importing \$1.5 billion worth of LNG from Russia every year and in total will import \$25 billion worth of gas in the next 20 years.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Russia is currently, world's largest crude oil & second largest gas producer in the world. India is world's third largest energy consumer and fourth largest importer of LNG.
- Qatar is the biggest supplier of Natural Gas to India.
- India's total natural gas production in 2017-18 was 32.64 billion cubic meter of which 22.01 BCM is offshore production while 10.63% is onshore production.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA' SANITARY NAPKIN

The government of India has launched the 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA', the Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin, under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

KEY POINTS

- The affordable sanitary napkins will now become available at over 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras functional in 33 States/UTs across India
- The product will be available at just Rs 2.50 per pad-- one-fourth of the cost of the branded sanitary pads
- Suvidha sanitary napkin was the first biodegradable napkin in the country that comes with much higher cost of at least Rs 8 per piece, takes 500 years to degrade in nature.
- Suvidha napkins degrade with soil within three to six months.

BACKGROUND

- According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16, about 58 percent of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons. Further, about 78 percent women in urban areas use hygienic methods of protection during menstrual period; only 48 percent women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins.

SECOND BI-MONTHLY MONETARY POLICY REVIEW FOR 2018-19

- The monetary policy committee of Reserve Bank of India has unanimously decided to increase the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. The decision came out with the announcement of the Second Bi-monthly monetary policy review.
- However, Reverse Repo rate has been adjusted to 6% and the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate remains to be 6.50%.
- Bank Rate is 6.50%
- The RBI retained the GDP growth for 2018-19 at 7.4 per cent.
- The RBI kept the retail inflation in the range of 4.7-5.1 per cent in the first half of 2019 and 4.4 per cent in the second half of the fiscal.

REASON BEHIND HIKED REPO RATE

- The reason behind hiked repo rate is considered to be the sharp rise in retail inflation which rose sharply to 4.6 per cent in April. The recent hike in crude prices & better GDP for last quarter of FY 18 suggests inflation trajectory may be on the higher side.

EFFECT OF INCREASED REPO RATE

- The increase in repo rate will affect those who have borrowed from banks because it is likely to lead to an increase in the interest they pay on loans. When the RBI increases the repo rate - which is the rate at which banks borrow money from the RBI - banks usually pass on the burden to the customers.

UNDERSTANDING REPO RATE, REVERSE REPO RATE, BANK RATE AND MSF

REPO RATE

- It is the rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks against the pledge of government securities whenever the banks are in need of funds. It is also called repurchase rate. Generally, these loans are for short duration up to 2 weeks. When RBI increases the repo rate, the move is generally called a tight monetary policy stance.
- Increase in Repo Rate → Increased interest Rates in Market

REVERSE REPO RATE

- It is the rate at which Reserve Bank of India borrows money from the bank by selling government securities. This monetary policy tool is used to control the money supply in the country. High reverse repo rate injects liquidity into the economic system by offering high profits to banks.

MARGINAL STANDING FACILITY

- Marginal Standing Facility enables the commercial banks to borrow overnight funds from RBI by depositing the government securities/bonds. RBI created MSF window in its Credit Policy of May 2011. This window was created for commercial banks to borrow from RBI in certain emergency conditions when inter-bank liquidity dries up completely and there is a volatility in the overnight interest rates

BANK RATE

- Also called discount rate is the rate of interest at which RBI lends money to domestic banks, often in the form of very short-term loans.

Repo rate	Reverse Repo Rate	Marginal Standing Facility
Repo rate is charged by RBI when commercial banks sell their securities.	Reverse repo rate is the rate at which RBI borrows money from banks within the country.	Marginal Standing Facility enables the commercial banks to borrow overnight funds from RBI
While high repo rate drains excess liquidity from the market as the banks have to pay high interest to obtain loan from RBI	high reverse repo rate injects liquidity into the economic system by offering high profits to banks.	Under MSF, banks can borrow funds up to one percentage of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).
The repo rate is always higher than the reverse repo rate	The reverse repo rate is always lower than the e repo rate	
repo rate is used to control inflation	reverse repo rate is used to control money supply in the market	It is used to control volatility in the overnight inter-bank rates.
Repo Rate involves selling securities to RBI with a motive to repurchase it in the future at a fixed rate of interest	reverse repo rate is mere transferring of funds from one bank account to RBI account.	The rate of interest on MSF is above 100 bps above the Repo Rate. The banks can borrow up to 1 percent of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) from this facility.
Present Repo Rate: 6.25%	Present Reverse Repo Rate: 6%	Marginal Standing Facility Rate: 6.50%

RBI TO SET UP PUBLIC CREDIT REGISTRY TO CURB BAD LOANS

- Considering the recommendations of Yeshwant M Deosthalee's high-level task force committee, The Reserve Bank of India has decided to set up a Public Credit Registry which will work as an information repository to collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers.

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC CREDIT REGISTRY

- The Public Credit Registry will help banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower.
- It will address information asymmetry, improve access to credit and strengthen the credit culture among consumers.
- It will help in addressing the bad loans problem facing the banking system
- It will help improve India's rankings in the World Bank's ease of doing business index

REASON BEHIND SETTING UP PCR

- Currently, there are multiple credit information repositories in India each having distinct objective and coverage. Within the RBI, CRILC is a borrower level supervisory dataset and there are four privately owned credit information company (CICs) operating in India.
- RBI has mandated all its regulated entity to submit credit information individually to all four CICs.
- It is noted in the report that credit information is spread over multiple systems in bits and pieces and information on borrowing from banks, NBFCs, market, ECBs, FCCBs, Masala Bonds, inter-corporate borrowing are not available in a single repository. This makes it very difficult to form a comprehensive view of total indebtedness of a borrower", it said, while making a case for expediting the setting up of the PCR.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF YESHWANT M DEOSTHALEE COMMITTEE

- The committee suggested that a comprehensive credit information repository covering all types of credit facilities (funded and non-funded) extended by all credit institutions is essential to ascertain the total indebtedness of a legal or natural person.
- The registry should facilitate linkage to related ancillary credit information available outside the banking system
- The registry should not include elements of judgment such as credit scoring services and had also called for strict privacy guidelines.

INDIA WITNESS DECLINE IN CURRENT MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO

- The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) figures revealed that India has seen a decline in its Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 139 to 130. The information was revealed by Union Health and Family Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda citing that India's MMR has significantly fallen from 167 in 2011-13 to the present figure of 130, as per the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) figures.
- It means that India has gone beyond the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) target of Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) of 139 by 2015.
- The decline has been most significant in EAG States & Assam from 246 to 188. Among the Southern States, the decline has been from 93 to 77 and in the Other States from 115 to 93.

BEST AND WORST PERFORMER

Top 5 States	MMR	Bottom Five States	MMR
Kerala	46	Assam	237
Maharashtra	61	Uttar Pradesh /Uttarakhand	201
Tamil Nadu	66	Rajasthan	199
Andhra Pradesh	74	Odisha	180
Telangana	81	Madhya Pradesh/Chhattisgarh	173

WHAT IS MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO?

- Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is derived as the proportion of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births reported under the Sample Registration System. It is one of the important measures of the quality of safe deliveries and maternal care.

WHAT ARE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)?

- In September 2000, 191 Members States of United Nations signed United Nations Millennium Declaration that consists of 8 goals to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women by the year 2015.

THE EIGHT MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ARE:

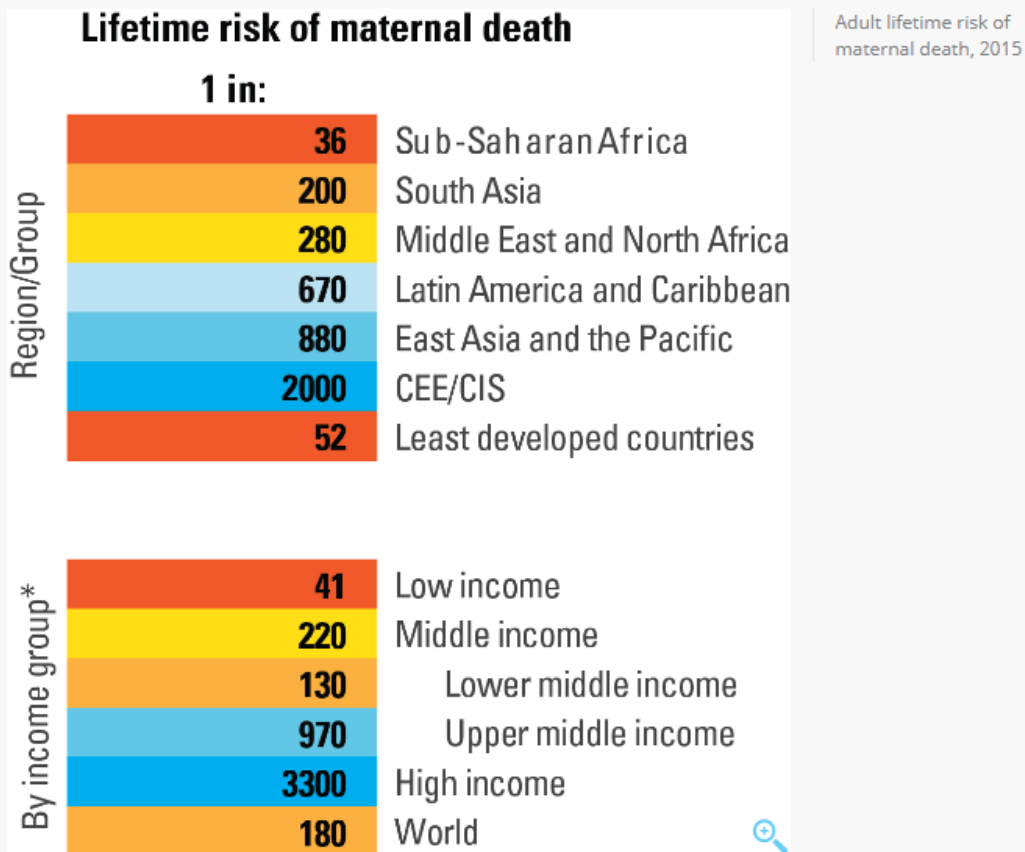
- to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- to achieve universal primary education;
- to promote gender equality and empower women;
- to reduce child mortality;
- to improve maternal health;
- to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases;
- to ensure environmental sustainability; and
- to develop a global partnership for development.

GLOBAL MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE

- Maternal mortality refers to deaths due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth. From 1990 to 2015, the global maternal mortality ratio declined by 44 per cent – from 385 deaths to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to UN inter-agency estimates. levels of maternal mortality remain unacceptably high in sub-Saharan Africa.



The lifetime risk of maternal death ranges from 1 in 3,300 in high income countries to 1 in 36 in sub-Saharan Africa



PRESIDENT APPROVES PROMULGATION OF THE INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE ORDINANCE 2018

- The President of India Sh. Ram Nath Kovind has given his approval to promulgate the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018.

BENEFITS

- Home Buyers:** The Ordinance provides recognizes home buyers as financial creditors. This would give them due representation in the Committee of Creditors and make them an integral part of the decision making process.
- MSMEs:** Ordinance empowers the Government to provide MSMEs with a special dispensation under the Code. It does not disqualify the promoter to bid for his enterprise undergoing Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP). Central Government is allowed further exemptions or modifications with respect to the MSME Sector, if required, in public interest.

CASE WITHDRAWAL

- In order to protect the sanctity of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process, the Ordinance lays down a strict procedure if an applicant wants to withdraw a case after its admission under IBC 2016. Withdrawal would be permissible only with the approval of the Committee of Creditors with 90 per cent of the voting share.
- Withdrawal will only be permissible before publication of notice inviting Expressions of Interest (Eoi).

OTHER KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The voting threshold has been brought down to 66 per cent from 75 per cent for all major decisions. The voting threshold for routine decisions has been reduced to 51% for the corporate debtor to continue as a going concern during the CIRP
- The existing Section 29(A) of the IBC, 2016 has also been adjusted to exempt pure play financial entities from being disqualified on account of NPA.
- Resolution application holding an NPA by virtue of acquiring it in the past under the IBC, 2016, has been provided with a three-year cooling-off period.
- The Ordinance provides for a minimum one-year grace period for the successful resolution applicant to fulfil various statutory obligations required under different laws.
- Ordinance include non-applicability of moratorium period to enforcement of the guarantee
- Liberalizing terms and conditions of interim finance to facilitate financing of the corporate debtor during CIRP period(Source PIB).

INDIA, WORLD BANK SIGN \$500 MILLION LOAN PACT FOR RURAL ROADS

- The Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$500 million loan agreement to provide additional financing for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) Rural Roads Project.
-
- Using this additional financial aid, India aims to construct 7,000 km of climate resilient roads, out of which 3,500 km will be constructed using green technologies. The loan has a 3-year grace period and a maturity of 10 years
- The additional financing will also fill the gender gap by creating employment opportunities for women in construction and maintenance.
- World Bank has supported Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana since its inception in 2004. It has invested over USD 1.8 billion in loans and credits. The investment is majorly focused on the economically weaker and hill states across North India -- Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Under PMGSY, about 35,000 km of rural roads are built benefitting about eight million people with access to all-weather roads.

CABINET APPROVES RS 8,500 CRORE BAILOUT PACKAGE FOR SUGAR INDUSTRY

- Union Cabinet chaired by has approved a Rs 8,500 crore bailout package for the sugar industry.
- Out of the total amount Rs 4,500 crore soft loan will be used for building ethanol production capacity and creating a 3 million tonne stockpile to soak up excess supply.

The government has taken the decision to tackle the problem of liquidity of sugar mills stressed by the accumulation of huge cane price arrears of farmers.

PM has approved the following measures involving total amount of about Rs. 7000 crore:

Creation of buffer stock of 30 LMT of sugar for one year and to incur an estimated expenditure of Rs.1175 crore for this purpose.

- The reimbursement under the scheme would be made on a quarterly basis which would be directly credited into farmers' account on behalf of mills against their cane price dues.
- Fixation of the minimum selling price of white sugar would be based on Fair Remunerative Price (FRP) of cane and minimum conversion cost of white/refined sugar. The minimum selling price of white/refined sugar shall be initially fixed at Rs.29/kg which can be revised by DFPD subsequently based on the revision of FRP etc.
- To augment capacity through up-gradation of existing distilleries attached to sugar mills by installing incineration boilers and setting up new distilleries in sugar mills; government will bear interest subvention of maximum Rs.1332 crore over a period of five years including moratorium period of one year on estimated bank loan amounting to Rs.4440 crore to be sanctioned to the sugar mills by the banks over a period of three years for which DFPD would formulate a detailed scheme in this regard. This would help diversion of sugar during surplus phase to reduce excess inventories.

IMPORTANT STEPS TAKEN BY GOI

In order to stabilize sugar production at a reasonable level with a view to improve the liquidity position of the mills thereby enabling them to clear the cane price arrears of farmers, Central Government has taken the following steps in past four months:

- (i) The custom duty on import of sugar is increased from 50% to 100% to check any import to the country.
- (ii) Stock holding limits on producers of sugar for the months of February and March, 2018 were imposed to stabilise the domestic sugar price.
- (iii) Custom duty on export of sugar has been withdrawn to encourage sugar industry to start exploring the possibility of export of sugar.
- (iv) Mill-wise Minimum Indicative Export Quotas (MIEQ) of 20 LMT of sugar was allocated for export during Sugar Season 2017-18.
- (v) Duty Free Import Authorization (DFIA) Scheme was reintroduced in respect of sugar to facilitate and incentivize export of surplus sugar by sugar mills.
- (vi) Financial assistance to sugar mills @ Rs.5.50/qtl of cane crushed was given during 2017-18 Sugar Season to offset the cost of cane.

BABA KALYANI HEADS GROUP TO STUDY SEZ POLICY

The Government of India has formed a group of to study the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Policy of India. The group will be headed by Baba Kalyani and it will submit its report in three months

RESPONSIBILITIES

The group will

- Evaluate the SEZ policy
- Suggest measures to cater to the needs of exporters

- Make the SEZ policy WTO compatible
- Suggest course correction in SEZ policy
- Make a comparative analysis of the SEZ scheme and
- Link the SEZ policy with other similar schemes.

MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

- Chairman: Shri Baba Kalyani, Chairman, Bharat Forge
- Ravindra Sannareddy
- Neel Raheja
- Arun Misra
- Anita Arjundas
- Ajay Pandey
- Srikanth Badiga,
- Principal Secretaries (Industries) of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu & Karnataka
- Additional Secretary (In-charge of SEZ Division, Department of Commerce)
- Director (SEZ), Department of Commerce
- Coordinating Officer

SEZ POLICY

- The Policy was first implemented from April 1, 2000 with an aim to enhance foreign investment and provide an internationally competitive and hassle free environment for exports.
- The Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 was passed by Parliament in 2005 and the Special Economic Zone Act was enacted. The Act provides the umbrella legal framework, covering all important legal and regulatory aspects of SEZ development as well as for units operating in SEZs.

WHAT IS A SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE?

- A special economic zone (SEZ) is an area in which business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country.

Their aims include

- increased trade
- increased investment
- job creation and effective administration.

SEZS LOCATED IN INDIA

At present, there are eight functional SEZs in India:

- Santa Cruz (Maharashtra)
- Cochin (Kerala)
- Kandla and Surat (Gujarat)
- Chennai (Tamil Nadu)
- Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)
- Falta (West Bengal)

- Noida (Uttar Pradesh)
- Indore (Madhya Pradesh)

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE LAUNCHED KRISHI KALYAN ABHIYAN

- With an objective of doubling farmers' income by 2022, Ministry of Agriculture in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan from 1st June, 2018 till 31st July, 2018.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This programme will help, assist and advice farmer on the ways of improving farming techniques and increase their income.
- The Krishi kalyan Abhiyaan will be undertaken in 25 Villages with more than 1000 population each in Aspirational Districts identified in consultation with Ministry of Rural Development as per directions of NITI Ayog. In districts where a number of villages (with more than 1000 population) is less than 25, all villages will be covered.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Krishi Vigyan Kendra of that district will be responsible for overall coordination and implementation in the 25 villages of a district. 111 officers have also been made in-charge of one district each for overall coordination and field level monitoring.

ACTIVITIES UNDER KRISHI KALYAN ABHIYAN

- Distribution of Soil Health Cards to all farmers
- 100% coverage of bovine vaccination for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in each village
- 100% coverage of Sheep and Goat for the eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)
- Distribution of Mini Kits of pulses and oilseeds to all
- Distribution of Horticulture/Agro-Forestry/Bamboo plant @ 5 per family(location appropriate)
- Making 100 NADAP Pits in each village
- Artificial insemination saturation
- Demonstration programmes on Micro-irrigation
- Demonstrations of integrated cropping practice.

ANDHRA PRADESH LEADS THE WAY TO CLINICAL HYGIENE!

- Infections caused due to used syringes is an unfortunate clinical reality.
- Every year numerous people get infected from injections given to them by clinics using used syringes.
- Despite repeated warnings and actions taken by the government against unlawful clinical practioners this menace still lingers in our society.
- But Andhra Pradesh has taken the lead in opting a way out of this problem completely.
- From World Hepatitis Day on July 28th 2018, Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will move to use "auto-disable syringes" for all clinical purposes.

- It must be noted that Andhra Pradesh will be the first state in the country to make this move worth a warm applause.
- Auto-disable syringes were already introduced in India in the past during the mass immunisation campaign.
- But astonishingly Andhra Pradesh was the first state to introduce this even before the Central Government decided to make it mandatory for all immunisation injections which clearly shows the level of awareness that Andhra Pradesh has when it comes to the critical issues of Public Health & Hygiene.
- Its time that the Central Government makes the use of auto-disable syringes mandatory nation-wide, not just for immunisation injections but for complete clinical therapeutic use.

Meanwhile: Great going Andhra Pradesh, keep it up !

DEADLINE TO ACHIEVE DAM SAFETY EXTENDED TILL 2020

- The Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project(DRIP) is an initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India, with World Bank financial assistance, to improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner.
- But it seems that the project will not be completed by its earlier deadline i.e June 2018.
- The meeting of Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) has revised the cost and deadline of World Bank funded DRIP.
- The cost estimate for the project has been revised to Rs 3466 crore from Rs 2100 crore that was proposed earlier and a new deadline of June 2020 has been introduced .
- In its first phase that was launched in 2012 DRIP had 223 dams in seven states narrowed down for rehabilitation and improvement.
- The second phase of the ongoing DRIP is expected to cover 18 states.
- In the original proposed cost of Rs 2100 crore, the State component was Rs 1968 crore and Central component was Rs 132 crore.

The single most important objective of this project is:

- To rehabilitate ageing dams in the country that need immediate attention to ensure their structural safety & operational efficiency.

OTHER OBJECTIVES OF DRIP ARE:

- Strengthened institutional capacity
- Robust project management
- Increased awareness on Dam Safety issues
- Incorporating latest cutting edge technologies and experience to arrive at feasible solutions.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) INFLOW INCREASED TO US \$61.96 BILLION IN 2017-18

- Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu said that FDI inflows into India rose to around 3% to US \$ 61.96 billion in 2017-18 compared to US \$60.08 billion in 2016-17 .
The Minister also said that during the four years of the Modi government, foreign inflows jumped to US\$ 222.75 billion from US \$ 152 billion in the previous four-year period.

- However, this statement from the Minister comes in response to another news that is contradictory to this news.
- According to an UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) report, "foreign direct investment (FDI) to India decreased to \$40 billion in 2017 from \$44 billion in 2016, while outflows from India, the main source of investment in South Asia, more than doubled."
- It must also be noted that the government has not arrived at a deal with the iPhone & iPad manufacturer Apple while Apple has asked for certain concessions for setting up manufacturing unit in the country.
- Another major US company in the electric vehicle sector: Tesla is not clear in whether to make an investment in India or not.
- The US-based electric vehicle maker recently cited a challenging environment for not making it to the Indian market.
- Foreign inflows play a significant role in India's growth as India needs large scale investments to make progress in developing its infrastructure such as ports, airports, highways etc.

COUNTRIES FROM WHICH INDIAN RECEIVE MAJOR FOREIGN INFLOWS ARE:

- Mauritius
- Singapore
- Japan
- Netherlands
- United States
- Germany
- France
- UAE

PRESIDENT CROWNS THE QUEEN PINEAPPLE OF TRIPURA AS STATE FRUIT

- Tripura is honoured by none other than the "Queen" variety of pineapple that is grown there.
- President Ram Nath Kovind recently announced that the famous Queen variety of pineapple will be Tripura's State Fruit. The President looks at Queen Pineapple as a fruit that is capable of connecting Tripura with opportunities in the world trade arena and hopes that the fruit will garner admirers in multiple countries including neighbouring Bangladesh.
- This confidence of the President in the State Fruit comes after the first consignment of one tonne Queen Pineapples was exported from Tripura to Dubai, earlier this month. Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb flagged-off the consignment sent on a SpiceJet aircraft via New Delhi.
- We hope that this delicious fruit from Tripura earns well deserved acceptance from all over the world and add a shining star to Tripura and in turn India's unique offering to the world !

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION: RURAL SANITATION COVERAGE CROSSES THE 85% MARK

- The Swachh Bharat Mission has perhaps been the most talked about public welfare initiative of the current government.
This largest behavior change programme in the world has resulted in raising the rural sanitation coverage of India to a whopping 85% !
- In this ongoing momentous task, through mobilization of rural communities:

- 7.4 crore toilets have been built across rural India, which in-turn resulted in over 3.8 lakh villages and 391 districts getting declared as Open Defecation Free (ODF).
- The fact that under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), sanitation coverage has increased to more than double the coverage at the time of the launch of the Mission, makes it extremely significant and noteworthy.
- A number of surveys conducted by both independent and government agencies in the recent times have also concurred that there is a considerable increase in the usage of toilets after the launch of this mission.

We wish a 100% success to this noble and much needed cause!

THE 18TH SCO SUMMIT IN QINGDAO CONCLUDES WITH A DECLARATION TO COMBAT TERRORISM

- The recently concluded 18th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in the coastal city of Qingdao in the Shandong Province of China was India's first SCO summit as a "Full-Time Member", a status that India got at the Astana SCO summit in Kazakhstan in June last year.
- A key take away that came from this 18th SCO summit was the adoption of the "Qingdao Declaration" that calls for a comprehensive 3-year plan to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- This crucial declaration was adopted by the leaders of India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan.
- The declaration does not limit itself to combating terrorism but covers under its progressive umbrella numerous other issues such as: "Implementation of treaty on long term good neighbourliness, friendship and co-operation."
- While praising Afghanistan President Ghani for taking courageous steps for peace, PM Modi said Afghanistan was "an unfortunate example" of terrorism.
- It must be noted that the SCO has a Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in place that works to achieve regional stability & security.
- RATS is based in Tashkent, encourages cooperation among the members to exchange information and achieve the common goal of curbing terrorism and dealing with security challenges.
- Another highlight of this summit was India's clear and unambiguous stand on China ambitious "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) programme.
- India was the only member state that did not give the SCO its consent on BRI.
- PM Modi in his speech said that India "welcomes new connectivity projects that are inclusive, sustainable, transparent, and those that respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations".
- He also stressed on the fact that "connectivity with SCO and neighbours is a priority for India".
- But since the proposed BRI passes through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, India will not endorse the project as it is against its sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- All in all it was a productive summit with the most important take away for China being India's support in the on going trade dispute that China is facing with the Trump administration.

INDIA, U.S AND JAPAN FLEX THEIR NAVAL MUSCLES IN THE PACIFIC

- The 22nd edition of the Malabar exercise has kicked off on June 7 and will finish on June 16 2018.
- This naval exercise will take place off the coast of Guam in the Philippine Sea and will witness war ships, aircrafts and personnel from the three countries participating in it, namely: India, United States and Japan.
- This trilateral naval exercise is of paramount significance given the recent tensions in the Pacific region because of China's increased activities of building artificial islands in the South China Sea and deploying submarines into the Indian Ocean.

- China's "String of Pearls" strategy to counter India in the waters is well known and poses a security risk to India's security in the waters ranging from The Bay of Bengal to the Indian Ocean to the Arabian Sea.
- Also the continuous rightful opposition of many nations including the three participating nations in the Malabar exercise to China's claim in the South China Sea, makes this exercise very crucial.
- This exercise will also add momentum to another initiative of the U.S from the past that the U.S calls: "Contain China Policy".
- The thing that brings special glory to India from this naval exercise is the fact that this is the first exercise since the US renamed its Hawaii-based Pacific command to as the Indo-Pacific Command.
- According to Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral G Ashok Kumar, this 22nd edition of the Malabar exercise will be performed with an aim to deal with threats and challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

The presence of following Indian Naval Ships will be seen in the exercise:

- Sahyadri
- Shakti
- Kamorta

Also this exercise will witness the first overseas deployment of The Indian Navy's P 8I Surveillance and Anti-Submarine Warfare Aircraft.

FORMER NIA CHIEF SHARAD KUMAR WILL LEAD THE CVC AS THE VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER

- The Central Vigilance Commission, on Sunday the 10th of June 2018, got Former NIA Chief Sharad Kumar as its Vigilance Commissioner.
- Kumar is a 62 year old, 1979-batch IPS officer of the Haryana cadre retired last year in September after heading the National Investigation Agency.
- He was at the helm of the NIA that is an anti-terror probe organisation for more than four years.
- His appointment as the Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission comes for a term of four years or till he attains the age of 65.
- To put it in other words: Sharad Kumar's tenure will come to an end in October 2020.
- It is interesting to note that the post of the Vigilance Commissioner in the CVC was lying vacant since February this year.

To throw some light on the top most hierarchical structure of the CVC, it comprises of:

- Central Vigilance Commissioner
- And two Vigilance Commissioners.
- At present, K V Chowdary is the Central Vigilance Commissioner and T M Bhasin is the other Vigilance Commissioner.
- With the induction of Sharad Kumar as the Vigilance Commissioner the structure seems complete.

SUNIL CHHETRI SCORES A MILESTONE !

- Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri on Sunday became the joint second highest international goal scorer among active players along with Argentine superstar Lionel Messi.

- The splendid Indian football player added this to his list of accolades by making his total goal count to 64 against Kenya in the "Intercontinental Cup Summit" in Mumbai.
- Prior to this match, Chhetri's strike count was 62 and post-match he equalled that of Lionel Messi.
- This 33-year-old Indian sports sensation played his 102nd international match and made the country proud!
- To this date, Sunil Chhetri and Lionel Messi hold a joint 21st rank in the list of all-time goal scorers.
- Another fact that is incredibly interesting is that the Indian footballer is just one goal behind Didier Drogba: former Chelsea and Ivory Coast player who has a total goal count of 65 from 104 matches.
- Further brainstorming into statistics leads us to know that Chhetri has scored 64 goals in 102 matches which brings his goals per match count to 0.62 while Messi has scored 64 goals from 124 matches which brings Messi's goals per match count to 0.52
- Sunil Chhetri has also become the second Indian football player to have played 100 international matches after former Indian skipper Bhaichung Bhutia.
- Clearly the Indian captain has put the football on fire!

MAURITIUS TO HOST 11TH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Mauritius is going to host the 11th World Hindi Conference (also known as the "Vishwa Hindi Sammelan" in the Hindi language).
- The event be organised by the Government of Mauritius & the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
- The Ministry of External affairs organises the World Hindi Conference every three years.
- This 11th Conference will float the theme of "Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti".
- The event will be held from August 18 to 20, 2018 at the Swami Vivekanand International Convention Centre in scenic city of Port Louis, Mauritius.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS CONFERENCE:

- To provide a much needed platform to numerous scholars, writers and laureates of Hindi language from all over the world to lend their much needed contribution to this Indian language.
- To discuss the Classical as well as the Modern elements of Hindi language.
- To layout guidelines for promoting Hindi as language of globalisation given its increasing use by India at the United Nations.
- Emphasize on the global reach of Hindi through movies and appreciate the role of Bollywood in that.
- To sum it up, the aim of organising this event is to bring an increase in the popularity of Hindi language, globally.
- Participants, including guests and delegates, can be registered only through an online process.
- The registration fee for general participant in Rs. 5,000 and for students, it's Rs. 1,000. The last day to register is July 15, 2018.

LET'S LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE:

FIRST WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Nagpur, India
- 10-12 January, 1975

SECOND WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Port Louis, Mauritius

- 28-30 August, 1976

THIRD WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- New Delhi, India
- 28-30 October, 1983

FOURTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Port Louis, Mauritius
- 02-04 December, 1993

FIFTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
- 04-08 April, 1996

SIXTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- London, U.K.
- 14-18 September, 1999

SEVENTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Paramaribo, Republic of Suriname
- 06-09 June, 2003

EIGHTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- New York, America
- 13-15 July, 2007

NINTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Johannesburg, South Africa
- 22-24 September, 2012

TENTH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

- Bhopal, India
- 10-12 September, 2015

SUNIL MEHTA COMMITTEE FORMED FOR FASTER RESOLUTION OF STRESSED ASSETS

- Union Finance Minister Piyush Goyal has formed a committee under the chairmanship of Sunil Mehta.

- The committee has been set up to examine the setting up of an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) and/or Asset Management Company (AMC) for faster resolution of stressed assets involving multiple Public Sector Bank
- Bank of Baroda Chief Shri Jayakumar will formulate a strategy regarding PSBs taking over good loans of banks under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA).

STRESSED ASSET

- Stressed Asset is a sum of Non-Performing Asset, Restructured Loans and Written off Assets. Therefore, to understand stressed assets, we must have an idea about NPAs, Restructured Loans and Written off assets

NON-PERFORMING ASSETS

- If the interest/installment of principal remains overdue for 90 days then it is considered as Non-Performing Assets

RESTRUCTURED LOANS

- A new loan that replaces the outstanding balance on an older loan, and is paid over a longer period, usually with a lower installment amount.

WRITTEN OFF ASSETS

- When the bank or lender doesn't count the money borrower owes to it, its called written off asset. The written-off loans are compensated through some other way. There is no meaning that the borrower is pardoned or got exempted from payment.

NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR CONFERS NATIONAL AWARDS ON BEST PERFORMING SELF HELP GROUPS

- Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Mines Minister, Narendra Singh Tomar conferred the National Awards on Best Performing Self Help Groups (SHGs) under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).
- Total 34 SHGs were awarded a cash award of Rs. 1,00,000 along with a commemoration and a certificate of appreciation.
- Tomar also launched the NRLM Best Practices Compendium and Self Help Group products catalogues. The compendium of 24 select Best Practices under DAY-NRLM will facilitate cross-learning from successful implementation and innovation among the State Missions.
- A catalogue of SHG products was also released which has a range of products made by the SHGs like handmade products, displaying various traditional arts, handlooms – silk and cotton fabrics, applique works etc., handicrafts – wood and clay products, jute items, tribal jewelry, food products, furniture, leather products etc. with the contact numbers of the SHGs and the price range.

PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY REPLACES ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT UNEMPLOYMENT SURVEY

- The government of India has decided to replace Annual Employment Unemployment Survey by Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) prepared by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

- The decision is taken after considering the recommendations of Task Force on Employment, chaired by Dr Arvind Panagariya

BENEFITS OF PERIODIC LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

- Collecting annual data on employment-unemployment in the rural sector
- Collecting quarterly data on employment-unemployment on urban sector based on a larger sample size
- Two Surveys of Labour Bureau
- Labour Bureau conducts two major surveys on employment scenario

ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT-UNEMPLOYMENT SURVEY (EUS)

Five Annual Employment-Unemployment Surveys have been conducted and released by Labour Bureau. The field work of Sixth Annual Employment Unemployment Survey (2016-17) is to be completed by September 2018.

QUARTERLY EMPLOYMENT SURVEY (QES)

The Quarterly Employment survey (New Series) is carried out with an objective to measure the relative change in employment situation over successive quarters for the establishments having 10 or more workers.

LIMITATIONS OF QES

- (i) It collects data of the 6th Economic Census (January, 2013 - April, 2014), therefore, does not include the new units which have been added after April 2014 and
- (ii) It only takes into account the enterprise having more than 10 workers and does not cover employment in establishments having less than 10 workers

CONSTITUTION OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

- The government has set up a technical committee under former chief statistician TCA Anant to bring in more transparency in jobs data calculation and presentation

PIYUSH GOYAL LAUNCHED RAIL MADAD AND MENU ON RAILS APPS

- Piyush Goyal, Minister of Railways & Coal has recently launched two mobile apps In line with Digital India initiatives.

RAIL MENU APP

- IRCTC has developed Rail Menu app with an aim to create awareness among the passengers for the items served to them on their Rail Journey.

FEATURES OF "MENU ON RAILS"

- Displays menu served on all type of trains
- For Mail/Exp trains, food items are covered in 4 categories namely : Beverages, Breakfast, Meals and A-La-Carte
- A-La-Carte includes list of 96 items

- Displays the menu to be served in Rajdhani/ Shatabdi/ Duronto
- Food item rates displayed are inclusive of taxes to avoid any confusion on taxation.
- Supports Android and iOS platforms
- Website version available

RAIL MADAD (MOBILE APPLICATION FOR DESIRED ASSISTANCE DURING TRAVEL)

- This app is launched to accelerate the passenger grievance redressal. Railway Passenger Grievance Redressal and Management System comprises many novel features including 'Rail Madad'. The app can be used to register complaints and it supports real-time feedback on the status of redressal of their complaints.

FEATURES OF RAIL MADAD APPLICATION

- It registers a complaint with minimum inputs from passengers, issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action. The action taken on complaint is also relayed to passenger through SMS, thus fast-tracking the entire process of redressal of complaints through digitisation.
- It displays various helpline numbers and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step
- The data analysis would also generate trends on various performance parameters of a selected train/station like cleanliness, amenities etc thus making managerial decision more precise and effective.
- Hierarchy based dashboard/reports will be available for management at Division /Zonal/Railway board level and sent through auto email to every concerned officer weekly

10 NEW SWACHH ICONIC PLACES LAUNCHED UNDER SWACHH BHARAT MISSION

Ten new iconic sites have been taken up under Phase III of the flagship project Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) of the Swachh Bharat Mission. The third phase of SIP was launched at Mana village which is situated close to the Badrinath temple in Uttarakhand.

THESE SITES ARE

- Raghavendra Swamy Temple, Andhra Pradesh
- Hazardwari Palace, West Bengal)
- Brahma Sarovar Temple, Haryana)
- VidurKuti, Uttar Pradesh)
- Mana village, Uttarakhand)
- Pangong Lake, J&K)
- Nagvasuki Temple, Uttar Pradesh
- ImaKeithal/market, Manipur
- Sabarimala Temple, (Kerala)
- Kanvashram, Uttarakhand)

These 10 places will witness the special Sanitation work which is already in full swing in the Special Iconic Places of Phase I and II.

Swachh Iconic Places initiative is being coordinated by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in association with the Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and the concerned State governments.

ACTIVITIES UNDER SWACHH ICONIC PLACE DRIVE

- Improved sewage infrastructure
- Drainage facilities
- Installation of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)
- Improved sanitation facilities
- Water vending machines (Water ATMs)
- Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) set-up
- Structure restoration, roads maintenance, lighting arrangements
- Beautification of parks
- Better transport facilities

12 JUNE 2018: WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

- Nothing can bring more disdain on the civilized society than the most unfortunate reality of child labour. We boast of modern technologies that nobody would have imagined a few decades ago. But this development has certainly not proved to be prosperous for humanity at large.
- The barometer of measuring happiness in any society is undoubtedly the state in which the children in that society live. But in this amazing journey of progressive changes in technology, somewhere we lost on the front of ensuring a child the future he/she deserves.
- Back in 2002, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour to bring this unfortunate reality to the attention of the world in the hope of garnering much needed efforts & actions to eliminate it.
- Every year on June 12, this world day makes an effort to bring governments, employers and workers organizations, civil society, as well as millions of people from all over the world to highlight the plight of child labourers and what can be done to help them get out of this living hell.
- In 2015, the world leaders adopted the "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" as a global commitment to end child labour.
- Statistically speaking, a target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls on the global community to: "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms."
- This day will also be marked as the World Day for Safety and Health at Work with an aim of the global need to improve the safety and health of young workers and end child labour.
- Ending child labour is not at all an issue that humanity can afford to put on the back burner or act in a way that is not backed by absolute resolve.
- Its high time we take our children out from this living hell of child labour and give our future generations, a world really worthy of being called humane.

CREDIT ENHANCEMENT FUND OF RS 500 CRORE IS COMING!

- A credit enhancement fund of Rs 500 crore that was first announced in the Union Budget for fiscal year 2016-17 is finally all set to be unveiled by the government.
The fund is expected to see the light of the day by next month, that is July 2018.
- The government expects the fund to facilitate infrastructure investments by insurance and pension funds.
- With the infrastructure projects getting a credit enhancement, the bonds issued by infrastructure companies will witness an upgrade in terms of their credit ratings and thereby attract investments from investors like pension and insurance funds.
- Kumar Vinay Pratap, Joint Secretary (Infrastructure, Policy and Finance), Ministry of Finance said that the fund will be sponsored by IIFCL (India Infrastructure Finance Company) and it will operate as a non-banking finance company.
- The Joint Secretary also pointed out that there is a mismatch between the bond ratings of bonds floated by infrastructure finance firms and the mandatory requirements by the regulatory agencies for investments by the long-term pension and insurance funds.
- The bonds floated by infrastructure finance firms are "BBB" rated whereas regulatory agencies mandate a rating of at least "AA".
- Following will be the stakeholders in the NBFC:
 - IIFCL (it will hold a 22.5% stake).
 - The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (wants to hold a 10% stake).
 - SBI (stake percentage not known at this point).
 - Bank of Baroda (stake percentage not known at this point).
 - LIC (stake percentage not known at this point).

AN "EPIC" DISCOVERY BY INDIAN PRL SCIENTISTS

- A team of scientists from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad have made a sensational achievement by spotting for the first time a distant planet six times bigger than Earth and revolving around a Sun-like star about 600 light years away.
- Both the planet and the star have been named EPIC.
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced that "With this discovery, India has joined a handful of countries which have discovered planets around stars".
- ISRO is an arm of the Department of Space who supports the PRL.
- The PRL conducts thorough researches in areas of physical sciences including astronomy and space.

A SPECTROGRAPH

- A Spectrograph is a device used to measure the mass of a planet going around a star.
- Proudly this phenomenal discovery was made using a PRL-designed spectrograph, PARAS, to measure and confirm the mass of the new planet.
- EPIC 211945201b (or K2-236b) is the name given to the planet by the discovery team led by PRL's Abhijit Chakraborty. The host star is named EPIC 211945201 or K2-236.
- The observation made by the scientists of this planet and its star was spanned over a period of 420 days or about 1.5 years.
- The mass of the planet was measured by using the indigenously designed PRL Advance Radial-velocity Abu-sky Search or PARAS spectrograph integrated with the 1.2-metre telescope located at PRL's Gurushikhar Observatory in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

Some facts about EPIC:

- It has a high surface temperature of around 600°C so it not habitable.
- The planet is smaller in size than Saturn and bigger than Neptune.
- It has a mass of about 27 times that of Earth.
- It has a radius that is 6 times that of Earth.
- It is estimated that over 60% of its mass could be made up of heavy elements like ice, silicates and iron.

SEVA BHOJ YOJNA BY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

- The Ministry of Culture, Government of India came up with a new scheme named as 'Seva Bhoj Yojna'.
- The scheme has come up with an aim of reducing the financial burden of "Charitable Religious Institutions who provide Food/Prasad/Langar (Community Kitchen)/Bhandara free of cost without any discrimination to Public/Devotees."
- Rs. 325.00 Crores is the amount that has been outlayed for financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20 under this scheme.

The Charitable Religious Institutions that will be eligible for grant under this scheme are:

- Temples
- Gurudwara
- Mosque
- Church
- Dharmik Ashram
- Dargah
- Matth
- Monasteries etc.

THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA MUST BE MET BY THE ABOVE-MENTIONED ESTABLISHMENTS:

- They should be in existence for at least five years before applying for financial assistance/grant.
- They should serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month.
- Such institutions should be covered under Section 10(23BBA) of the Income Tax Act or Institutions registered as Society under Societies Registration Act (XXI of 1860) or as a Public Trust under any law for the time being in force of statutory religious bodies constituted under any Act or institutions registered under Section 12AA of Income Tax Act.

FURTHER NOTEWORTHY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHEME ARE:

- The Ministry of Culture will register the eligible charitable religious institutions for a time period ending with finance commission period and subsequently the registration may be renewed by the Ministry, subject to the performance evaluation of the institutions.
- The details of registered institutions will be available on an online portal for the viewership of public, GST authorities and entity/institution itself.
- The entity/institution will be permitted to submit the reimbursement claim of the GST and Central Government share of IGST to designated authority of GST Department at State level in the prescribed format during the validity of registration.
- It would be the responsibility of the institutions/entity to intimate the Ministry about any changes being made in Memorandum of Association, Office bearers or addition/deletion of the location of the free food services.
- All the eligible institutions should be registered with Darpan portal.

- All applications along with supporting documents received from the institutions in the Ministry shall be examined by the committee constituted for the purpose within 4 weeks and on the basis of the recommendation of the committee, competent authority in the Ministry shall register charitable religious institutions for reimbursing claim of CGST and Central Government share of IGST paid on above mentioned specific items.

GOVT. LAUNCHES 5,000 WIFI CHOUPALS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CSC

- The Department of Telecom (DoT), launched 5,000 WiFi choupals in partnership with CSC(Common Service Center) which will provide 60,000 WiFi hotspots in rural areas.
- The government is constantly exploring opportunities to utilise the reach of CSCs in rural areas.
- Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, who is also the interim Finance Minister, said that WiFi service is already being made available at the CSC's and along with these, we can connect with core banking. If an extension counter of a bank is opened, then every villager will have a bank near his/her home.
- The Union Minister also said after IRCTC and CSC e-Governance signed an agreement for train ticket bookings: "My dream will come true if you accept the challenge to open extension counters of banks in 2.9 lakh places. If required we can collaborate with renewable and power ministry to set-up small solar units at your places so that electricity becomes free".
- Telecom Secretary Aruna Sundararajan said that the DoT is looking to maintain BharatNet network and the higher education department is looking to deliver its education content in gram panchayats through CSCs.
- Out of 2.9 lakh CSCs, around 40,000 CSCs are already providing the facility of railway ticket booking.
- It must be noted that there will be no limit on number of tickets that can be booked from a CSC.
- Another extraordinary proposal of CSC e-Governance that Mr. Goyal accepted is that of allowing all CSCs to operate as banking correspondents and to disburse 'Mudra Loan' through CSCs.
- The Union Minister also announced that all 2.9 lakh CSC's will be made banking correspondents.
- He said that giving loan is a task of great responsibility and the VLE (village level entrepreneur) will have to be vigilant to check misuse of loan disbursed through him or her.
- Another interesting proposal that the Minister made was: opening of CSC at 8,000 railway stations where they can provide all their services besides telemedicine and education.
- He also said that CSCs should explore the possibility to make sanitary pads at price of Re 1 - Rs 1.25 and create awareness in rural areas about hygiene.

UNION CABINET APPROVES PROPOSAL FOR ENACTMENT OF DAM SAFETY BILL, 2018

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the Union Cabinet that has approved the proposal for introduction of Dam Safety Bill, 2018 in the Parliament.
- The bill has been drafted with the vision that it will help all the States and Union Territories of India to adopt uniform dam safety procedures which in turn shall ensure safety of dams and safeguard benefits from such dams.
- Safety of humans, livestock and property is expected to be achieved by this proposed bill's enactment.
- A great amount of consultation with leading Indian and international experts have been done that has resulted in arriving at this draft bill.

THE BILL IS AIMED AT ACHIEVING THE FOLLOWING:

- Safety of humans, livestock and property.

- Proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.
- Constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which shall evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required for the purpose.
- Establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body which shall discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country.
- Constitution of a State Committee on Dam Safety by State Government.

ROLE OF NATIONAL DAM SAFETY AUTHORITY

- It shall maintain liaison with the State Dam Safety Organisations and the owners of dams for standardisation of dam safety related data and practices.
- It shall provide the technical and managerial assistance to the States and State Dam Safety Organisations.
- It shall maintain a national level data-base of all dams in the country and the records of major dam failures.
- It shall examine the cause of any major dam failure.
- It shall publish and update the standard guidelines and check-lists for the routine inspection and detailed investigations of dams and appurtenances.
- It shall accord recognition or accreditations to the organisations that can be entrusted with the works of investigation, design or construction of new dams.
- It will also look into unresolved points of issue between the State Dam Safety Organisation of two states, or between the State Dam Safety Organisation of a State and the owner of a dam in that State, for proper solution.
- Further, in certain cases, such as dams of one State falling under the territory of another State, the National Authority shall also perform the role of State Dam Safety Organization thereby eliminating potential causes for inter-state conflicts.

ROLE OF STATE COMMITTEE ON DAM SAFETY:

- To ensure proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in that State and ensure their safe functioning.
- To make sure that every State shall establish a "State Dam Safety Organisation".
- It might be of some interest that there are over 5200 large dams in India and about 450 are under construction but lack of legal and institutional architecture for dam safety in India makes dam safety a growing concern.
- The Dam Safety Bill, 2018 address all issues concerning dam safety including regular inspection of dams, Emergency Action Plan, comprehensive dam safety review, adequate repair and maintenance funds for dam safety, Instrumentation and Safety Manuals. It also lays onus of dam safety on the dam owner and provides for penal provisions for commission and omission of certain acts.

3,000 ADDITIONAL SCHOOLS GET SELECTED TO SET UP "ATAL TINKERING LABS"

- NITI Aayog has given permission to 3,000 additional schools to set up Atal Tinkering Labs under its Atal Innovation Mission (AIM).
- This will make the number count of schools with Atal Tinkering Labs rise to 5,441.

WHAT'S THERE IN IT FOR THE SCHOOLS?

- As per the NITI Aayog: “The selected schools shall receive a grant of INR 20 lakh spread over the next five years to establish Atal Tinkering Labs for nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial spirit among secondary school children across India”.

Each ATL would be provided with an amount of INR 10 Lakh over a maximum period of 5 years for:

- Maintenance of equipment.
- Purchase of consumables.
- Organising popular science lecture series.
- Innovation events.
- Other scientific activities, competitions, and payment of honorariums to the faculty and mentors involved.

THE VISION

- NITI Aayog has a vision of establishing Atal Tinkering Labs in every district of the country. This is very much needed for enabling an atmosphere that leads to a transformational change in the area of technological innovation.
- NITI Aayog has an ambitious target of setting up tinkering labs across 30K schools in India in the next three years.

HOW ALL OF THIS WAS SET INTO MOTION?

- It was the Startup India Action Plan that played a key role in launching the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) with the Self-Employment and Talent Utilisation (SETU) programme.

OBJECTIVES OF AIM:

- Key focus on providing support to innovators and mentoring them to become successful entrepreneurs.
- To provide an ecosystem where innovative ideas are generated in the futuristic fields of robotics, IoT (internet of things), 3D printing, holographic technologies etc. and those ideas are efficiently promoted.

SEBI EXPLORES WAYS FOR DIRECT LISTING OF INDIAN FIRMS ABROAD

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has geared up to make direct listing of Indian companies in overseas markets possible.
- The market regulator has formed a panel of experts to frame rules for making it possible for a company incorporated in India to list its equity share capital on foreign exchanges.
- To this date, direct listing of a company incorporated in India is not possible on a foreign exchange and vice versa.
- The panel will consist of nine members.
- In the evolving and internationally connected capital markets of today, it seems to be a good idea to facilitate companies incorporated in India to directly list their equity share capital abroad and vice versa.
- The only option for Indian firms to list on overseas exchanges, currently is the depository receipts route which has: American Depositary Receipt (ADR) or Global Depositary Receipt (GDR).
- Similarly, for foreign companies wanting to list on Indian exchanges, the Indian Depositary Receipt (IDR) is the only option currently.

- However, the companies incorporated in India can list their debt securities (masala bonds) on international exchanges.

SEBI CONSTITUTES GROUP TO REVIEW INSTITUTIONAL TRADING PLATFORM (ITP) FRAMEWORK

- Well, the word "Startups" has been buzzing in the Indian business world for quite some time now.
- The market regulator: Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has formed a group to look into the existing Institutional Trading Platform (ITP) framework and suggest measures to facilitate the listing of startups.

THE OBJECTIVES OF FORMING THE GROUP ARE:

- To review the need for present ITP framework in the current context.
- To revisit the current ITP framework and identify the areas, if any, which require further changes.
- Any other issue relevant to ITP which the group may like to assess.

THE GROUP HAS MEMBERS THAT ARE REPRESENTATIVES FROM:

- The Indian Software Product Industry Round Table (iSPIRT)
- The Indus Entrepreneurs (TIE)
- The Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (IVCA)
- Law Firms
- Merchant Bankers
- Stock Exchanges
- SEBI expects the group to submit its report within a period of one month.
- Going back a little, the ITP framework was put in place by SEBI in 2015 with a view to facilitating listing of new age companies in sectors like e-commerce, data analytics, bio-technology and other startups.

106TH INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS TO BE HOSTED BY LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY (LPU) IN JALANDHAR

- Lovely Professional University (LPU) is all set to host the 106th Indian Science Congress in Jalandhar, Punjab from January 3 to 7, 2019.
The prestigious event will be inaugurated by none other than the Hon'ble Prime of India, Narendra Modi.
- Focal Theme of this year's event is - Future India : Science & Technology
- The event organised by the the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), will witness the gathering of 15,000 delegates, including 300 top scientists and Nobel Laureates from across world as attendees.

PEOPLE EXCITED ABOUT THE EVENT ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO:

- 18 plenary sessions including those of medical, chemical, environmental and other science domains.
- 4 mega events including Children Science Conference, Women Science Conference, Science Communicators' Meet, and Science Exhibition.
- National and International scientific companies including those of the US, Australia, Germany, Switzerland exhibiting their scientific achievements and prowess. Names of few such companies are: India's DRDO, DST, Defence units, Switzerland's Aglient, Camag.

- The executive council of Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) that works under Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology (Government of India) is looking to advance and promote cause of science in India and to recognize and support excellence in scientific research, technologies and innovations.

CABINET APPROVES PROPOSAL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF NALANDA UNIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2013

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposal for withdrawal of Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013 pending in the Rajya Sabha.

FEW FACTS RELATED TO NALANDA UNIVERSITY ARE:

- The announcement of establishing the Nalanda University was made at the 4th East Asia Summit held in Thailand in October 2009.
- It was established as a non-state, non-profit, secular and self-governing international institution.
- The Parliament passed the Nalanda University Act, 2010 which came into effect from 25 November 2010.
- Hon'ble President of India is the Visitor of the University.
- Dr. Vijay Bhatkar is the Chancellor.
- Professor Sunaina Singh is the Vice Chancellor.
- At present, the University has 116 students in three schools of studies namely School of Historical Studies, School of Ecology and Environment Studies and School of Buddhist Studies. This includes 35 international students from 21 foreign countries.
- On August 26, 2013, the Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha to amend certain existing provisions of the Nalanda University Act, 2010 and add some new provisions.
- This current proposal is for moving a motion in the Rajya Sabha to withdraw that Bill. After the approval of Hon'ble President of India, the Governing Board of Nalanda University came into effect from 21st November 2016.
- The Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill, 2013 will be discussed with the current Governing Board of Nalanda University before a final decision is made as far as going with the proposed amendments is concerned.
- It must also be noted that the Governing Board may also look into the entire Nalanda University Act, 2010 afresh and suggest amendments/additions wherever necessary.

GOVERNMENT HIKE IMPORT DUTY ON NON-PALM OILS BY 5-10%

- With a goal to protect the interest of domestic oilseeds growers and processors, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBITC) raised the import duty by 5-10 per cent on non-palm edible oils, both crude and refined ones.

FOLLOWING CHANGES ARE MADE IN CASE OF DIFFERENT OILS:

SUNFLOWER OIL:

- The import duty on crude variant has been increased from 25 per cent to 35 per cent.
- The import duty on refined variant has been increased from 35 per cent to 45 per cent.

GROUNDNUT OIL:

- The import duty on crude variant has been increased from 30 per cent to 35 per cent.
- The import duty on refined variant has been increased from 35 per cent to 45 per cent.

CANOLA OIL:

- The import duty on canola oil has been increased from 25 per cent to 35 per cent.
- The Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) had earlier demanded from the government an increase in the import duties of non-palm edible oils in same proportion as palm oils and stated that the government's aim to double farmers' income will be defeated unless this step is taken forward.
- The association also said that farmers will take up to growing more oil seeds only when they see decent profit in doing that.
- India imports over 14 million tonnes of vegetable oils annually to meet its domestic demand.

20 STATES SIGN MOU FOR IMPLEMENTING AYUSHMAN BHARAT - NATIONAL HEALTH PROTECTION MISSION (AB-NHPM)

- In a march towards addressing the most important issue a poor family has, that is health care, the central government and 20 states have taken a significant step during the Health Ministers's Conclave held in New Delhi.
- Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, J.P. Nadda exchanged the Memorandum of Understanding with the State Health Ministers of 20 States, stating their commitment towards the launch of the Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).
- According to the Minister, this largest health assurance scheme of the world that he says can be perfected by working with the spirit of cooperative federalism.
- While expecting an active participation from the States, he stressed on the fact that the States need to own the scheme while Centre will design the policy framework with all possible flexibility and support.

FEATURES OF AB-NHPM:

- It will protect around 50 crore people (from about 10 crore families).
- It will provide cashless and paperless access to services upto Rs. 5 lakhs per year.
- It will be available for the beneficiary families at the point of service in both public and private empanelled hospitals across India.
- The beneficiaries under the scheme can avail services anywhere in India
- It will help the beneficiaries to reduce "Out Of Pocket (OOP) expenditure".
- It is extremely important at this juncture to point out that the Minister also said that alongside AB-NHPM, the Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) will deliver comprehensive primary health care.
- The H&WC would provide preventive, promotive, and curative care for non-communicable diseases, dental, mental, geriatric care, palliative care, etc.
- Apart from all this, the Government has already gone ahead with an initiative of "Universal Screening of common non-communicable diseases (NCD's)" .
- Some examples of NCD's that the government is looking to screen are: diabetes, hypertension and common cancers along with Tuberculosis and Leprosy.
- Getting to know about these NCD's affecting an individual, in the early stages, will help in taking timely protective measures and eventually bringing down the disease burden of the country.

- As of now, 20 states have signed the MoU and its likely to be 25 States by the end of this month. Another important news was that of the launch of a web portal for initiating the empanelment of hospitals under the mission. Training / Demo of empanelment software will be conducted in next two weeks and States can operationalize empanelment of hospitals by 1st of July.

SWAJAL SCHEME LAUNCHED TO PROVIDE CLEAN DRINKING WATER IN 115 ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICTS OF INDIA

- Clean drinking water through being an absolute necessity for survival has become a luxury that unfortunately not everyone can afford in many parts of rural India.
- In order to chart the course for the Swajal scheme and the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP), a National Consultation was held in New Delhi.
- The consultation that was chaired by the Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Sushri Uma Bharti.
- Other attendees in the consultation were the Minister of State for Drinking Water and Sanitation: Shri Ramesh Jigajinagi and Ministers-in-charge of Drinking Water from 13 States.
- The consultation saw exchange of views on the reforms needed in NRDWP and the ongoing Centrally-sponsored drinking water schemes to outline a road map for the Swajal scheme.
- As far as the Swajal Scheme is concerned, the Union Minister said:
- Swajal schemes in 115 aspirational districts of the country will involve an outlay of Rs 700 crores through flexi-funds under the existing NRDWP budget.
- These schemes will aim to provide villages with piped water supply powered by solar energy.
- The scheme will train hundreds of rural technicians for operation and maintenance of Swajal units.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE BY THE UNION MINISTER ARE:

- The modernisation of 2000 water quality testing laboratories spread across the country.
- The Union Minister urged the State Ministers to closely monitor the functioning of the water laboratories so as to ensure safe drinking water for rural Indians.
- She also said that Rs.1000 crores will be earmarked for addressing the drinking water needs of 27,544 arsenic and fluoride affected habitations of the country in this financial year under the National Water Quality Sub-Mission (NWQSM).
- She pointed out the importance of rain water harvesting and water conservation, announcing that a special communication campaign will be taken up in the country to create awareness on the same.
- She also called upon the States to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goal 'safe drinking water for all' is achieved in India by 2030.

US TEAM OF EXPERTS IN DELHI TO DISCUSS KEY MILITARY AGREEMENT

- Even after 2 years of the US granting India the status of a 'Major Defence Partner' in 2016, no tangible benefits on military technology front have come to India so far.
- Preparations for the 2+2 dialogue between the foreign and defence ministers of India and the US in Washington next month are in full swing.
- Starting today that is Monday, till Wednesday, a team of specialists from the Pentagon comprising of lawyers, and policy & technical experts will be meeting their counterparts on the Indian side in Delhi to negotiate the text of a "foundational" military communications agreement.

- The US officials will try and address Indian observations on the draft Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) submitted earlier.
- The Indian government in the past was not keen on signing the two other “foundational” agreements — COMCASA and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA).

WHAT SHOULD ONE KNOW ABOUT COMCASA:

- A legal framework for the transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India.
- It would also facilitate “interoperability” between Indian and US forces and also with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secure data links.
- It was called the Communication and Information on Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) before the name was changed to reflect its India-specific nature.
- Finalisation of the COMCASA text or its signing is not expected during the inaugural 2+2 dialogue in Washington next month.
- As per the American Officials: The Indian Military is currently dependent on commercially available and less secure communication systems on high-end American platforms like C-130Js and the P8I maritime surveillance aircraft.
- Signing COMCASA is mandatory if India is to get the armed version of the Sea Guardian drones from Washington.
- Defence ministry were reluctant in the past about signing the COMCASA as they fear American intrusive access to Indian military communication systems.
- There is also a reasonable fear that a large quantity of Russian-origin and indigenous Indian military platforms may not be compatible with COMCASA.

THIS "DHANUSH" IS NOW READY FOR BATTLE

- Dhanush artillery gun clears final trials. It is a proud moment for India as the indigenously upgraded artillery gun "Dhanush" has successfully completed final user trials and is ready for induction into the Army.
- In the mid-1980s, India procured the Swedish 155-mm Bofors howitzers gun to meet its artillery requirements. Dhanush is the upgraded version of the Bofors.

FEATURES OF DHANUSH:

- It is a 155mm, 45mm calibre artillery gun.
- It has strike range of 38 kilometres (11 km more than imported Bofors guns) with accuracy and precision.
- It provides greater fire power, depending on type of ammunition used. It also has night firing capability in direct fire mode.
- It has an all-electric drive, high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system and automated command and control system.
- It has six round magazine, instead of standard three round.
- Its 81% components are indigenously sourced and it will be scaled up to 90% by 2019.
- Each of this gun costs about Rs 14.50 crore while each shell costs Rs. 1 lakh.
- The Indian Army has ordered 114 guns that will be delivered within four years and the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) is confident of producing eight to 10 guns per month within two to three years.

TRIAL HISTORY OF DHANUSH:

- The first phase of trials were conducted between July and September 2016 at the Pokhran and Babina ranges.
- The second phase was conducted between October and December 2016 at the Siachen base camp with three guns.
- This was the third and final phase of user exploitation firings in which six Dhanush guns were fired in battery formation from May 31 to June 7, 2018 at the Pokhran field firing range.
- A total of 301 rounds were fired from the six guns, including burst fire.

WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT, OBSERVED ON 17 JUNE, 2018

- Before we know the much needed noble change that this day marks, we should understand what "desertification" & "drought" means.
- **Desertification:** It is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations. Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one-third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to overexploitation and inappropriate land use.
- **Drought:** A drought is a period of below-average precipitation in a given region, resulting in prolonged shortages in the water supply, whether atmospheric, surface water or groundwater.

CAUSES OF DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT:

- Poverty
- Political instability
- Deforestation
- Overgrazing
- Bad Irrigation Practices

The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.

ABOUT WDCDD:

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) had designated June 17 as World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in 1994.
- It was observed for the first time in 1995.
- The date marks adaptation of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) by UNGA in 1994.
- The day is observed globally to promote public awareness on the issue, and implementation of UNCCD in those countries experiencing serious desertification or drought, particularly in Africa.
- 2018's theme for WDCDD is: "Land has true value – invest in it."

ROLE OF THE UNCCD:

- It is committed to bottom-up approach, encouraging participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

- Its secretariat facilitates cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly around technology and knowledge transfer for sustainable land management.
- UNCCD collaborates closely with other two Rio Conventions, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected to meet these complex challenges with integrated approach.

RUSSIA SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES GLONASS-M NAVIGATION SATELLITE

- MOSCOW, June 17, as per a statement by the Russian Defense Ministry, Russia successfully launched a Glonass-M positioning satellite using a Soyuz-2.1b carrier rocket.
- The Space Forces, a branch of the Aerospace Forces, launched the satellite from the Plesetsk space center in Mirny, Arkhangelsk Oblast at 00:46 local time (2146 GMT).
- The Glonass network provides real-time positioning data for surface, sea and airborne objects around the globe, at an accuracy reportedly on par with the U.S. Global Positioning System.
- There are now 26 Glonass satellites in orbit.

FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE GLONASS-M SATELLITE:

- It was built by Reshetnev Information Satellite Systems (formerly NPO-PM).
- It has design life of 7 years which is significantly higher than that of previous generation of Glonass satellites.
- It is about 2.4 x 3.7 meters in size with solar array span of 7.2 meters.
- It has two deployable solar arrays which provide 1600 watts of electrical power.
- The heart of the satellite is Caesium atomic clock that provides accurate timing reference needed to generate navigation data.

ABOUT GLONASS:

- Glonass is Russian Satellite Navigation System considered as counterpart to GPS of US, Galileo of European Union (EU) and Beidou of China.
- It is being used by military as well as commercial customers.
- It provides real time position and velocity determination at accuracy that can be compared to that of GPS.
- It has accuracy of 100 meters as part of public segment and 10 to 20 meters for military users. Its time accuracy is under 1000 nanoseconds.
- Glonass Program started back in 1976 when development was initiated.
- The first Glonass launch took place in 1982 and the constellation became fully operational in 1995.
- Currently, second generation Glonass-M satellites as well as Glonass-K1 satellites are in service.
- Glonass-K2 and KM satellites are under development.

SAARC FUND TO LAUNCH SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME IN ALL EIGHT MEMBER NATIONS

SAARC Development Fund, headquartered in the Bhutanese capital, Thimpu, soon will launch a social enterprise development programme (SEDP) to fund 80 entities annually across eight-member states, including India.

Countries comprising the SAARC are:

- India

- Nepal
- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Maldives
- Sri Lanka
- Pakistan

Eight heads of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in April 2010 along its governing council comprising of the finance ministers of these eight countries, established the SAARC Development Fund (SDF).

FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SDF:

- SDF is in the process of launching the SEDP as part of its social window.
- The programme will be implemented in all the SAARC member states with the objective of identifying and building social enterprises by using a mix of grants and concessional returnable capital.
- The programme intends to fund around 80 enterprises across the 8 SAARC member states annually.
- SDF has already committed \$73.74 million for social window projects as of date out of which it has disbursed \$47 million to the member states.
- Two energy infrastructure projects in the region have received in-principle approval with a loan commitment of \$30 million under the SDF's infrastructure window.
- SDF is currently implementing 12 regional projects with more than 70 implementing and lead implementing agencies covering all the member countries under the social window funding.
- Acknowledging the important role of MSMEs in an economy, the SDF is planning to come out with a programme to provide line of credit to the sector across the member states.
- The SDF would create access to financial services which can in-turn boost job creation, raise income, reduce vulnerability and increase investments in human capital in SAARC countries.

GOVERNMENT PLANNING LARGEST NATIONAL DATA CENTRE IN BHOPAL FOR A BPO PROMOTION SCHEME

- IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said that the government is in plans to expand its BPO promotion scheme to one lakh seats, and will also set up India's largest National data centre in Bhopal.
- While highlighting the achievements of IT and Electronics Ministry over the last four years, the Minister expressed the government's desire for making India a hub for BPO movement.
- The current number of seats under the BPO promotion scheme is at 48000.
- The government is planning to increase this number to 1 Lakh seats.
- The Minister said that BPO's will soon start in smaller cities like Gaya and Gazipur apart from the already operational in Guwahati, Muzaffarpur, Patna and other places.
- As of now, there are 91 BPO's operational in 27 States.
- As per the Minister, BPO units operating from smaller towns, apart from creating significant employment have a potential to offer nearly 200,000 direct and indirect jobs to youth under India BPO promotion scheme and North East BPO promotion scheme.

THE NATIONAL DATA CENTRES

- They host government websites, services and apps.
- They are currently operational at four locations: Pune, Hyderabad, Delhi and Bhubaneswar.
- Finally, the fifth 'National Data Centre' which is the largest of such centres will come up in Bhopal with the capacity of five lakh virtual servers.

CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION (CWC) TO TEAM UP WITH GOOGLE FOR FLOOD FORECASTING

- Central Water Commission (CWC), India's apex technical organization in the field of Water Resources, has entered into a Collaboration Agreement with Google.
- Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari has expressed hope that collaboration with Google will help in effective flood management in India.
- CWC would use state-of-the-art advances made by Google in the in the field of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and geo spatial mapping for effective management of water resources particularly in the field of flood forecasting and dissemination of flood related information to the masses widely using the dissemination platforms developed by Google.
- This initiative is likely to help crisis management agencies to deal extreme hydrological events in a better manner.
- CWC and Google will share technical expertise in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine learning, geospatial mapping and analysis of hydrological observation data to collaborate on:
 - Improving flood prediction systems, which will help provide location-targeted, actionable flood warnings.
 - High priority research project utilizing Google Earth Engine to help visualize and improve flood management.
 - A cultural project to build online exhibitions on the Rivers of India.
- Under collaborative arrangement, Google would use high resolution Digital Elevation Model (DEM) and vast computational resources and its expertise in the field of Artificial Intelligence to generate flood inundation maps utilising the level forecast input provided by CWC. The information in the form of likely extent and depth of inundation would be disseminated with a lead time of up to 3 days.
- The collaborative arrangement is likely to result in saving of crores of rupees which otherwise would have to be spent by the government on acquiring high resolution DEM, high end computational resources and developing dissemination platforms widely used by the masses.
- This would enable the Government as well as disaster management organisations to identify well in advance the locations and population, which are at risk from floods and require warnings and information.

NATIONAL HYDROLOGY PROJECT (NHP)

- This programme was launched during the year 2016-17.
- NHP is a World Bank assisted central sector scheme with pan India coverage.

OBJECTIVES OF NHP:

- To improve the extent, quality, and accessibility of water resources information.
- To provide decision support system for floods and basin level resource assessment/planning.
- To strengthen the capacity of targeted water resources professionals and management institutions in India.

PAPER SETTERS TO RECEIVE TRAINING FROM NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY

- HRD minister Prakash Javadekar while listing the achievements of the Modi government in the field of education, told journalists that "There is no system for paper-setter training till now. We will introduce it as part of the National Testing Agency's mandate".
- The National Testing Agency (NTA), which is being set up to relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) of the burden of conducting multiple examinations, will also train paper setters to set better question papers and provide better model answers.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THE NTA:

- To put in place a robust system for the conduct of examinations.
- It is expected to conduct some of the examinations that the CBSE has been conducting till now.
- Ultimately take over all examinations from the CBSE, except the 10th and 12th board examinations.
- It must be noted that, among the examinations that will be transferred to the NTA are the prestigious Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for admission to engineering colleges like the IITs and NITs and the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to all medical colleges in the country, except AIIMS and JIPMER, Puducherry.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)

- The creation of NTA was approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister in November 2017.
- After a one-time grant of INR 25 crore to the NTA, it is supposed to become financially self-sustainable.
- It is registered as society under Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860.

AT 93 PER CENT, WOMEN BEAR BURDEN OF STERILISATION, SAYS NHM REPORT

- The 11th report of the Common Review Mission of the National Health Mission show that women bear uneven burden in family planning with the latest data showing women account for more than 93 per cent of sterilisations in the country.
- The report has flagged the issue citing latest data from the Health Management Information System (HMIS) where states upload data on various parameters of NHM including sterilisations.
- As per HMIS in 2017-18 (till October) of the total 14,73,418 sterilisation procedures only 6.8 % were male sterilisation (vasectomy) while 93.1 % were female sterilisation (tubectomy) .
- This is however, a marginal improvement from earlier years when women accounted for 98 per cent of all sterilisation in the country. Of the 41,41,502 sterilisations across India in 2015-16 under government programmes, 40,61,462 were tubectomies. In 2014-15, out of 40,30,409 sterilisations, 39,52,043 were tubectomies.

WHAT IS VASECTOMY OR MALE STERILISATION?

- It is the process of cutting or tying the vas deferens which is the duct that carries the sperm from the testes to the urethra so that it cannot be released for fertilisation. It is an easier process than female sterilisation or tubectomy which involves clamping or blocking the fallopian tubes so eggs do not reach the uterus.

WHY ARE MALES RELUCTANT TOWARDS VASECTOMY?

- Experts say the reluctance of Indian men to undergo sterilisation stems from history, social taboo and sheer logistical limitations. Forced sterilisations during the Emergency have given the procedure a bad name, misinformation about it robbing men of their "strength" has made it a social taboo and the fact that there are no male health workers means these impressions cannot be corrected. It is difficult for an ASHA worker in a village to talk to men about sterilisation.
- The CRM also found that in most states sterilisation services were offered in fixed places on fixed days. The only exceptions are Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Nagaland and Manipur.

RBI ALTERS THE DEFINITION OF 'RELATIVE' TO CHECK OUTWARD REMITTANCES

- RBI in its latest move makes the 'maintenance of close relative', difficult!
- The issue of people sending funds abroad under the 'maintenance of close relative' category of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) is something that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is determined to tackle.
- The RBI in its latest move has narrowed the definition of relatives to check the flow of funds.
- From now on, funds under the 'maintenance of close relative' category can be sent only to immediate relatives such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses.
- The RBI in its statement said that "In the context of remittances allowed under LRS for maintenance of close relatives, it has been decided to align the definition of 'relative' with the definition given in Companies Act, 2013 instead of Companies Act, 1956".
- Its interesting to know that outward remittances under maintenance of close relatives had shot up to almost \$3 billion in 2017-18 from mere \$174 million in 2013-14. The funds sent under this category have more than doubled since 2015-16. Overall outward remittances under LRS went up to \$11 billion from \$1 billion in the same period.
- That is a huge increase that warrants attention by the central bank and in June 2018 in order to keep things in check, the RBI had made PAN mandatory for anyone using LRS for remitting money outside the country.
- Earlier, PAN was not insisted upon for putting current account transactions of up to \$25,000.
- It is possible that the facility of "maintenance of relatives" under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme is used for commercial purposes which is not its objective. That may have prompted the regulator to narrow the definition of relatives.
- Also, the RBI has introduced a system for daily reporting of individual transactions under the LRS by banks.

LIBERALISED REMITTANCE SCHEME

- LRS is facility provided by RBI for all resident individuals including minors to freely remit up to a certain amount in terms of US Dollar for current and capital account purposes or combination of both.
- The scheme was introduced in February 2004 and its regulations are provided under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.
- At present, LRS limit for all resident individuals, including minors, is the US \$2,50,000 (Rs. 1.5 crores) per financial year.
- Under LRS, individuals can make remittances for overseas education, travel, medical treatment, maintenance to relatives living abroad, gifting and donations.
- The remitted money can be used for purchase of shares and property as well.
- Individuals can also open, maintain and hold foreign currency accounts with overseas banks for carrying out transactions under it.

- Under LRS, remittances cannot be used for trading on foreign exchange markets, purchase of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds issued abroad by Indian companies and margin or margin calls to overseas exchanges and counterparties.
- Similarly, individuals are not allowed to send money to countries identified as 'non-cooperative jurisdictions' by Financial Action Task Force (FAFT).
- It also prohibits remittances to entities identified as posing terrorist risks.

HARYANA GOVERNMENT GIVES STAR RANKINGS TO PANCHAYATS ON SEVEN PARAMETERS

- In an initiative that was never heard of before, Haryana government has decided to give star rankings to its panchayats on the basis of seven social parameters under the state's 7-Star Gram Panchayat Rainbow scheme. As many as 1,120 villages of the state have achieved the rankings under the scheme, launched in January this year.
- Ambala has topped star ranking with 407 stars followed by Gurugram with 199 stars and Karnal 75 stars.

Social parameter based on which the panchayats will be judged are:

- Sex Ratio
- Education
- Hygiene
- Environment Preservation
- Governance
- Social Participation
- The selected villages will be honoured at an award ceremony to be held in Panchkula, Gurugram and Rohtak next month.
- The villages would be rewarded Rs one lakh for achieving each parameter.
- Agriculture minister of Haryana, O P Dhankar said that the villages having equal or more girl population will be given Rs 50,000 as bonus with their reward money. Similarly, the villages which adopt Swachhta Mission will be given additional Rs 50,000 as reward.
- An online portal has also been developed for receiving claims of panchayats, for evaluation and verification.

TYPES OF STARS:

- **Pink star:** It will be awarded to those panchayats that make outstanding performance in improving sex ratio.
- **Green star:** It is for protection of environment.
- **White star:** for cleanliness.
- **Saffron star:** It is for crime-free villages.
- **Sky colour star:** It will be awarded to village that will have no dropout.
- **Golden star:** It is for good governance.
- **Silver star:** It will be awarded for participation in development of villages.

INDIA-RUSSIA MILITARY EXERCISE 'INDRA' SCHEDULED FOR LATE 2018

- The second half of 2018 will witness the thunderous might of the Tri-Service joint India-Russia military exercise called INDRA.

- Already, a Russian military delegation has visited India to discuss the logistics of the exercise.

EXPECTATIONS FROM INDRA-2018:

- During the exercise, combined military units of the Russian Eastern Military District will participate in the drills.
- Members of the Indian defence forces will also be involved in the planning of the exercise including practical operations of the units besides catering, consumer services and medical support for the Russian units.
- In addition, the parties will agree on the procedure for receiving and servicing of military transport aircraft in India.

HISTORY OF INDRA:

- INDRA military exercise was launched in 2003 as bilateral exercise between India and Russia to boost cooperation and interoperability between navies of the two countries.
- The name of the exercise INDRA has been derived from INDIA and RUSSIA.
- Till 2016, the bilateral exercises under INDRA were undertaken between respective Armies, Navies and Air Forces of India and Russia by separately engaging with each other without concurrent participation from other services.
- This exercise was transformed into tri-services military exercise in 2017 and was for first time held successfully in October 2017 at Vladivostok, Russia.
- It was India's first joint tri-services exercise and also first between Russia and India.
- It was also first time Russia has hosted tri-services military exercise on its soil.

NASSCOM LAUNCHES PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT "WOMEN TECHIES"

- 'Women Wizards Rule Tech' programme for women techies Nasscom has taken a noteworthy step to increase the number of women in senior levels in the Information Technology (IT) industry. The programme is called 'Women Wizards Rule Tech'.
- The programme was announced in March 2018 at Nasscom Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Chennai as joint initiative by Nasscom Sector Skills Council and Data Security Council of India.
- Senior Director of Nasscom Ashok Pamidi in a statement has said "This programme is designed to support women who are moving up the career ladder, while also paving the way for potential leaders of the future".
- As per the Director, this initiative aims at equipping women with the skills required for an edge in their career and aid women techies in core technologies like IT-Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), Business Process Management (BPM), product and research and development (R&D) sectors.
- Among the other attendees that graced the occasion were Nasscom President Debjani Ghosh and Biocon Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw.
- It must be noted that a report by Nasscom on "Women and IT Scorecard - India" launched earlier this year predicted that policies towards flexible work, work-from-home, parental leave, healthcare and anti-harassment will increase the number of women in senior level at IT firms from 20 per cent to 60 per cent.

A LOOK AT WHAT NASSCOM IS:

- NASSCOM stands for National Association of Software and Services Companies.
- NASSCOM is global non-profit trade association (organisation) of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.

- It facilitates business and trade in software and services and encourages the advancement of research in software technology.
- It is registered under the Indian Societies Act, 1860. Its headquarters are in New Delhi.
- It has regional offices in Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram.
- The global IT trade body has over 2000 members, of which over 250 are companies from the China, EU, Japan, US and UK.
- NASSCOM's member companies are in the business of software development, software services, software products, IT-enabled/BPO services and e-commerce.

UNION HRD MINISTER DEDICATES THE NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY OF INDIA TO THE NATION

- Government comes up with a reader's delight!
- The Union Human Resource Development Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar launched the new digital initiative of HRD Ministry 'National Digital Library of India' on the occasion of National Reading Day in New Delhi on 19th June 2018.
- The Union HRD Minister said that anybody can access the digital library anytime and anywhere absolutely free of cost and will contribute greatly to the Government's commitment towards "Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat".

WHAT IS NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY OF INDIA (NDLI)?

- It is a project of the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the aegis of National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT).
- It is the Single Window Platform that collects and collates metadata from premier learning institutions in India and abroad, as well as other relevant sources.
- It is a digital repository containing textbooks, articles, videos, audiobooks, lectures, simulations, fiction and all other kinds of learning media.
- It has 1.7 Crore content from more than 160 sources, in over 200 languages, everywhere and 30 lakh users are registered on NDL as on date and the government's target is to increase the users 10 times in a year.
- NDLI is also available on the Mobile app.
- Users can search for content using various parameters like subject matter, source, content type and more.
- Right Now the app is available in three languages – English, Hindi and Bengali.
- Speaking at the launch function, the Minister of State for Culture (I/c) Dr. Mahesh Sharma said that it is a massive online library with resources covering tens and hundreds of fields, ranging from arts, music, dance, culture, theatre, science and technology to education, archaeology, literature, museums, cartography maps, e-papers and manuscripts, among others, in all possible forms collated and made available on a single online platform.

This programme is a part of the National Mission on Libraries of the Ministry of Culture.

GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES NATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE REPOSITORY (NHRR) PROJECT

- The Union ministry of health and family welfare launched the National Health Resource Repository (NHRR), the first ever registry in the country of authentic, standardised and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare establishments.
- It is country's first ever healthcare establishment census to collect data of all public and private healthcare establishments.
- Also, the minister released the National Health Profile (NHP) 2018. It's being prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI). Also, the E-book (digital version) of the annual document was also released.
- The NHP covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE NHRR PROJECT:

- NHRR Project aims to strengthen evidence-based decision making and develop platform for citizen and provider-centric services by creating robust, standardized and secured IT-enabled repository of India's healthcare resources. The census will be conducted under Collection of Statistics Act 2008.
- It will comprehensively collect information of both, private and public healthcare establishments including Indian Railways, ESIC, Defence and Petroleum healthcare establishments.
- It will be capturing data on over 1,400 variables of over 20 lakh healthcare establishments like hospitals, clinics, doctors, diagnostic labs, pharmacies and nursing homes.
- The exercise will involve approximately 4,000 trained professionals who will approach every healthcare establishment for information collection.
- As per the press release, "The Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) has actively engaged with key stakeholders including leading Associations, Allied Ministries, and several private healthcare service providers. This resource repository shall enable advanced research towards ongoing & forthcoming healthcare challenges arising from other determinants of health like – disease, environment etc".

KEY EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE NHRR PROJECT:

- To provide comprehensive data on all health resources including private doctors, health facilities, chemists, and diagnostics labs.
- Establish a National Health Resource Repository for evidence based decision making – aligned with Digital India mission.
- Enhance the coordination between central and state government for optimization of health resources.
- Making 'live' and realistic state Project Implementation Plans (PIPs) and improving accessibility of data at all levels, including State Head of Departments, thus, decentralize the decision making at district and state level.

GOVERNOR'S RULE IMPOSED IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

- Army chief says anti-terror operations will continue as earlier
After the BJP pulled out of the three-year-old alliance with the People's Democratic Party
- (PDP) in the state of Jammu & Kashmir resulting in the fall of the government in the state, Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti submitted her resignation to Governor N.N Vohra.
The Governor then on the evening of 19 June 2018, sent a report to Union Home Ministry recommending Central rule in the State after.
- President Ram Nath Kovind approved the imposition of Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir with immediate effect on Wednesday 20 June 2018.

- It must be noted that President Kovind is on a three-nation tour, the proposal was sent to Suriname, his current stop.
- According to a government official "When the Governor sent the proposal on Tuesday evening, the President was already in transit from Athens to Suriname. As soon as he touched down in Paramaribo, he signed the recommendation giving his assent to Governor's rule in J&K".
- Governor Vohra will be presiding over governor's rule in the state for the fourth time
- He's done so previously in 2008, 2015 and 2016.
- He was set to complete his second term in a few days, and is now set to continue till the conclusion of 'Amarnath Yatra' on 26 August 2018.
- This is the eighth time in the last four decades that J&K was put under Governor's rule.
- What makes the Governor's rule in J&K different?
- In case of failure of constitutional machinery in any other state of India, President's Rule is imposed under Article 356 of the Constitution.

BUT IN CASE OF J&K :

- As per Section 92 of state Constitution, Governor's Rule is imposed in the state only after the consent of the President of India in case of failure of constitutional machinery for period of six months.
- During the Governors rule, State Assembly is either suspended or dissolved.
- If the Constitutional machinery is not restored before the expiry of this six month period, the provision of Article 356 of the Constitution of India are extended to J&K and the President's rule is imposed in the State.

SIKKIM GOVERNMENT APPOINTS MUSICAL LEGEND AS ITS BRAND AMBASSADOR

- The Sikkim Government with an aim to promote its achievements both nationally and internationally has appointed the incredibly talented Indian music composer A.R. Rahman (Allah-Rakha Rahman) as Brand Ambassador of the state for a year.
- Sikkim is a unique hub of natural beauty which has since decades made a name of itself among world's famous eco-tourism destinations.
- It must be noted that Sikkim attained a distinct identity as the first fully organic farming state of the country.
- Also, the State Government of Sikkim had earlier this year made Rahman its Brand Ambassador of Tourism and Business.

FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT A.R. RAHMAN:

- His father, who worked as a composer and conductor died when A.R.Rahman was young as a result of which A.R.Rahman had a difficult childhood.
- A.R.Rahman was born in Chennai on January 6, 1967, as A. S. Dileep Kumar and he came to be known as A.R. Rahman(Allah Rakha Rahman) after he converted to Islam.
- His work is well known and renowned for inter mixing eastern classical music with electronic music and traditional orchestral arrangements.
- He has won multiple international awards including two Oscars, two Grammy Awards, BAFTA Award and Golden Globe Award.
- In 2010, he was conferred country's third highest civilian honour Padma Bhushan.

PUNJAB GOVERNMENT TAKES A STEP TO INCREASE STATE'S GREEN COVER

- The Punjab Government has launched a mobile application "i-Hariyali" under 'Mission Tandarust Punjab' with an aim to increase the state's green cover.
- Under this programme, people of Punjab can get the saplings of their choice at their doorstep and that too free of cost.

A LOOK AT HOW THIS PROCESS IS DONE:

- The users can book a sapling of their choice, a maximum of 25 per person, from a nearby government nursery.
- Once the booking is done, the contact number of the concerned employee of the nursery or the forest guard will be displayed on the mobile phone of the person.

MOTIVE

- The main motive behind this move is to inspire more and more people to plant maximum saplings during the current monsoon season in order to save the environment from pollution hazards.
- It must be noted that Punjab Government, in order to ensure that there is no misuse of this noble cause, has imposed a condition of proper upkeep and care of the saplings.
- State Forest Minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot has exhorted all the stakeholders to plant the saplings in large number in order to ensure a clean and green Punjab.
- Lets hope the entire nation walks on this much needed environment-friendly path and make our surroundings ecologically balanced & sustainable.

WORLD'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN FORENSICS LAUNCHED IN GUJARAT

- Marking a significant milestone on the path of humanity, the world's first International Centre for Humanitarian Forensics is launched at Gandhinagar in Gujarat.
This comes as a joint venture of the Regional delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in India, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives and also Gujarat Forensic Science University.
- Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GSFU) will run different courses both postgraduate and postgraduate diploma courses in humanitarian forensics.
- This unique Centre will play a significant and essential role during natural and manmade calamities which takes place at regular intervals across world over and large number of people become victims of such calamities.
- ICHF is the first definitive effort at institutionalising humanitarian forensic action within an existing university system.
- The launch of the Centre was followed by an International Symposium on Humanitarian Forensics.
- Speakers from India, Ireland, Germany and Sri Lanka will speak at the symposium.

WHAT WILL THE CENTRE DO?

- The centre will use forensics for humanitarian services to aid humanitarian efforts during emergencies and natural disasters.
- It will assist in dignified and proper management of dead bodies during disasters or emergencies and also help in their identification.

- The centre will also conduct various academic and professional programmes, training and research and also provide technical expertise to support operations in field of humanitarian forensics to authorities and agencies concerned.
- The centre will also help to combine local and international expertise to build capacities before tragedies hit people.

ABOUT GUJARAT FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY (GFSU) AND ITS OBJECTIVES:

- GFSU is the world's first and only University dedicated to Forensic and allied Sciences.
- It became functional from July 2009 with various courses, scientific programs and training modules.
- Its objective is to fulfil acute shortage against increasing demand of forensic experts in the country and around the world.
- It runs in parallel association with Directorate of Forensic Science (DFS) Gujarat to provide hands-on training pertaining to various areas of forensic science, forensic psychology and research & development.

US QUILTS UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

- The United States has called the United Nation's Human Rights Council: a "cesspool of political bias"
- In a surprised move, the US has pulled out of the UN's Human Rights Council by making some very strong allegations/statements.
- Nikki Haley, the US envoy to the UN, said it was a "hypocritical" body that "makes a mockery of human rights".
- Ms Haley further described the council as a "hypocritical and self-serving organisation" that displayed "unending hostility towards Israel".
- A few months back the US recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving US Embassy there from Tel Aviv.
- At the time of announcing the decision to quit, Ms Haley was speaking alongside US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who not too long ago served in the US government as the Chief of CIA.
- Mr. Mike Pompeo, denounced the council as "a protector of human rights abusers".
- The US in the past, did opt to stay out of the UNHRC at the time of its creation in 2006. This was during the George. W. Bush administration.
- US joined the council only in 2009 under President Barack Obama.

SOME FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT UNHRC:

- UNHRC is an inter-governmental body within United Nations system.
- It is responsible for strengthening promotion and protection of human rights around globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It was created by UNGA on 15 March 2006 by adopting resolution 60/251 to promote human rights globally.
- It has replaced former UN Commission on Human Rights.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- UNHRC is made up of 47 UN member states which are elected by UN General Assembly (UNGA) with specific number of seats allocated for each region of the globe.
- Members serve for three-year terms and can serve only two terms in a row.

GOVERNMENT RELEASES DRAFT ON CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY RESOLUTION

- Banks to get access to overseas assets of firms undergoing resolution
Taking a significant step, the government on Wednesday 21 June 2018, released a draft on cross-border insolvency that would help banks access overseas assets of a company undergoing resolution.
- Similarly, the Indian authorities will also be required to cooperate with foreign creditors to a domestic company.
- This is done with an aim to strengthen the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE DRAFT:

- The draft favours adoption of the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Laws) model on dealing with cross-border insolvency.
- As per the draft law, the central government after entering into agreement with other countries, may bring overseas asset of a domestic corporate debtor into consideration of insolvency resolution in India.
- While initially the cross-border insolvency framework will apply only to corporate debtors, it can be extended to cases of personal insolvency resolution as well.
- The draft says India will also cooperate with foreign creditors and enable them to initiate insolvency against local corporate debtors.

WHY DID THE NEED TO FRAME SUCH DRAFT ARISE?

- The existing IBC provides for two Sections –234 and 235 — relating to cross-border insolvency but these are not adequate to effectively deal with default cases such as that of Kingfisher Airlines.
- In many of the ongoing cases under the IBC, several companies have assets and operations outside India, for which a legal framework is required to deal the assets overseas.
- Existing provisions only allow the Central government to enter into an agreement with a foreign country for enforcing provisions of the Code.
- Also, the government can issue a letter of request to a country outside India seeking information.
- The draft norms have now been issued to plug these loopholes and have any effective resolution mechanism in place for cross-border insolvency.

THE UNCITRAL MODEL LAW ON CROSS-BORDER INSOLVENCY, 1997

- The UNCITRAL model law envisages a balance between liquidation and reorganisation of global companies going in for resolution.
- On the global scale, the UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency, 1997(“Model Law”) has emerged as the most widely accepted legal framework to deal with cross-border insolvency issues while ensuring the least intrusion into the country’s domestic insolvency law.
- Due to the growing prevalence of multinational insolvencies, the Model Law has been adopted by 44 States till date, including Singapore, UK, and US.

GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON AFFILIATES OF AL-QAEDA & ISLAMIC STATE

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has banned the Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) under the anti-terror law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).
- In a notification, the Ministry said that the AQIS, an affiliate of the Al Qaeda and ISKP, the Afghanistan wing of the Islamic State are “terrorist organisations.”
- Al Qaeda and IS are already banned under the UAPA.

ABOUT THESE TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS:

The Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS):

- The AQIS is a terrorist organisation, which has committed acts of terrorism in the neighbouring countries.
- It has been promoting and encouraging terrorist acts on the Indian interests in the Indian sub-continent and has been attempting radicalisation and recruitment of youth from India.
- The AQIS has been pushing several provocative messages on social media platforms.
- On several occasions, the Al Qaraar media, affiliated to the Islamic State has posted messages inviting former Hizbul Mujahideen commander Zakir Musa and now the head of AQIS-affiliated Ansar Ghazwat-ul Hind group to join them.
- AQIS was created in August 2014 and is led by an Indian, Maulana Asim Umar, who was later identified as U.P. resident Sanaul Haq

THE ISLAMIC STATE IN KHORASAN PROVINCE (ISKP):

- The ISKP came into existence in 2015.
- The ISKP “promotes and encourages terrorism in the Indian sub-continent and has been committing terrorist acts to consolidate its position by recruiting youth for ‘global jihad’.
- It works to achieve the objective of establishing its own ‘caliphate’ by overthrowing democratically elected governments.
- It considers India and the Indian interests as its targets and is engaged in radicalising and recruiting Indian youth for terrorist activities.
- It mainly comprises of defectors from the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP).

WORLD’S HUNGRY POPULATION ON THE RISE AGAIN, SAYS U.N. REPORT

- An unfortunate reality that's plaguing humanity.
- The most vital ingredient to sustain life on this planet besides air is food.
- A life of two assured square meals a day is not something that's too much to ask.
- The number of hungry people in the world has risen for the first time in more than a decade, according to a United Nations report.
- There are now approximately 38 million more undernourished people in the world, rising from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016.

CAUSES:

- According to the United Nations’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2018 report, conflict is now one of the main drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries.
- Conflict, drought and disasters linked to climate change are among the key factors causing this problem.
- Violent conflicts also led to the forced displacement of a record high 68.5 million in 2017.
- Due to an increasing impact of extreme events related to a changing climate, the economic losses attributed to disasters were estimated at over \$300 billion in 2017.

SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA:

- South Asia, which includes India, has seen child marriage rates plunge, with a girl's risk of getting married in childhood dropping by 40% from 2000 to 2017.
- On the other hand, water stress levels for many countries in the region are above 70%, indicating fast-approaching water scarcity.
- More than nine out of 10 people living in urban areas around the world are breathing polluted air, with southern Asia scoring the worst in this area.
- While electricity and sanitation deficits in south Asia are still poor, there are noted efforts are being made to close the gap.

THE FINAL TAKEAWAY:

- With only 12 years left to achieve the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 agenda requires accelerated actions by countries along with collaborative partnerships among governments and stakeholders at all levels.

INDIA, U.S TO HOLD INAUGURAL 2+2 DIALOGUE IN JULY 2018 IN WASHINGTON D.C.

- The inaugural U.S - India 2+2 Dialogue will take place in Washington D.C, the capital city of the United States. As per a statement from the U.S. State Department "The dialogue will focus on strengthening strategic, security, and defence cooperation as the United States and India jointly confront global challenges."
- Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo and Secretary of Defense James Mattis will host External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Washington, D.C.
- The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India said in a statement that "The two sides are expected to share perspectives on strengthening their strategic and security ties and exchange views on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest."

ABOUT 2+2 DIALOGUE:

- It was during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington D.C. in June 2017, that this new dialogue format was agreed to between the two sides.
- It will replace earlier India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue.
- It is similar to India-Japan 2+2 dialogue format between foreign and defence secretaries of the two countries.
- The 2+2 Dialogue between US and India aims to enhance strategic coordination between both countries and maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It will put strategic, defence and security relationship between the two countries at the forefront and centre stage.
- It will enhance strategic coordination between the two nations and also elevate strategic consultations between both countries.

CHALLENGES SO FAR:

- The meeting takes place amid considerable divergence between the two countries on several strategic and trade issues.
- Tina Kaidanow, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs, who visited India recently, asked New Delhi to desist from conduct that might invite sanctions. The U.S is pressing India to scale down its defence cooperation with Russia.

- Negotiations on India's proposed purchase of Guardian Avenger armed drones from the U.S. is dependent on the progress of talks on the Communications, Compatibility, Security Agreement (COMCASA) between the two countries.
- Nevertheless, this new format dialogue will be closely watched and carefully perceived by both the countries.

RETALIATORY MOVE, INDIA NOTIFIES HIGHER TARIFFS ON U.S. IMPORTS

- Trade War kicked off initially between just the U.S and China and later even the European Union joined the momentum.
- But now India has made a move too in retaliation to the U.S. action of imposing tariffs on steel and aluminium products 25% and 10% respectively.
- India has notified higher tariffs on multiple items imported from the United States (U.S).

HERE ARE SOME DETAILS:

- The items imported from the U.S on which India has put higher tariffs includes agricultural products such as almonds, apples, chickpeas, lentils, walnuts and industrial inputs such as some grades of iron and steel products.
- The notification, however, says that these higher tariffs would come into effect from 4 August 2018, leaving room for further discussions between the U.S. and India before the new rates are implemented.
- It follows the government's notification to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) last week, saying that it was imposing tariffs amounting to \$240 million in retaliation to the U.S. action on steel and aluminium.
- These additional duties were aimed at helping government earn an additional \$241 million, equivalent to amount of iron and steel trade affected by US measures.
- The notification did not mention a tariff hike on 800 cc (or more) motorcycles, which would affect Harley Davidson imports that has already been a point of tussle between the two countries even before this latest move started.
- Lets hope for an amicable solution before this goes in a way that's not beneficial for both the parties !

POWER MINISTRY MAY MAKE 24 DEGREES CELSIUS AS DEFAULT SETTING FOR AIR CONDITIONERS

- The government of India plans to reduce "Cool Wastage" of power soon!
- After an awareness campaign that ran for about 4 to 6 months and a survey that followed to gather public feedback, the government will consider making 24 degrees Celsius as mandatory default setting for air conditioners within a few months.
- The AC makers had a meeting with the Power Minister RK Singh and they were advised to have labelling indicating the optimum temperature setting for the benefits of consumers both from financial and their health points of view.
- It is expected that the temperatures settings in ACs will be in the range of 24 to 26 degrees Celsius.
- Further interesting facts that came out from this proposed eco-friendly move that we are likely to see in the future are:

- Every one-degree increase in the air-conditioner temperature setting results in saving of 6 per cent of electricity consumed.
- This move, if implemented, will result in substantial energy savings and also reduce greenhouse gas emission.
- As per the Power Minister: To begin with, this will be an advisory to be issued to all establishments and manufacturers.
- The Minister said that setting the temperature in the range of 18 to 21 degrees celsius compels people to wear warm clothing or use blankets, therefore, this is actually wastage of energy.
- Also, under the guidance of Ministry of Power, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has carried out a study and has recommended that the default setting in the air-conditioning should be at 24 degrees Celsius.
- The Power Ministry estimates indicate that if all the consumers adopt, this will result in savings of 20 billion units of electricity in one year alone.
- As per BEE, considering the current market trend, total connected load in India due to air conditioning will be 200 GW by 2030 and this may further increase as today only about 6 per cent of households use ACs.
- The BEE also estimated that total installed air conditioner capacity is 80 million TR (ton of refrigerator) in the country, which will increase to about 250 million TR by 2030.
- The targeted commercial buildings will include airports, hotels, shopping malls, offices and government buildings.

Some countries like Japan have put in place regulation to keep the temperature at 28 degrees Celsius.

THE VICE PRESIDENT CALLS FOR MAKING AGRICULTURE VIABLE, PROFITABLE & SUSTAINABLE

- The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated a two-day National Consultation on Making Agriculture Sustainable and Profitable at Vaikuntha Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management, Pune in Maharashtra.
- During the event, the Vice President said concerted, coordinated and focused action is required to double the farmer's income in the coming years.
- The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Devendra Fadnavis, former Union Minister for Agriculture, Shri Sharad Pawar, renowned Agricultural Scientist, Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, former Agriculture Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri Vadde Sobhanadreeswara Rao, Indian Agricultural Economist, Shri Ashok Gulati, several farm experts, farmers and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

THE 4 IS

The Vice President emphasized that 4 Is:

- Irrigation
- Infrastructure
- Investment
- Insurance

are the sectors that are needed to be strengthened for an integrated development of farm sector.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH:

- He added that it was important to make agriculture sustainable through a judicious use of scarce resources like water, electricity and by avoiding indiscriminate use of fertilizers and pesticides.

- The Vice President also pointed out that populist programs like loan waivers and free power would not provide lasting solutions.
- He emphasized that farmers must be provided timely credit at affordable interest rates.
- He added that farmers have to be given the latest know-how and trained in the do-how to improve farm productivity.
- The Vice President said that along with increased production, we need efficient distribution of food grains. Only then can we move our country forward to achieve the goal of zero hunger and adequate nutrition for all.
- The Vice President wanted e-NAM implementation to be further streamlined and expedited.
- The Vice President said that Lab-to-Land transfer of technologies needs to be enhanced.
- Putting stress on the need to promote diversification of crops, he said that farmers should be encouraged to cultivate high-value crops like fruits, vegetables, condiments, pulses, spices and sugarcane.
- The Vice President said that it is important to encourage farmers to take up allied activities like poultry, dairy, fisheries and aquacultures to not only enhance farmers income but also to provide a cushion against the adverse impact of failed crop.

PM MODI TO INAUGURATE THE THIRD AIIB ANNUAL MEETING 2018

- The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will jointly host the third Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on June 25-26, 2018 at Hotel Trident/Oberoi and NCPA, Mumbai, India.
- Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi will inaugurate the third Annual Meeting of AIIB on June 26, 2018.
- The theme for this year's meeting is "Mobilizing Finance for Infrastructure: Innovation and Collaboration".
- This annual meeting will see leaders from varied organizations and levels of government to share ideas and experiences for creating a sustainable future through sound infrastructure investment.
- Key position holders from the Ministry of Finance will also be present during the course of this meeting, to discuss the environmental landscape of investing in infrastructure plans in India and also share an overview about the third Annual Meeting.
- Also, leading experts from a range of fields will be present to lead discussions and share insights on addressing Asia's infrastructure gap in an environmentally and socially friendly way.

WHAT WILL BE SEEN DURING THIS ANNUAL MEETING?

- Several seminars that focus on topics including mobilizing finance for infrastructure, gender and infrastructure and connectivity within and beyond Asia.
- Host Country Seminars on topics including the sources and instruments of financing and new technology choices and alternatives.
- A panel discussion with Chief Ministers on the vision of infrastructure development in India.

SHRI NITIN GADKARI SAYS INDIA TRYING TO MAKE CHABAHAR PORT IN IRAN OPERATIONAL BY 2019

- The Union Minister also went on an official visit to Tajikistan. Shri Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Road Transport & Highways and Shipping said in Dushanbe, that India is trying to make Chabahar Port in Iran operational by 2019.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Union Minister addressed the Indian Community at the inauguration of the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre at the Indian Embassy in Dushanbe.
- The Union Minister in his address mentioned the efforts and initiatives taken by the NDA Government in the last four years and the massive change that has been brought in the infrastructure sector, with National Highways being built at an unprecedented pace of 28km/day.
- The Union Minister was on a two-day official visit to Tajikistan to represent India at the high-level global conference on “International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development”.
- Wide-ranging talks were held between Mr Gadkari and Mr Sirodjidin Muhridin, Foreign Minister of Tajikistan during this visit.
- The two leaders underlined the need to give further impetus to the ongoing bilateral cooperation in various fields and agreed to enhance mutual cooperation in the area of sustainable water development.
- It is interesting to know that the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre at Dushanbe will offer classes in Hindi, Sanskrit, Yoga and various performing arts like music and dance to the Indian diaspora as well as the Tajik people. The Centre has generated a lot of interest and excitement amongst the Tajik people.

FINANCE MINISTER SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL INAUGURATES INDIA INFRASTRUCTURE EXPO 2018

- The Expo is jointly organised by Ministry of Finance, Government of India and FICCI at NCPA, Mumbai.
- The Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), is organising India Infrastructure Expo 2018 (June 24-26, 2018) at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai, India that will run in parallel to the third Annual Meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) from June 25-26, 2018.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT AT THE EXPO?

- The exposition is aimed to showcase achievements under major national infrastructure development programs as well as related investment opportunities to investors from over 80 countries.
- The exposition offers companies from the public and private sector to showcase their latest solutions, technologies and offerings in the realm of infrastructure project development and delivery.
- Participating companies will also highlight their capabilities and key projects delivered over time for information of all delegates.
- Another novel feature of the exposition is the participation of several state governments and central ministries and they will be showcasing investment opportunities in their respective regions / under their national flagship programs to financial investors from across the world.
- The highlight of the exposition is the oil & gas pavilion which has participation of leading public-sector companies who are showcasing the upcoming projects in their respective areas of operation.
- Some of the key national development programs that will be showcased at this exposition include Smart Cities, Sagarmala, Bharatmala, Ganga Rejuvenation Plan and the River Linking project.
- Details on the modernisation plans of the Railways sector in India will also be of interest to the delegates.
- Government of Chhattisgarh & Government of Gujarat are the partner states to the exposition while Government of Maharashtra is the host state to the exposition.
- Over 50 organisations are participating in the exposition including leading entities such as IL&FS, Essel Infrastructure, GAIL, JSPL, Wapcos, HPCL, BPCL, NHAI, MMRDA, MIDC, CIDCO, IREDA, ONGC, Indian Oil, EIL and IIFCL etc.

INDIA GETS A \$200 MILLION INFRA-PUSH FROM AIIB

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank will invest \$200 million in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund to boost infrastructure projects.
- Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg said The AIIB will invest \$100 million in the NIIF's fund of funds at present, followed by another \$100 million later.

INDIA'S SHARE OF RECEIVING FUNDS FROM AIIB:

- India is already the largest borrower from the AIIB with \$1.2 billion financing in six projects.
- In total, the AIIB has invested \$4.39 billion in projects and India is the second largest shareholder of the AIIB with an 8.72 per cent stake.

WHAT IS AIIB?

- AIIB is China led multilateral development bank set up in 2016.
- It is headquartered in Beijing, China.
- Its purpose is to provide finance to infrastructure development and regional connectivity projects in Asia-Pacific region.
- It has 83 member nations.
- India is second largest shareholder in AIIB after China.

WHAT IS NATIONAL INVESTMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (NIIF)?

- NIIF was set up in December 2015 to catalyse funding into the country's infrastructure sector.
- It has been registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India as a Category II Alternate Investment Fund.
- It has been set up as a fund of funds structure with aim to generate risk adjusted returns for its investors alongside promoting infrastructure development.
- It has targeted corpus of Rs 40,000 crore to be raised over the years — 49% of it will be funded by government at any given point of time.
- The remaining 51% will be raised from domestic and global investors, including international pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, multilateral/bilateral investors.
- Its Governing Council is chaired by Finance Minister and has already been set up to act as an advisory council to the NIIF.

INDIAN AND BANGLADESH NAVIES AGREE TO INSTITUTE COORDINATED PATROL (CORPAT)

- Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba will inaugurate the first edition. India and Bangladesh have agreed to institute a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) as an annual feature between the two Navies.
- The first edition will be inaugurated by Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba during his visit there from June 24 to 29.
- As per a statement by the navy, Adm. Lanba's visit is to "consolidate bilateral defence relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation."
- It must be noted that Adm. Lanba will call on Bangladesh President Md Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and also interact with the three service Chiefs of Bangladesh armed forces.

- Two Indian Navy ships and aircraft will arrive in Chittagong to take part in CORPAT.

IMPORTANCE OF CORPAT WITH BANGLADESH:

- It is aimed to consolidate bilateral defense relations between India and Bangladesh and to explore new avenues for naval cooperation.
- At present, both naval forces are patrolling their respected water territories round-the-clock on individual purpose.
- The joint patrol will help to curb maritime crimes, including militancy in sea, and stop various sea crimes like smuggling and piracy in Bay of Bengal.
- Naval cooperation between India and Bangladesh has been traditionally strong, encompassing a wide span which includes operational interactions through port calls, passage exercises along with capacity building, capability enhancement and training initiatives.

CORPAT IS NOT LIMITED TO JUST ONE COUNTRY:

- Over the last few years, the Indian Navy has expanded its assistance to countries in the region through material support, training, EEZ surveillance, provisioning of platforms, hydrographic assistance, joint exercises and offering slots in professional training courses.
- The Navy regularly conducts CORPATs with Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. It also conducts EEZ surveillance of Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles on their request.

MCKINSEY GLOBAL INSTITUTE SAYS GENDER INEQUALITY EXTREMELY HIGH IN WORK & POLITICS IN INDIA

- The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) for the Asia-Pacific region released a report in which it said gender inequality in India is extremely high at the workplace and in terms of legal protection and political voice.

FACTS FROM THE REPORT:

- The report assessed inequality on the basis of a Gender Parity Score (GPS) that uses 15 indicators of gender equality in work and society.
- With 1.0 signifying parity, India's score was 0.30 in gender equality at work and 0.78 in legal protection and political voice.
- The report finds India behind the Asia-Pacific average in all four broad categories, but ahead of Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- However it pointed out that India has progressed faster than any other country in the Asia-Pacific region in the last 10 years, primarily due to advances in education and a reduction in maternal mortality.

A SILVER LINING IN THE REPORT:

- Advancing women's equality in the countries of Asia Pacific, could add \$4.5 trillion to their collective GDP annually in 2025, a 12% increase over a business-as-usual GDP trajectory.
- This presumes a best-in-region scenario in which each country matches the rate of progress of the fastest-improving country in its region — China in the case of the Asia-Pacific. If this were achieved, India would add \$770 billion in 2025 over and above its business-as-usual GDP, it says.

"REMOVEDEBRIS" SET TO DEMONSTRATE TECHNOLOGY TO TACKLE SPACE JUNK

- The 100-kg RemoveDebris spacecraft will attempt to capture simulated space debris
- The first-ever satellite to test possible solutions in cleaning up space junk has been deployed by the International Space Station (ISS) and would soon begin experiments in orbit.
- The Britain-built satellite, named RemoveDEBRIS mission, is one of the world's first attempts to tackle the build-up of dangerous space debris orbiting the Earth.
- It was transported to ISS via SpaceX CRS-14 launch in early April 2018.

HOW WILL REMOVEDEBRIS WORK?

- RemoveDEBRIS mission is aimed at performing key Active Debris Removal (ADR) technology demonstrations (e.g capture, deorbiting) representative of operational scenario during low-cost mission using novel key technologies for ADR.
- The mission plans is to test efficacy of several ADR technologies on mock targets in low Earth orbit (LEO), rather than engaging in ADR of real space debris.
- The mission will comprise of main satellite platform that once in orbit will deploy two CubeSats as artificial debris targets to demonstrate four methods for release, capture and deorbit two space debris targets, called DebrisATs.

THESE FOUR METHODS ARE:

- **Net capture:** It involves net that will be deployed at target CubeSat.
- **Harpoon Capture:** It will be launched at target plate made of representative satellite panel materials.
- **Vision-based navigation:** It will send data about debris back to the ground for processing using cameras and LiDAR (light detection and ranging).
- **De-orbiting process:** The spacecraft after entering Earth's atmosphere during de-orbiting process will burn up, leaving no debris behind.

GUJARAT GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES SURYASHAKTI KISAN YOJANA (SKY)

- This solar power scheme for farmers will enable them to generate electricity for their captive consumption as well as sell the surplus power to the grid and earn an extra buck!
- The pilot project of this scheme was announced in Gandhinagar, Gujarat by Chief minister Vijay Rupani.
- The CM termed it a revolutionary step towards empowering farmers to generate their own electricity using solar energy and help doubling their income.

ABOUT SURYASHAKTI KISAN YOJANA (SKY):

- Farmers having existing electricity connection will be given solar panels as per their load requirements.
- The State and Central governments will give 60 per cent subsidy on the cost of project.
- The farmer is required to take 5 per cent cost, while 35 per cent will be provided to him as an affordable loan with interest rates of 4.5-6 per cent.
- The scheme duration is 25 years, which is split between 7-year period and 18-year period.
- For the first 7 years, farmers will get per unit rate of Rs 7 (Rs 3.5 by GUVNL + Rs 3.5 by state govt). for the subsequent 18 years, they will get the rate of Rs 3.5 for each unit sold.

- As per the Chief Minister, the work on the scheme will begin from July 2.

BHARAT-22 ETF RECEIVES BIDS WORTH RS 15,436 CRORE

- The second tranche of the Bharat-22 Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) received bids worth Rs15,436 crore, much higher than the government's fund raising target.
- Bharat-22 ETF comprises shares of 22 companies.
- The second tranche of the ETF was targeted to achieve a fund mop up of Rs 6,000 crore with a green-shoe option for another 2,400 crore.
- The bidding for the ETF ended on June 22, 2018.
- According to ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund, which is managing the follow-on fund offer (FFO), total bids of 1.2 lakh have been made.
- It must be noted that the government is likely to exercise the green-shoe option to retain the additional Rs 2,400 crore worth bids received.

WHAT IS BHARAT-22 ETF?

Bharat 22 is a well-diversified ETF spanning six sectors:

- Basic Materials
- Energy
- Finance
- Industrials
- FMCG
- Utilities

The sector wise weightage in the Bharat 22 Index is:

- Industrials (22.6%)
- Finance (20.3%)
- Utilities (20%)
- Energy (17.5%)
- FMCG (15.2%)
- Basic Materials (4.4%)
- It was launched by The Union Government to meet some part of its disinvestment target of Rs. 80,000 crore in current fiscal.
- The finance segment includes stocks from State Bank of India (SBI), Axis Bank, Bank of Baroda (BoB), Indian Bank, Rural Electrification Corporation and Power Finance Corporation.
- The energy segment includes Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum (BP), and Coal India.

EXCHANGE TRADED FUNDS (ETFS)

- ETFs are essentially index funds that are listed and traded on exchanges like stocks.
- They are basically basket of stocks with assigned weights that reflects the composition of an index.
- They are similar to mutual funds in a certain manner but are more liquid as they can be sold quickly on stock exchanges like shares.
- The ETFs trading value is based on the net asset value of the underlying stocks that it represents.

- Their price changes daily as they are traded throughout day.
- ETF route is considered as safer mode of disinvestment as it shields investors against stock market volatility.

INDIA, SEYCHELLES INK SIX AGREEMENTS IN SEVERAL FIELDS

India and Seychelles have signed six MoUs to further expand bilateral ties between the two sides.

THESE INCLUDE AREAS OF:

1. Naval Cooperation
 2. Cybersecurity
 3. Culture
 4. Development Projects, etc.
- The MoUs were exchanged in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Seychelles President Danny Faure after the two leaders held bilaterally and delegation level talks in Hyderabad House.
 - The Prime Minister announced a line of credit worth 100 million USD for Seychelles.
 - India also announced to hand over second Dornier aircraft to Seychelles as promised by PM Modi during his visit there in 2015.
 - The aircraft will reach Seychelles before its National Day on June 29, 2018.

ABOUT THE SIX MOUS THAT WERE SIGNED:

- MoU regarding Indian Grant Assistance for implementation of small development projects through local bodies, educational and vocational institutions.
- Twinning Agreement on Establishment of Friendship and Cooperation between Panaji (Municipal Corporation), Goa (India) and Victoria City of Seychelles.
- MoU in the area of Cyber Security: It was signed between Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-in) and Seychelles' Department of Information Communications Technology.
- Cultural Exchange Programme between India and Seychelles for the years 2018-2022.
- Technical Agreement on Sharing White Shipping Information between Indian Navy and National Information Sharing and Coordination Center of Seychelles which will enable the two countries to exchange data regarding identity and movement of non-military commercial vessels.
- MoU between Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of Ministry of External Affairs of India and Department of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles.

CRUCIAL ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE BILATERAL TALKS:

ASSUMPTION ISLAND:

- Both India and Seychelles have agreed to work together on the project to develop a naval base at Assumption Island keeping each other's concerns in mind.
- Both countries are key strategic partners for each other and they respect the core values of democracy.
- They share the geo-strategic vision of maintaining peace, security and stability in Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION:

- Both countries share robust defence and security cooperation.
- The US \$100-million credit from India to enable Seychelles to buy defence equipment to boost its maritime capacity.
- Both countries have strategic convergence in dealing with maritime challenges.
- Both countries are straddled between one of important Sea Lanes of Communication and vulnerable to piracy.
- They face dangers of international crimes such as piracy, drugs, human trafficking and illegal exploitation of oceanic resources.
- India is committed to augmenting Seychelles' defence capabilities, maritime infrastructure and increase capabilities of its defence personnel.

MONSOON SESSION OF PARLIAMENT TO TAKE PLACE FROM JULY 18 TO AUGUST 10

- Bill on National Commission for Backward Classes, on Government's agenda
- The monsoon session of Parliament will be held from July 18 to August 10.
- It will span over 24 days and will have 18 sittings.
- It was formally announced by Cabinet Committee of Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA) chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

WHAT WILL BE NEW THIS TIME?

- The CCPA recommendation now sets in summoning motion process of President Ram Nath Kovind for formally convening the session.

EXPECTATIONS FROM THIS MONSOON SESSION

- The legislative business of Monsoon Session, 2018 will include passing of six Ordinances promulgated during the inter-session period before the session.
Government is going to introduce bills for consideration and passing in both Houses of Parliament including:
- Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017 that seeks to accord constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016.
- Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017.
- National Medical Commission Bill, 2017.
- Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017.
- Also, the election to post of Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha will also be held during the session as term of P.J. Kurien ends in June 2018.

RBI PROPOSES BOARD OF MANAGEMENT FOR ALL URBAN CO-OP BANKS

- To protect the interests of depositors and also overcome constraints imposed by dual regulation, the RBI has proposed the constitution of a board of management (BoM) in every urban cooperative bank (UCB) in addition to the board of directors (BoD).
- The Board of Management (BoM) will be setup in all Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) having deposits of over Rs 100 crore within one year to strengthen governance and promote professional management but banks having deposits less than Rs 100 crore may constitute BoM within 2 years.
- BoM will be in addition to the Board of Directors (BoD).

- The BoD will continue to be apex policy-setting body and constitute various committees of board including BoM to assist it to carry out its functions.

DUTIES & FUNCTIONS OF THE BOM:

- BoM will look after all administrative functions of UCBs as spelt out in respective Co-operatives Act.
- It will be responsible for credit, risk and liquidity management of UCBs.
- It will consider loan proposals, recommend action for recovery of bad loans, implement sound internal controls and oversee compliances, among others.

STRUCTURE OF BOM:

- BoM will be constituted by BoD.
- BoM will have minimum of 3 members in UCBs having deposit size up to Rs 100 crore and 5 members in UCBs having deposit size up to Rs 100 crore.
- The maximum number of members in BoM will not exceed 12.
- Not more than 50% of BoM members should be from BoD.
- Under all circumstances, BoM should have atleast two members outside from BoD.

EXPERTISE THAT IS LOOKED FOR IN THE BOM:

50% of the members of BoM will consists of persons having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of one or more of the following matters:

- Accountancy
- Agriculture
- Rural Economy
- Banking
- Co-operation
- Economics
- Finance
- Law
- Small Scale Industry
- Information Technology

ECONOMISTS LAWRENCE HADDAD AND DR. DAVID NABARRO RECOGNIZED AS 2018 WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATES

- Lawrence Haddad and David Nabarro on June 25 were recognized as 2018 World Food Prize Laureates during a ceremony at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- They were rewarded for their individual but complementary global leadership in elevating maternal and child undernutrition within food security.
- The World Food Prize is most prominent global award for individuals whose breakthrough achievements alleviate hunger and promote global food security.
- \$250,000 prize will be divided equally between two recipients.

ABOUT THE TWO RECIPIENTS:

- Lawrence Haddad is British economist and food policy researcher.
- Dr. David Nabarro has worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations (UN) on health and hunger issues.
- Both have dedicated their careers to reducing hunger and malnutrition.
- Their work has deepened understanding of nutrition's impact on individual health and also on human capital and economic growth which has compelled world leaders to invest in evidence-based solutions.
- Their work has resulted in reducing world's number of stunted children by 10 million between 2012 and 2017.

A LOOK AT WORLD FOOD PRIZE:

- The prize recognizes achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world.
- It was conceived in 1986 by Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug (considered as father of the Green Revolution).
- The prize is annual award carrying monetary award of \$250,000.
- The prize emphasizes importance of a nutritious and sustainable food supply for all people and is considered as means of establishing role models who would inspire others.
- Since its formation, 7 Indians have won it. They are Dr Sanjaya Rajaram (2014), Dr Modadugu Vijay Gupta (2005), Dr Surinder K. Vasal (2000), Dr B. R. Barwale (1998), Dr Gurdev Khush (1996), Dr Verghese Kurien (1989) and Prof. M. S. Swaminathan (1987, he was first recipient of the prize).

S RAMESH APPOINTED AS CHAIRMAN OF CBIC

- The Union Government has appointed senior bureaucrat S Ramesh as chairman of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).
- It must be noted that the CBIC is the apex policy making body for indirect taxes in the country.
- He has been appointed as chairman of CBIC with the status of special secretary to the central government.
- He will succeed Vanaja N Sarna who retired on June 30, 2018.

ABOUT S RAMESH:

- S Ramesh is 1981 batch officer of the Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Central Excise).
- Prior to this appointment he was member in CBIC, mandated with responsibility of implementing the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

CENTRAL BOARD OF EXCISE AND CUSTOMS (CBEC)

- CBIC is the nodal national agency responsible for administering Customs, GST, Central Excise, Service Tax & Narcotics in India.
- It is part of the Department of Revenue under Union Ministry of Finance.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It was renamed to present name from Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) in March 2017.
- It is one of the oldest government departments of India (established in 1855 by the then British Governor General of India, to administer customs laws in India and collection of import duties / land revenue).

- CBIC deals with tasks of formulation of policy concerning levy and collection of customs and central excise duties and service tax, prevention of smuggling and administration of matters relating to customs, central excise, service tax and narcotics.
- It is administrative authority for its subordinate organizations, including Central Excise and Service Tax Commissionerates, Custom Houses and Central Revenues Control Laboratory.

INDIA INCREASES GRANT FROM \$12 MILLION TO \$15 MILLION TO THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

- India speeds up help to handle global environment crises !India announced to increase its grant to Global Environment Facility's (GEF) new four-year investment cycle, known as GEF-7 from \$12 million to \$15 million.
- This announcement came at the GEF Council meeting held at Da Nang, Vietnam where the GEF council approved a \$4.1 billion replenishment of GEF-7.
- GEF is a mechanism to provide grants for environment projects.

INDIA'S ROLE/POSITION IN THE GEF:

- India is among the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change and is both a donor and a recipient of GEF.
- With India's increased financing commitment, it is playing crucial role to mitigate climate change and other environmental challenges across the globe.
- India has been a leading developing country participant in GEF since its inception and has played a major role in shaping GEF.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE GEF MEETING COUNCIL?

- The GEF meeting Council will be followed by sixth GEF Assembly (June 27-28).
- It meets every four years.
- It is expecting 1,200 participants, including heads of state, environment ministers, United Nations (UN), NGOs and business leaders.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

- GEF is multilateral financial mechanism that provides grants to developing countries for projects that benefit global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities.
- It was established on the eve of 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems.
- **It addresses six designated focal areas:**
 - Biodiversity
 - Climate Change
 - International Waters
 - Ozone Depletion
 - Land Degradation
 - Persistent Organic Pollutants
- GEF is an international partnership of 183 countries.
- It is based in Washington DC, United States.

- Since its inception, GEF has provided \$17.9 billion in grants and mobilised an additional \$93.2 billion in financing for more than 4,500 projects in 170 countries.
- The GEF, although not linked formally to Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete Ozone Layer, supports its implementation in countries with economies in transition.

GEF ALSO SERVES AS FINANCIAL MECHANISM FOR FOLLOWING CONVENTIONS:

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).
- Minamata Convention on Mercury.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OBSERVED ON 26 JUNE

- By resolution 42/112 of 7 December 1987, the General Assembly decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking as an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse.
- Supported each year by individuals, communities and various organizations all over the world, this global observance aims to raise awareness of the major problem that illicit drugs represent to society.

THE THEME FOR 2018 IS:

"Listen First - Listening to children and youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe."

THE OUTCOME DOCUMENT OF THIS YEAR RECOMMENDS:

- Measures to address demand and supply reduction.
- To improve access to controlled medicines while preventing diversion.
- The recommendations also cover the areas of human rights, youth, children, women and communities; emerging challenges, including new psychoactive substances; strengthening international cooperation; and alternative development.
- The text puts new emphasis on proportionate national sentencing policies and practices for drug-related offences, and features a strong focus on prevention and treatment.

HISTORY/SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DAY:

- The day was officially instituted by UN after UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 42/112 in December 1987.
- The date was chosen to commemorate Lin Zexu's (Chinese scholar and official of the Qing dynasty) dismantling of the opium trade in Humen, Guangdong, just before the First Opium War in China (1839–42).
- The day recognizes that despite continued and increased efforts by international community, the world drug problem continues to constitute serious threat to public health, safety and well-being of humanity, in particular young people, and national security and sovereignty of States and that it undermines socio-economic and political stability and sustainable development.

- It encourages Commission and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to continue their work on international drug control and urges all Governments to provide fullest possible financial and political support to enable UNODC to continue, expand and strengthen its operational and technical cooperation activities, within its mandates.
- The UN General Assembly held a Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in April 2016. This Special Session marked an important milestone in achieving the goals set in the policy document of 2009 "Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem", which defined action to be taken by Member States as well as goals to be achieved by 2019.

ANANT BARUA APPOINTED AS WHOLE-TIME MEMBER OF SEBI

- The Union Government has appointed Anant Barua as a whole-time member of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- He has been appointed to post for three years on the pay as admissible to additional secretary to the central government or a consolidated salary of Rs 4 lakh per month.

ABOUT ANANT BARUA:

- Anant Barua is at present executive director in SEBI.
- He had taken charge as executive director of market regulator in May 2010.
- Prior to this assignment, he was legal adviser, Legal Affairs Department (LAD), SEBI.
- He had been working in LAD since 1992.
- He is commerce graduate with LL.B from the University of Delhi.
- He was on deputation to Central Bank of Bahrain as legal adviser and has also worked with National Fertilizers Ltd. (NFL), Industrial Finance of India (IFCI) and DCM Ltd.

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (SEBI):

- SEBI is statutory regulator for securities market in India established in 1988.
- It was given statutory powers through tSEBI Act, 1992.
- Its mandate is to protect interests of investors in securities, promote development of securities market and to regulate securities market.
- It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- SEBI is responsive to needs of three groups, which constitute market, issuers of securities, investors and market intermediaries.

IT HAS THREE FUNCTIONS:

- Quasi-legislative (drafts regulations in its legislative capacity).
- Quasi-judicial (passes rulings and orders in its judicial capacity).
- Quasi-executive (conducts investigation and enforcement action in its executive function).

UN RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY (UNRWA): INDIA PLEDGES \$5 MILLION FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

- India's pledge to uplift the ones in need !

- India has pledged \$5 million for United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees.
- The agency serves about 5.3 million refugees scattered around the Middle East.
- Besides India, 19 countries also made pledges (contributions) for UNRWA at the Pledging Conference for UNRWA held in New York, US.

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE UNRWA:

- The agency faces a shortfall of \$250 million, according to the UN.
- US President Donald Trump announced in January 2018 that the US would cut its contributions to UNRWA.
- The agency said that the actual shortfall for its budget would be \$300 million as it had been expecting \$365 million from Washington but has received only \$65 million.
- In March 2018, India announced at a conference in Rome, Italy that its raising its annual contributions from \$1.25 million per year to \$5 million for the next three years.
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA)
- UNRWA is relief and human development agency of UN which supports more than 5 million registered Palestinian refugees, and their descendants.
- It is only UN agency dedicated to helping refugees from specific region or conflict and is separate from UNHCR.

EXISTENCE:

- It came into existence in December 1949 following 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV).

ROLE OF THE UNRWA:

- UNRWA has contributed to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees, who had fled or were expelled from their homes during 1948 Palestine war as well during and following 1967 Six Day war.
- Originally, it was intended to provide jobs on public works projects and direct relief, but now it provides services like education, health care, and social services to population it supports.
- It also allows refugee status to be inherited by descendants.

WHERE DOES THE UNRWA OPERATES?

It provides aid in five areas of operation:

- Jordan
- Lebanon
- Syria
- The Gaza Strip
- West Bank (including East Jerusalem)

Aid for Palestinian refugees outside these five areas is provided by the UNHCR.

CABINET APPROVES CAPITAL INFUSION IN EXPORT CREDIT GUARANTEE CORPORATION LTD.

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the capital infusion of Rs.2000 crore for strengthening of Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC).
- The amount would be infused in the three financial years:
 1. Rs.50 crore in 2017-18
 2. Rs.1450 crore in the year 2018-19 and
 3. Rs.500 crore for 2019-20

WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED?

- The infusion would enhance insurance coverage to MSME exports and strengthen India's exports to emerging and challenging markets like Africa, CIS and Latin American countries.
- With enhanced capital, ECGC's underwriting capacity and risk to capital ratio will improve considerably.
- With a stronger underwriting capacity, ECGC will be in a better position to support Indian exporters to tap new and unexplored markets.
- Increased capital infusion will help ECGC to diversify its product portfolio and provide cost-effective credit insurance helping exporters to gain a stronger foothold in the difficult markets.
- Covers from ECGC will help in improving competitive position of Indian exporters in International markets.
- More than 85% of customers benefitted by ECGC's covers are MSMEs.
- ECGC covers exports to around 200 countries in the world.

ECGC AND ITS ROLE:

- ECGC is a premier export credit agency of the Government of India to provide Export Credit Insurance Services to facilitate exports from the country.
- The ECGC offers credit insurance schemes to exporters to protect them against losses due to non-payment of export dues by overseas buyers due to political and/or commercial risks.

COOPERATION ON MARITIME AWARENESS MISSION: CABINET APPROVES IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN INDIA & FRANCE

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been appraised of the Implementing Arrangement (IA) for Pre-formulation Studies of a "Maritime Domain Awareness Mission" signed between India and France on 10th March 2018.
- The proposed joint mission will be devoted to maritime domain awareness, with the objective to provide relevant data and services to both nations.

MORE ABOUT THE MISSION!

- The objective of the mission is to monitor the maritime traffic and identify non-compliant ships at maximum possible revisit frequency.
- The monitoring system will provide end to end solution for detection, identification, monitoring of vessels in the regions of interest for India and France.
- As per the IA, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and France's Centre Nationale D'études Spatiales (CNES), will jointly undertake various activities during these pre-formulation studies.
- They will present pre-formulation concept study results to respective senior management for review within one year of its signing.

MICRO-, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES DAY : JUNE 27

- The Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Day is observed every year across the world on June 27.
This year is second edition after the day was instituted in April 2017.
- The day highlights strong contribution of MSME businesses worldwide to livelihoods, communities and economies, and need to support MSMEs towards their success.

ITS OBJECTIVES:

- To advocate importance of MSMEs in youth employment.
- Raise awareness about the skills needed by youth to acquire decent jobs.
- Raise awareness about youth entrepreneurship.
- The campaign slogan of MSME Day 2018 is 'The Youth Dimension'.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MSMES IN OUR SOCIETY:

- MSMEs are the major job providers and catalysts for growth.
- They are critical force in realizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- They promote innovation, creativity and decent work for all.
- Interestingly, four in five new formal jobs created in emerging markets are among MSMEs.
- The private sector led by MSMEs drives jobs growth, accounting for 87% of total employment in 2016.
- MSMEs tend to employ larger share of vulnerable sectors of workforce, such as women, youth, and people from poorer households.
- They can even sometimes be only source of employment in rural areas.
- MSMEs as group are main income provider for income distribution at "base of the pyramid".

A LOOK AT THE YOUNG BUT IMPORTANT HISTORY OF THIS DAY:

- The Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through resolution A/RES/71/279 to recognize need to improve small business access to microfinance and credit.
- The resolution was introduced by delegation of Argentina and was co-sponsored by 54 member states and adopted without vote by 193-member UNGA in April 2017.
- The goal is to encourage member states to facilitate observance of the day by increasing awareness and actions to support small business.

GOVERNMENT TAKES STEP TO PUT AN END TO THE MISUSE OF OXYTOCIN

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has banned manufacture and sale of Oxytocin drug formulations for domestic use in private sector to prevent its misuse from 1st July 2018.
- Not only it has banned its import but retail or wholesale chemists cannot stock this drug in their shops in any form or name.
- From now on, Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd will only manufacture the drug and supply it directly to registered private and public hospitals.

WHAT IS OXYTOCIN?

- Oxytocin, often called love hormone, is released naturally in human bonding activities such as childbirth, breastfeeding and sex.
- It is uterine stimulant hormone, prescribed for initiation of uterine contractions and induction of labour in women as well as stimulation of contractions during labour.
- It is also used to help abort fetus in cases of incomplete abortion or miscarriage, and control bleeding after childbirth.
- It may be used for breast engorgement.

A LOOK AT ITS MISUSE:

- It has become a controversial hormonal injection that is misused widely in the dairy industry, agriculture and horticulture.
- The drug's abuse in dairy animals to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers shortens their lives and makes them barren sooner.
- The hormone is also used to increase size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, brinjals, gourds and cucumbers.
- Even its misuse is reported among trafficked children, injected to accelerate puberty among girls.
- It is also being misused to speed up deliveries for pregnant women in overcrowded government hospitals.

GOVERNMENT WANTS TWO MORE STRATEGIC OIL STORAGE FACILITIES

- Cabinet approves establishment of "Strategic Petroleum Reserves" at Chandikhol and Padur.
- The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of additional 6.5 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) facilities at Chandikhol in Odisha and Padur in Karnataka.
- The Cabinet also approved construction of dedicated SPMs (Single Point Mooring) for the two SPRs.
- This should not come as a surprise as this decision is in line with Government's announcement of setting up of two additional SPRs during 2017-18 budget.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED SPR FACILITIES:

- The SPR facilities at Chandikhol and Padur will be underground rock caverns.
- They will have capacities of 4 MMT and 2.5 MMT respectively.
- These facilities will provide an additional supply of about 12 days of petroleum reserves and is expected to augment India's energy security.
- They will be built up project under Public Private Partnership (PPP) model to reduce budgetary support of Government of India.
- The terms and conditions of such PPP participation will be determined by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in consultation with Ministry of Finance after conducting road shows to elicit requirements of market, including prospective investors.

This is not the first time that the Government is going for SPR's:

- Central Government under phase I of SPR programme has built three underground crude oil storage facilities (Strategic Petroleum Reserves) with total capacity of 5.33 MMT.

THESE THREE FACILITIES AND THEIR CAPACITIES ARE:

1. Vishakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh, 1.33 million tonnes).
2. Mangalore (Karnataka, 1.5 million tonnes).
3. Padur (Kerala, 2.5 million tonnes).

- The above three facilities can provide energy security of 10 days of consumption in response to external supply disruptions.
- They are maintained by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL), a special purpose vehicle (SPV), which is wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

US POSTPONES 2+2 DIALOGUE WITH INDIA

- The inaugural dialogue hits a bump on the diplomatic road !
- United States of America (US) has postponed its inaugural 2+2 dialogue with India which was scheduled to be held on July 6, 2018 in Washington DC, citing “unavoidable reasons”.

WHATS NEXT?

- Both countries are now identifying new mutually convenient dates to hold dialogue at the earliest, either in India or in US.
- It must be noted that this is the third time that 2+2 dialogue has been postponed in the last six months.

ABOUT THE INDIA-US 2+2 DIALOGUE

- India-US 2+2 Dialogue format was agreed to between two countries during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to US in June 2017.
- It was aimed at replacing earlier India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue.
- It is aimed at enhancing strategic coordination between both countries and maintaining peace and stability in Indo-Pacific region.
- It puts strategic, defence and security relationship between the two countries at the forefront and centre stage.
- It insulates India-US strategic relationship from feuds over trade issues and deep divide on economic integration policies as trade and commercial issues that collided with strategic relationship between both countries' discussed in Strategic and Commercial Dialogue earlier.
- It is similar to India-Japan 2+2 dialogue format between foreign and defence secretaries of the two countries.

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE PLACES PAKISTAN IN GREY LIST FOR FAILING TO CURB TERROR FINANCING

- Crack down on terror financiers!
- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) at its plenary meeting in Paris, France has officially placed Pakistan on its Grey List of countries involved in providing monetary assistance to terrorism and related causes for failing to curb terror financing on its soil.

- This will be second time Pakistan has been grey listed by FATF, for first time it was placed in the list for three years from 2012 to 2015.

IMPLICATIONS OF BEING IN THE GREY LIST FOR PAKISTAN:

- It will endanger Pakistan's handful of remaining banking links to outside world, causing real financial pain to its already fragile economy.
- It will squeeze Pakistan's economy and make it harder to meet its mounting foreign financing needs, including potential future borrowings from International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- It will lead to downgrading of Pakistan's debt ratings by international banking and credit rating agencies, making it more difficult to tap funds from international bond markets.
- It will also suspend international funds and aid to Pakistan such as Coalition Support Funds (CSF), money which US owes to Pakistan for military operations.
- It will lessen investors' confidence in Pakistan and also impacts its imports and exports, widening its existing huge current account deficit (CAD).

WHAT IS FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)?

- FATF is an inter-governmental policy making body that aims to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris (France) to combat the growing problem of money laundering.
- It comprises over 39 member countries including India. FATF Secretariat is housed at headquarters of OECD in Paris, France.
- Initially, FATF was only dealing with developing policies to combat money laundering. But in 2001 its purpose was expanded to act against terrorism financing.

ROLES OF FATF:

- Combating Money Laundering
- Stopping Terrorism Financing
- Fighting other threats to integrity of international financial system.
- Assess and monitor compliance with the FATF standards.
- Conducting studies of money laundering and terrorist financing methods, trends and techniques.
- Responding to new and emerging threats, such as proliferation financing used for promoting proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

GLOBAL REAL ESTATE TRANSPARENCY INDEX: INDIA RANKS 35

- India was ranked 35th among 100 countries (countries) in recently released Global Real Estate Transparency Index (GRETl).
- The index was released by realty consultant JLL.
- India was ranked 36th in the index during the last bi-annual survey conducted in 2016 and 40th in 2014.
- India's real estate market is currently placed in the 'semi-transparent' zone.

TOP 10 COUNTRIES IN GRETI 2018:

- United Kingdom
- Australia
- United States
- France
- Canada
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Germany
- Ireland
- Sweden

TOP 5 WORST PERFORMERS:

- Venezuela (100th)
- Libya (99th)
- Senegal (98th)
- Mozambique (97th)
- Ivory Coast (96th)

RANKINGS OF BRICS COUNTRIES APART FROM INDIA:

- South Africa (21st)
- China (33rd)
- Brazil (37th)
- Russia (38th)
- India's neighbours:
- Sri Lanka (66th)
- Pakistan (75th)



REASONS FOR INDIA'S IMPROVED RANKING:

- India has moved up one place due to improvement in market fundamentals, policy reforms, and liberalisation of FDI.
- Digitisation of property records and industry status accorded to affordable housing also has helped India to improve its rankings.
- India has emerged as one of the top ten countries to register maximum improvement in transparency in real estate over the last two years.

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTES HOME MINISTER'S SPECIAL OPERATION MEDAL

- Government's new step towards recognizing valour!
- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved institution of Home Minister's Special Operation Medal.

It also has instituted three more Medals:

- Antarik Suraksha Medal
- Asadharan Aashuchan Padak
- Utkrisht & Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medal

THESE MEDALS WILL BE AWARDED ANNUALLY AS FOLLOWS:

- Special Operation Medal and Asadharan Aashuchan Padak will be awarded on Independence Day (15th August).
- Antarik Suraksha Medal and Utkrisht & Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medal will be announced on Republic Day (26th January).
- It must be noted that there will be no limit or quota for awarding HM's Special Operation Medal, Asadharan Aashuchan Padak and Antarik Suraksha Medal.
- However, there will be cap of 1% and 0.5% of sanctioned strength rank subject to the eligibility conditions for the Utkrisht and Ati-Utkrisht Seva Medals respectively.
- The medal may be withdrawn if holder is found guilty of disloyalty or brings force to disrepute such as removal, major penalty, criminal offence etc.

HOME MINISTER'S SPECIAL OPERATION MEDAL:

- It aims to promote high professional standards of Investigation of Crime in State/UT Police and Central Investigating Agencies (CIAs) in the country.
- Police Officers of States/UTs, Central Police Organisations (CPOs), Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Security Organisation involved in Special Operations are eligible for it.

ASADHARAN AASHUCHAN PADAK:

- It will be given to officials of Intelligence organization of Central Government and Intelligence Department/wings/Special Branches/Units of all State/UT Police, CAPFs, Assam Rifles (AR) and National Security Guard (NSG) for acts of exceptional courage and skill in intelligence gathering.

ANTARIK SURAKSHA MEDAL:

- It will be bestowed upon Police personnel of States/UTs/CAPFs/Security Organisation in recognition of operation duty rendered by them for tenure of every two years in internal security in Jammu & Kashmir, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) region and North East region.

UTKRISHT AND ATI UTKRISHT SEVA MEDAL:

- It will be awarded to permanent Police personnel and other permanent support staff working in CAPFs, State/UTs Police Forces, AR, NSG, Home Guard (HG) and intelligence organizations of Central and state Governments and CAPFs in recognition of Long Service of 15 and 25 year and good service records.

NATIONAL STATISTICS DAY: JUNE 29

- The National Statistics Day is celebrated every year on June 29 in India to create public awareness about the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation.
- The day also acknowledges the notable contribution of Late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning.

- The 2018 theme is “Quality Assurance in Official Statistics”.
- It underscores the importance of compliance with essential parameters of quality in statistical systems and products.

HISTORY OF THIS DAY:

- The Union Government had designated June 29 as National Statistics Day in 2007 in recognition of notable contributions made by Late Professor PC Mahalanobis in the fields of statistics.
- Every year Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and Indian Statistical Institute selects particular theme for the day based on current national importance for focused discussions and efforts throughout year to bring about improvements in selected area.

ABOUT THE GENIUS- PC MAHALANOBIS:

- He was born on 29 June 1893 in Kolkata and died on 28 June 1972 in Kolkata.
- He was the first Indian statistician to receive world recognition.
- In 1933, he had founded the first Indian statistical journal Sankhya.
- He had founded the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) and contributed to the design of large-scale sample surveys.
- He had made pioneering studies in anthropometry in India.
- He is also best remembered for the statistical measure Mahalanobis distance.
- He was also a member of the Planning Commission (PC) from 1955 to 1967.
- The Second Five-Year Plan had relied on Mahalanobis’s mathematical description of Indian economy.
- This plan had encouraged the development of heavy industry in India and later became known as Nehru-Mahalanobis model or Basic Industry strategy of economic growth.

