

Monthly GK Digest: September 2018

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Arpinder Singh wins the gold medal in Men's Triple Jump event at 2018 Asian Games

Another Golden day for India

India's Arpinder Singh (25) won the gold medal in Men's Triple Jump event at 2018 Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games.

- He lodged a best jump of 16.77m in the third attempt to win a gold medal.
- Ruslan Kurbanov of Uzbekistan won the silver medal with a best jump of 16.62m while Shuo Cao of China was third with an effort of 16.56m.
- India's last Asian Games gold medal in men's triple jump had come in 1970 from Mohinder Singh Gill.

About Arpinder Singh?

- He hails from Punjab.
- He had last won a medal in a multi-sporting event in 2014 when he had won the bronze medal at the Glasgow Commonwealth Games.
- He had finished fifth in 2014 Incheon Asian Games.

Medals won:

- **Bronze medal:** 2013 Pune Asian Championships.
- **Bronze medal:** 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.
- **Gold medal:** 2017 Ashgabat Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.

Arunachal Pradesh Assembly passes bill for creation of 3 new districts

Arunachal Pradesh gets a makeover!

Arunachal Pradesh Legislative assembly has passed Arunachal Pradesh Re-Organisation of Districts (Amendment) Bill, 2018 for the creation of three new districts, Pakke-Kesang, Lepa Rada and Shi Yomi, in the state.

- The bill was passed by voice vote.
- These new districts were created keeping in view the growing demands of people, bring administration to their door-steps and for an all-round equal development in all parts of the state.
- With addition of these three new districts, **the state will have total 25 districts from earlier 22 districts.**

About the 3 Districts:

Pakke-Kessang district:

- It will be carved out of East Kameng district with five administrative units namely Pakke-Kessang, Seijosa, Pijiriang, Passa Valley and Dissingn Passo with district headquarters at Lemmi.

Lepa Rada district:

- It will be created by bifurcating Lower Siang district with headquarters at Basar.
- It will have four administrative units Tirbin, Basar, Daring and Sago.

Shi-Yomi district:

- It will be created by bifurcating West Siang district with its headquarters at Tato.
- It will have four administrative units namely Mechuka, Tato, Pidi and Manigong.

Germany to provide Euro 120 million soft loan for Clean Ganga Mission

Germany has announced to provide a soft loan of euro 120 million (Rs. 990 crore approximately) to India to strengthen sewage water treatment infrastructure in Uttarakhand in an effort to clean River Ganga under Clean Ganga Mission.

- German development agency GIZ also prepared 'Ganga Box' aimed to target school-going children and inform them about the river.

Details:

- The proceeds from this soft loan will be used for the project focusing on extension and replacement of sewerage system (around 360 kilometres) including complete house connection, construction of sewage treatment plants (STPs) of around 15 million litres per day (mld).
- The purpose of this project is to reduce the inflow of untreated waste water in River Ganga and, thus, to improve the water quality of the river.
- This project also includes construction of 13 sewage pumping stations.

About Ganga book:

- Ganga book has been prepared on lines of 'Danube Book' when cleaning of European river was undertaken.
- This book will have information on mythological, socio-cultural, economic importance about the river and suggestions to avoid pollution, like not dumping plastic in water body.
- Its aim is to bring a behavioural change in people towards Ganga River.
- Ganga book project has been piloted in government schools in Uttarakhand and it will be replicated in other states.

Union Government introduces Atal ranking for institutions to promote innovation

Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has introduced Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA) to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators.

About the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARRIA):

- ARRIA is named after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- It measures some parameters which are India-specific considering the current scenario and status of higher education in India.
- ARRIA parameters are primarily organised in five broad heads which are further elaborated into suitable sub-heads.
- Each of the five main parameters has certain weightage assigned to it and the sub-heads also have appropriate weight distribution.
- The institutions will be rank-ordered based on scores.
- **The overall score can take a maximum value of 100.**

Five main focus parameters of ARRIA are:

- Budget expenses and revenue generated through Innovation and entrepreneurship development (weightage: 20)
- Facilitate access to advance centres and facilities and entrepreneurial support system (10)
- Idea to entrepreneurship (54)
- Development of innovation ecosystems supported through teaching & learning (10)
- Best innovative solutions developed in-house for improving governance of institution (6)

Significance of ARRIA:

- ARRIA will inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship.
- It will focus on quality of innovations rather than quantity and measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally.
- It will set tone and direction for institutions for future development for making them globally competitive and in forefront of innovation.

Call for Code initiative: IBM partners with Indian IT companies to build global solutions for disaster management

Global IT giant IBM has partnered with Indian IT companies for its 'Call for Code' initiative that aims to build global solutions for disaster management.

- Indian IT companies that will partner with IBM for Call for Code initiative include **Persistent Systems,**

Invest India, Wipro, Capgemini and NASSCOM.

About the Call for Code initiative:

- IBM's Call for Code initiative aims to bring startup, academic and enterprise developers together to respond to and recover from natural disasters.
- The initiative seeks to solve one of the most pressing societal issues of preventing, responding to and recovering from natural disasters.
- For this, IBM will provide access to its cloud, data, Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technologies, along with training and code to developers.
- Through this initiative, IBM and David Clark Cause are joining forces to benefit their charitable partners such as United Nations Human Rights and American Red Cross.
- Since its inception in May 2018, over 35 organizations and over 20 IBM clients have participated in this initiative.

4th BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal in August 2018

The fourth edition of Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) will be held in Kathmandu, capital city of Nepal from 30 to 31 August, 2018.

- Nepal is the current chair of BIMSTEC.
- The main focus of the summit will be to increase connectivity between BIMSTEC nations including roads, airways and transmission lines.
- It will also give top priority connectivity and will work towards poverty alleviation.

About the Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC):

- BIMSTEC is the sub-regional group of seven countries in South Asia and South East Asia lying in littoral and adjacent areas of Bay of Bengal constituting contiguous regional unity.
- It was established on 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- It is headquartered in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- It's member countries are: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka from South Asia and Myanmar, Thailand from South East Asia.
- BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization, starting with six sectors including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries.
- In 2008, it was expanded to embrace eight more sectors including agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change.
- They are collectively home to around 1.5 billion people which constitute around 22% of global population.

Objective of BIMSTEC:

- Technological and economic cooperation among south Asian and south East Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.

Sunil Mehta elected as new Chairman of Indian Bank's Association for 2018-19

Punjab National Bank's (PNB's) Managing Director and Chief Executive, Sunil Mehta was elected as the new chairman of Indian Banks Association (IBA) for year 2018-19.

- Bank of India's managing director and chief executive Dina Bandhu Mohapatra was elected as the Deputy Chairman.
- Madhav Nair, Country Head and Chief Executive, Mashreqbank PSC, was elected as Honorary Secretary of IBA for 2018-19, State Bank of India's Chairman, Rajnish Kumar, and Federal Bank's Managing Director, Shyam Srinivasan, will continue as Deputy Chairmen of IBA.

About Indian Bank's Association (IBA):

- It is an association of Indian banks and financial institutions.
- It was established on September 26, 1946.
- It is headquartered in Mumbai.
- Its objective is to strengthen, develop and foster coordination among Indian banking stakeholders.
- It also facilitates various member banks.
- Managing Committee of IBA consists of a chairman, three deputy chairmen, one honorary secretary as well as 26 members.
- The members of IBA comprise of public sector banks, private sector banks, foreign banks having offices in India, co-operative banks, regional rural banks and all Indian financial institutions.
- Currently it has 237 members from banking sector operating in India.

Department of Biotechnology inks MoU with IAE on Enhancing Innovation for Clean Energy Transition

Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under Union Ministry of Science and Technology has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with International Energy Agency (IEA) for enhancing innovation for Clean Energy Transition.

- The MoU seeks to deepen co-operation in support of clean energy innovations to accelerate research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) of clean energy technologies in India.
- It will also help support generation of data for policymaking and improve knowledge of good policy practices for innovation in India and around the world.

More details about the MoU:

- The MoU will ensure cooperation for sharing of energy policies on RD&D and sharing of best practices on data collection and analysis.
- It also has provision for activities such as training and capacity building and accelerating energy innovation by identifying sources of finance.
- The MoU will be coordinated for Union Ministry of Science & Technology by Mission Innovation India Unit set up by DBT and for IEA it will be coordinated by its International Partnership and Initiatives Unit (IPI).
- It will be initially valid for three years.

About the International Energy Agency (IEA):

- IEA is an inter-governmental organization established in 1974 as per the framework of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- It was established in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis after the OPEC cartel had shocked the world with a steep increase in oil prices.
- Presently it has 30 member countries including India.
- It is headquartered in Paris, France.
- Its prime focus is on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy: Energy Security, Economic Development and Environmental Protection.
- It also seeks to promote alternate energy sources (including renewable energy), rational energy policies and multinational energy technology co-operation.
- It acts as energy policy advisor to 29 member countries and also non-member countries like China and Russia.

India opens Zokhawthar immigration check-post in Mizoram along Myanmar border

India has opened the Zokhawthar land immigration check-post in Mizoram along the border with Myanmar.

- It has been designated as an authorised immigration centre for entry into and exit from India with valid travel documents for all passengers to or from Myanmar.
- Zokhawthar will be the second immigration check-post in Mizoram along the Myanmar border after the Zorinpui check-post in Lawngtlai district which was opened in September 2017.

Interesting Details:

- India shares a 1,643 km-long border with Myanmar which touches Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.
- It is the fifth largest after Bangladesh (4,096.7 km), China (3,488 km), Pakistan (3,323 km) and Nepal (1,751km).

- Earlier in August 2018, India and Myanmar opened the land border crossing at Zokhawthar-Rih.
- Zokhawthar is in Champhai district of Mizoram, while Rih is in Myanmar's Chin province.
- Zokhawthar border trading post is one of the largest trading centres after Mizoram's state capital Aizwal.

Exercise KAKADU 2018: INS Sahyadri reaches Port Darwin in Australia

Indian Naval Ship INS Sahyadri has reached the Port of Darwin, Australia to participate in the multilateral regional maritime exercise KAKADU 2018 conducted by Australia.

- The ship was earlier deployed in South China Sea and Pacific Ocean for over four months and had represented Indian Navy in multinational exercises MALABAR 18 at Guam and RIMPAC 18 at Hawaii.

About Exercise KAKADU:

- It is a premier multilateral regional maritime engagement hosted by Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and supported by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- It was started in 1993.
- It is held biennially in Darwin and Northern Australian Exercise Areas (NAXA).
- Exercise KAKADU derives its name from Kakadu National Park, which is a protected area in the northern territory of Australia and located 171 km south-east of Darwin.

About KAKADU 2018:

- KAKADU 2018 is the fourteenth edition of exercise scheduled to be held between August 29 and September 18, 2018.
- It is aimed at enhancing inter-operability and development of common understanding of procedures for maritime operations.
- It will see participation of 23 warships, one submarine, 45 aircraft, 250 marines and approximately 52 foreign staff from over 25 different countries including India and China.
- During the exercise, professional exchanges in harbour and diverse range of activities at sea, including complex surface, sub-surface and air operations will be conducted for sharing of best practices and honing of operational skills.
- Indian Navy's participation in KAKADU-18 will provide it an opportunity to engage with regional partners and undertake multinational maritime activities ranging from constabulary operations to high-end maritime warfare in combined environment.

ITI Limited partners with startups to boost manufacturing of ICT, IoT and Defence Technology

State-owned ITI Limited has signed agreements with leading startups and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) covering manufacturing of a wide range of ICT-IOT (Information and communications technology-

Internet of Things) based solutions.

- The agreements were signed on the sidelines of the first edition of ITI's two-day 'ICT & IoT Startup Tech Expo' in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

About the agreements:

- The agreements with leading startups and OEMs covers manufacturing of civil and military advanced radar systems, advanced edge router systems, data storage and networking solutions, next generation 5G technology products, digital security solutions, advanced metering solutions and wi-fi products and solutions.
- This will help to promote effective platform for startups to convert their innovative ideas into marketable products and services.
- It will also help ITI diversify its manufacturing capabilities in partnership with startups, thereby supporting sustainable turnaround of ITI.
- It is also in line with the draft National Digital Communications Policy 2018 which emphasizes domestic manufacturing of digital communications equipment and components and aims to introduce Phased Manufacturing Program for identified product segments.

About the ITI Limited- TEC New Delhi partnership:

- ITI Limited has also entered into agreement with Telecommunication Engineering Center (TEC), New Delhi for establishment of state-of-the-art telecom testing labs at its Bengaluru plant to facilitate mandatory testing of imported and indigenous telecom equipment in India.

Census 2021 for first time to collect data on Other Backwards Castes

Union Home Ministry has announced that Census 2021 for the first time in independent India will collect data on Other Backwards Castes (OBCs).

- This comes more than 25 years after the implementation of 27% reservation for OBCs based on Mandal Commission's recommendations on the basis of last castes data collected in 1931 census.
- This decision was taken in a meeting for the roadmap for undertaking the Census in 2021 chaired by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.
- The meeting also put special emphasis on improvements in design and technological interventions to ensure that data is finalised within three years of the conduct of the 2021 Census.
- This census data on OBCs will play an important role in such a sub-categorisation.

A look in the history:

- In 1953, President under Article 340 had set up first Backward Classes Commission under chairmanship of Kaka Kelkar to identify backward classes other than SCs and STs at the national level.

- But its conclusion that caste is an important measure of backwardness was rejected on ground that it had failed to apply more objective criteria such as income and literacy.
- Later in January 1979, second Backward Classes Commission headed by B P Mandal (famously known as Mandal Commission) was appointed by then Janata Party government under Prime Minister Morarji Desai to consider the question of reservations for people to redress caste discrimination, and used eleven social, economic, and educational indicators to determine backwardness.
- The Mandal Commission report had estimated OBC population at 52% and classified 1,257 communities as backward.
- It also had recommended increasing existing quotas, which were only for SC/ST, from 22.5% to 49.5% to include OBCs.
- Its recommendations including of reservation were implemented by then V.P.Singh government in 1990.
- The previous UPA government (under PM Manmohan Singh) had accepted demand for caste-based enumeration and undertaken Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in 2011.
- However, data from SECC-2011 conducted at a cost of Rs 4,893.60 crore was not made public for certain errors identified by Registrar General of India.

MOVE Cyclathon organized by NITI Aayog to promote clean mobility

National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog flagged off the cycle rally MOVE Cyclathon to spread the message of clean mobility to the Indian public and promote cleaner, accessible modes of transport.

- The cyclathon was held in a run up to MOVE: Global Mobility Summit scheduled to be held on September 7, 8 in New Delhi.

About the event:

- The event was aimed at promoting cycling for healthier life & less polluting city and spread message of a shared, connected, and zero-emission mobility in the country.
- It was organized as part of 'Mobility Week' which will see 17 events in seven days from 31 August to 6 September 2018.
- These events are aimed to facilitate interactions with various stakeholders across the mobility domain.

About MOVE: Global Mobility Summit:

- It is the first of its kind summit to be organized by NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners to promote new cleaner, accessible modes of transport.
- It is aimed at bringing together and engaging with key stakeholders within a rapidly transforming global mobility landscape and evolve a public interest framework for shared, connected, zero emission agenda for the future.

- It also aims to encourage synergies between indigenous industries such as automobile manufacturing, information technology, electronics, telecommunications to integrate with global supply chains.
- It also envisages mobility as a key driver for generating employment, providing innovative solutions to improve efficiency and efficacy of transport sector and accelerate economic growth.
- It will help to drive government's goals for vehicle electrification, renewable energy integration and job growth and also speed up India's transition to a clean energy economy.

Krishna Kutir: Government inaugurates home for 1000 widows in Vrindavan

Union Ministry of Women and Child Development recently had inaugurated widows' home "Krishna Kutir" at Vrindavan in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.

- Krishna Kutir is a special home for 1000 widows set under **Swadhar Greh scheme** and is the largest ever facility of its kind created by a government organization.
- It was constructed to mitigate the plight of widows living in pathetic condition in Vrindavan.

About Krishna Kutir:

- Its construction was funded by Central Government and will be managed by UP Government.
- It was constructed on 1.4 hectare of land allotted by UP Government through National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC).
- It has 100 rooms or dormitories with a capacity of housing 1000 inmates at a time.
- Its name was selected after a month-long Vrindavan Ashram contest held on social media and entry of Sunita Katyal- "Krishna Kutir", was adjudged as the winning entry.
- The design of this Home was prepared in consultation with Helpage India and is old age friendly.
- It consists of ground plus three floors with facilities of ramp, lifts, supply of adequate electricity, water and other amenities for meeting the requirements of senior citizens and persons with special challenges.
- It is also equipped with a large modern kitchen and a skill cum training centre.
- It also has two dispensaries and a physiotherapy facility to provide regular medical check-ups to inmates.

About the Swadhar Greh Scheme:

- It is implemented by Union Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It aims to ensure economic and social security to women in distress or victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.
- It envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.

Kerala ropes in KPMG as consultant for rebuilding flood hit state

Kerala Government has decided to appoint KPMG as project consultant partner for rebuilding the state ravaged by recent massive floods.

- This decision was taken at a state cabinet meeting chaired by **Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan**.
- Besides, Tata Project Ltd was entrusted with the task of reconstructing roads, buildings and bridges destroyed in the rain fury at Pamba, the foothills of famous Lord Ayyappa shrine in Sabarimala.

More Details:

- **The services of KPMG rendered for projects related to revamping to Kerala will be free of cost.**
- KPMG is one of the largest professional service companies in the world and one of the Big Four auditors, along with Deloitte, Ernst & Young, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- **State Government also has decided to raise funds from foreign countries where Kerala expatriates live in large numbers.**
- It will deploy minister and necessary officials for mobilising funds from countries such as UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, UK, Germany, USA and Canada.
- **It was decided to conduct fund-raising drives in key towns in India in cooperation with local association of Keralites.**

About Kerala Floods:

- **Severe flooding in the month of August 2018 had severely affected Kerala due to unusual high rainfall during the monsoon season.**
- **It was the worst flooding in Kerala in nearly a century after a great flood that happened in 1924.**
- It had directly affected one-sixth of the total population of Kerala.
- **All 14 districts of the state were placed on red alert.**
- **Central Government had declared it "calamity of a severe nature" or Level 3 Calamity.**
- **Due to excessive rainfall, 35 out of total 54 dams within the state were opened for the first time in history.**
- **All five overflow gates of the Idukki Dam were opened at the same time, for the first time in 26 years.**
- Heavy rains also had triggered severe landslides in Wayanad and Idukki districts and had left the hilly districts isolated.
- **It is estimated that the loss and damage due to massive flood, is much more than 2018-19 annual plan outlay of the state which stood at Rs 37,247.99 crore.**

4th International Ayurveda Congress held in Leiden, Netherlands

Fourth International Ayurveda Congress (IAvC) was held in Leiden, Netherlands from September 1 to 2, 2018.

- It was inaugurated by Minister of State, (IC), for AYUSH Shripad Yesso Naik.
- The Congress was jointly organized by International Maharishi Ayurveda Foundation, Netherlands; All India Ayurvedic Congress, New Delhi and International Academy of Ayurveda, Pune in association with Indian Embassy in Netherlands.

More Details:

- The congress focused on promotion and propagation of Ayurveda in Netherlands and its neighboring countries of Europe.
- On sidelines of this congress, Indian Embassy had also organized a special seminar titled "India-Netherlands collaboration in Healthcare, including Ayurveda".
- This seminar was jointly addressed by AYUSH Minister and Dutch Minister for Medical Care and Sport- Bruno Bruins highlighting benefits on traditional knowledge of India such as Yoga and Ayurveda for healthy living and aging.

AYUSH:

- India has a long history and culture running over 5000 years of using traditional medicines for health care and developing them with modern scientific outlook.
- AYUSH is acronym of tradition medical systems that are being practiced in India such as Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy which are collectively abbreviated as AYUSH.

Japanese swimmer Ikee Rikako named as Most Valuable Player (MVP) of Asian Games

Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has chosen Japanese woman swimmer Rikako Ikee (18) as the winner of Most Valuable Player (MVP) Trophy Award in 2018 Jakarta and Palembang Asian Games.

- With this, she became the first female winner of MVP award, which OCA introduced at 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand.
- She was presented with a trophy and \$50,000 cheque.

More Details:

- Rikako Ikee was recognized as MVP for winning 6 gold and 2 silver medals.
- She had won gold medals in 50m butterfly, 100m fly, 50m free, 100m free, 4x100m free and the

4x100m medley events and silver medals in 4 x 200m freestyle and mixed medley relays.

- **She is first female athlete in any sport to win six gold medals at a single Asian Games.**
- So far, only North Korean shooter So Gin-man, had won seven golds and a silver at 1982 Asian Games held in New Delhi, India.
- **With eight medals in total, Ikee has equalled record medal haul in single Asian Games held by North Korean shooter So Gin-man.**
- **Ikee is the fourth Japanese athlete to win this award since its inception.**
- Previously, three swimmers had won this award: Kosuke Kitajima (Japan) in 2002, Park Tae-hwan (South Korea) in 2006 and Kosuke Hagino (Japan) in 2014.

India and Cyprus sign 2 MoUs

India and Cyprus have signed two agreements on combating money laundering and cooperation in the field of environment.

- These agreements were signed after wide-ranging talks between President Ram Nath Kovind and his Cypriot counterpart Nicos Anastasiades in Nicosia (capital of Cyprus).
- **President Kovind visited Cyprus on the first leg of his three-nation visit to Europe including Bulgaria and Czech Republic to continue India's high-level engagements with European countries.**

Further Details:

- The MoU on combating money laundering was signed between Financial Intelligence Unit, India, and Unit for Combating Money Laundering of Cyprus.
- This agreement will further strengthen the institutional framework to facilitate investment cross-flows.

About India-Cyprus ties:

- **Cyprus is the eighth largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative foreign direct investment of about \$9 billion** in areas such as financial leasing, stock exchange, auto manufacture, manufacturing industries, real estate, cargo handling, construction, shipping and logistics.
- **The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between both the countries was revised in 2016.**
- **Diplomatic ties between India and Cyprus were established in 1962.**
- **Cyprus got the support of India during its struggle for independence from British colonial rule.**
- Bilateral trade between both the countries stood at EUR 76.5 million in 2015.
- **The major commodities exported by India to Cyprus are organic chemicals, vehicles & accessories and iron & steel.**
- **India's main imports are aluminium and its products, wood pulp, machinery, boilers, engines, and plastic.**

Health Ministry releases draft rules for e-pharmacies to regulate online sale of medicines

Union Health Ministry has released draft rules on sale of drugs by e-pharmacies to regulate online sale of medicines across India.

- These rules also have been proposed to ensure accessibility and availability of genuine drugs to the people across India from authentic online portals.

Salient Features of the Rules:

- It is mandatory for online pharmacies to register under Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and obtain trade licence applicable across India from any state government.
- E-pharmacies only need to take one licence in any state.
- They can sell drugs all over the country even if they have one licence.
- E-pharmacies need to apply for grant of registration to Central Licensing Authority through the online portal of Central Government.
- The registration issued to any person for e-pharmacy will remain valid for three years period from date of its issuance and renewal of registration will have to be done in case it wants to continue.
- Registration of e-pharmacy can be suspended or cancelled if it contravenes any provision of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- E-pharmacy registration holder will have to comply with provisions of Information Technology Act, 2000.
- It is mandatory for e-pharmacy to maintain keep details of patient confidential and not disclose it to any person other than Central Government or State Government concerned.
- The supply of any drug shall be made against cash or credit memo generated through the e-pharmacy portal and such memos shall be maintained by e-pharmacy registration holder as record.
- Sale of tranquilisers, psychotropic drugs, narcotics and habit forming drugs will be prohibited through these portals.
- The premises from where the e-pharmacy business is conducted will be inspected, every two years, by team of officers authorised by Central Licensing Authority, with or without experts in relevant field or officers authorised by the concerned State Licensing Authority.
- It will be binding on e-pharmacies to deliver drugs in specific time that will be told to patient during time of purchase while the e-portals are mandatorily required to have 24/7 call centres.
- The e-pharmacy cannot advertise any drug on radio or television or internet or print or any other media for any purpose .

Mauritius remains top source of FDI into India in 2017-18: RBI

According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, Mauritius was the top source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India in 2017-18 followed by Singapore.

- The total FDI in FY 18 stood at \$37.36 billion in financial year which was a marginal rise over \$36.31 billion recorded in the previous fiscal 2016-17.

More Details:

- **FDI from Mauritius was \$13.41 billion in 2017-18 as against \$13.38 billion in previous year.**
- FDI inflows from Singapore rose to \$9.27 billion from \$6.52 billion.
- **FDI from Netherlands has declined** marginally to \$2.67 billion as against \$3.23 billion.
- **FDI into manufacturing sector had witnessed substantial decline to \$7.06 billion, as against \$11.97 billion a year earlier.**
- FDI into communication services rose to \$8.8 billion in 2017-18 from \$5.8 billion.
- The inflows into retail and wholesale trade increased to \$4.47 billion as against \$2.77 billion.
- FDI in financial services too saw a rise to \$4.07 billion from \$3.73 billion in the previous year.
- These sectors accounted for more than 50% of total FDI of \$37.36 billion in 2017-18 reflects global interest in new areas, including online marketplaces and financial technologies.

6th East Asia Summit-Economic Ministers' Meeting and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting held in Singapore

The 6th East Asia Summit-Economic Ministers' Meeting (EAS-EMM) and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM) was held in Singapore.

- Singapore is currently holding the Chair of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

About the 6th EAS-EMM:

- **It was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their 8 dialogue partners –** Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and United States.
- **The meeting recognized importance of the ongoing work to maximize opportunities and address challenges presented by digital economy and rise of regional and global value chains as part of their efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.**
- **EAS-EMM forum expressed hope that economic linkages among EAS members will enable them to address challenges due to disruptions in macro-economy that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth.**
- **It also took note of increasing importance of trade and investment relations among the EAS economies.**
- **It also agreed to the importance of keeping markets open and fair as well as improving transparency and predictability of business environment.**

About the 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting (AEM):

- **The 6th EAS-EMM was followed by the 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting.**

- It was co-chaired by Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Suresh Prabhu.
- The meeting attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries.
- It took stock of current level of trade and economic engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It also reaffirmed commitment to further strengthen ASEAN-India economic relations.
- ASEAN has emerged as the second largest trade partner of India in 2017-18 with a bilateral trade valued at US \$81.33 billion, comprising 10.58% of India's total trade with the world.

IOWave18: India to participate in multi-nation Indian Ocean-wide tsunami mock exercise

India along with 23 other nations will be participating in a major Indian ocean-wide tsunami mock exercise known as IOWave18.

- The exercise is being organized by Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.
- It will involve evacuation of thousands of people from coastal areas in over half a dozen states.

About IOWave18:

- The purpose of the exercise is to increase tsunami preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each state and improve coordination throughout the region.
- It is also aimed at enhancing tsunami preparedness at the community level.
- The exercise will simulate Indian Ocean countries being put in a tsunami warning situation and require National Tsunami Warning Centre (NTWC) i.e. National and Local Disaster Management Offices (NDMO/LDMO) to implement and test their communication links and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at all levels of warning chain.
- In this exercises, Hyderabad based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) will be the nodal participating agency.
- It will be involved in evacuation of more than 1,25,000 people from coastal communities of Odisha, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Goa in this simulated tsunami warning situation.

Interesting to know:

- IOC, the only UN body specialized in ocean science and services had coordinated in setting up of Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) in the aftermath of December 26, 2004 tsunami.
- Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), based out of Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, is an autonomous institution under Union Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The state-of-the-art warning centre is operational since October 2007.

- It has all necessary computational and communication infrastructure for reception of real-time data from seismic and sea-level networks, tsunami modelling, as well as generation and dissemination of tsunami bulletins for entire Indian Ocean region (IOR).

Puducherry bags top position in National Clean School Award given by HRD Ministry

Union Territory of Puducherry has bagged the top position in National Clean School Award after seven schools from Puducherry were awarded for cleanliness.

- As many as 52 schools from across the country were bestowed with National Clean School Award in recognition of their efforts in carrying forward Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

More Details:

- Tamil Nadu bagged second position in National Clean School Award.
- The third position was shared by Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.
- Fourth position was shared by Jharkhand, Haryana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.
- Three schools from each state made it for the award.
- National Clean School Award ranking and the list were issued by Union Ministry of Human Resource Development and was prepared by National Institute of Cleanliness Education and Research (NICER).

KAZIND 2018: Indo-Kazakhstan joint military exercise to be held in Otar region, Kazakhstan

India, Kazakhstan joint army exercise KAZIND 2018 will be conducted between Indian and Kazakhstan Army in Otar region, Kazakhstan from 10 to 23 September 2018.

- This will be third joint military exercise between two countries which have a history of extensive cooperation in the defence arena.
- The second edition of the exercise was held in India in 2017.

About KAZIND 2018:

- The aim of the exercise is to build and promote bilateral army to army relations and exchange skills and experiences between armies of both countries.
- The exercise will also serve as a platform for exchange of drills and procedures.
- It will also follow graduated continuum from orientation to full scale mock exercise with an aim of achieving optimum integration among the two armies through enhanced mutual comprehension of each other's tactics, techniques and procedures.
- It will also set stage for greater defence cooperation and consequently manifest in stronger ties between two countries.

- Kazakhstan Army will also get vast knowledge from the experience and expertise of Indian troops in counter insurgency operations.

Internet Society, ISPAI sign MoU to secure Internet infrastructure in India

US-based nonprofit organization- The Internet Society and Internet Service Providers Association of India (ISPAI) have signed a MoU to make Internet safe and secure in India by securing routers which are vital for a healthy internet infrastructure.

- The MoU will also see both organizations exchanging research information and training materials related to routing security which is vital to future and stability of the Internet.

About the MoU:

- The partnership between The Internet Society and ISPAI will also promote **Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS)** which is a global initiative to implement crucial fixes needed to reduce most common threats to internet's routing system and safeguard enterprises and government from cyber threats.
- MANRS will provide simple and concrete steps for network operators that will enable dramatically improved Internet security and reliability.
- By joining MANRS, participants commit to implement actions to address common challenges related to routing security such as filtering and anti-spoofing.

About the The Internet Society:

- It is a non-profit organisation dedicated to ensuring open development, evolution and safe use of Internet worldwide.
- It was founded in 1992 and is headquartered in Virginia, US.
- It is an open standards body which develops and promotes voluntary internet standards.
- It is governed by a diverse board of trustees that is dedicated to ensuring that internet stays open, transparent and defined by the people who use it.

Dr Arif Alvi elected as 13th President of Pakistan

Dr Arif ur Rehman Alvi (69) was elected as the 13th President of Pakistan.

- He is a close ally of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and one of the founding members of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.
- He will take the oath of office of President on September 9, 2018.

About his election:

- Dr Alvi has defeated Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate Aitzaz Ahsan and Pakistan Muslim

League-N nominee Maulana Fazl ur Rehman in a three-way contest to become President.

- Of the 430 votes cast through secret ballot in National Assembly and Senate, Dr. Alvi had received 212 votes followed by Mr. Rehman 131 and Mr. Ahsan 81.
- Six votes were rejected.

About Dr Arif ur Rehman Alvi:

- **He was born in Karachi in 1947 where his father settled after partition.**
- **His father Dr Habib ur Rehman Elahi Alvi was dentist to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru before partition.**
- He had inherited the profession of dentistry from his father.
- His father was also connected with the Jinnah family.
- Prior to his political career, Dr Alvi was a dentist by profession.
- **Dr. Alvi had started his political career about five decades ago when he was a student of de'Montmonrency College of Dentistry in Lahore.**
- **He had joined Imran Khan's PTI as its founding member in 1996.**
- He was the Secretary-General of party from 2006 till 2013.
- In 2013 he was elected as a Member of National Assembly from Constituency NA-250 Karachi and was re-elected in July 2018.
- **He had also served as the President of Pakistan Dental Association.**
- He was also the Chairman of the first Pakistan International Dental Conference in 1981 and was also elected the Chairman of 28th Asia Pacific Dental Congress.
- **In 2006, he was elected as the President of Asia Pacific Dental Federation.**
- **In 2007, he was elected as the Councillor of FDI World Dental Federation, this was for the first time that a Pakistani was elected.**

Note: Dr Alvi will be the third Pakistani President to have an India connection prior to partition.

His predecessors Mamnoon Hussain's family came from Agra and Pervez Musharraf's parents had migrated to Pakistan from New Delhi.

International Women Entrepreneurs Summit 2018 held in Kathmandu

International Women Entrepreneurs Summit 2018 was held in Kathmandu, capital of Nepal from September 3 to 5, 2018.

- The summit was inaugurated by Vice President of Nepal Nanda Bahadur Pun.
- **The theme of the 3-day summit was "Equality begins with Economic Empowerment".**
- It was organised by the South Asian Women Development Forum.

About the International Women Entrepreneurs Summit 2018:

- **The main objective of the summit was to bring together achievers, women business leaders,**

professionals, international service providers, resource organizations, experts, government representatives and other stakeholders with a focus on innovative economic transformation through discussions and collaborations.

- It had seen participation of delegates from SAARC, ASEAN, EU, Africa, Arab countries and China.

About the South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF):

- SAWDF is an autonomous, nonprofit organization based in Kathmandu, Nepal.
- It was granted the status of SAARC Recognized Body by the 36th Session of SAARC Council Ministers at 18th SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in 2014.
- It is the first SAARC Recognized Body organisation working on women entrepreneurs issues.
- It represents national women entrepreneurs' associations or organizations, institutions working towards economic issues of women entrepreneurs in SAARC Region.
- Its membership is based on organizations with extensive work around women's entrepreneurship.

Lockheed Martin, Tata JV to make F-16 jet wings in India

American security and aerospace giant Lockheed Martin has entered into an agreement with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) to manufacture wings of its F-16 fighter jets in India.

- Producing F-16 wings in India will support Central Government's flagship 'Make in India' programme and strengthen Lockheed Martin's strategic partnership with TASL.

Key Details:

- Lockheed Martin and TASL joint venture is bidding for a contract to supply Indian air force (IAF) with 114 combat planes, estimated at more than \$15 billion which must be all manufactured locally under the Make in India programme.
- Lockheed has offered to move its entire F-16 manufacturing base to India.
- The proposed production of F-16 wings in India is not contingent upon the company winning order from IAF for these planes.
- It will help to push local manufacturing that will generate jobs and also end armed forces' dependence on imports.
- Lockheed Martin and TASL have already entered into a partnership for C-130J [Super Hercules airlifter] and S-92 [helicopter].

Japan to conduct world's first test of space elevator

Japanese researchers from Shizuoka University will conduct the world's first experiment to test a small prototype of a space elevator in space by using two mini satellites.

- The test equipment will be launched by Japan's space agency on board of H-2B rocket from the southern island of Tanegashima.

About the experiment:

- **In this experiment, two ultra-small cubic satellites developed by Shizuoka University Faculty of Engineering will be used for demonstration of space elevator technology.**
- Each satellite measures 10 centimeters on each side.
- **Roughly a 10-meter-long steel cable will be employed to connect the twin satellites.**
- The pair of satellites will be released from the International Space Station (ISS) and the container acting like elevator car will be moved on a cable connecting satellites using motor.
- **The movement of the motorised elevator box will be monitored with cameras in the satellites.**

About Space Elevator:

- It is a proposed type of planet-to-space transportation system.
- Its components mainly are cable (also called tether) anchored to the surface of the planet and extending into space.
- It will permit vehicles to travel along cable from planetary surface, such as Earth's, directly into space or orbit, without the use of large rockets.
- The idea of space elevator was first proposed in 1895 by Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky after he saw the Eiffel Tower in Paris and later it was revisited nearly a century later in a novel by Arthur C. Clarke.
- **The one end of the cable of space elevator will be attached near to surface and the other end in space beyond the geostationary orbit (35,786 km altitude).**
- The competing forces of gravity, which is stronger at the lower end and outward or upward centrifugal force, which is stronger at the upper end, will result in the cable being held up, under tension, and stationary over a single position on Earth.
- **Once cable (tether) is deployed at a fixed position, climbers can repeatedly climb it to venture into space by mechanical means, releasing their cargo to orbit.**
- Climbers also can descend ether to return cargo to surface from orbit.

Ranjan Gogoi will become 46th Chief Justice of India

Justice Ranjan Gogoi will become the 46th Chief Justice of India succeeding incumbent Dipak Misra.

- His name was recommended by incumbent CJI Dipak Misra by following the convention of recommending next senior most Supreme Court judge.
- **With this, Justice Ranjan Gogoi will become the first CJI from north-eastern region.**
- He will have a tenure of about 13 months, from October 3, 2018 till his retirement on November 17, 2019.

About Justice Ranjan Gogoi:

- Justice Gogoi was born on November 18, 1954.
- He is a native of Assam and is the son of former Assam Chief Minister Keshab Chandra Gogoi.
- He had joined Bar in 1978 and practiced mainly in Gauhati High Court.
- He was appointed as permanent judge of High Court in February 2001.
- He was transferred to Punjab and Haryana High Court in September 2010 and was appointed its Chief Justice in February 2011.
- He was elevated to the Supreme Court in April 2012.
- In Supreme Court, Justice Gogoi had led important benches that have dealt largely with issue of corruption in politics and public life.
- He has led the apex court bench which ordered Centre to set up special courts to exclusively try MPs and MLAs as a means to de-criminalise politics.
- His Bench is also monitoring the progress made by government in appointment of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal.
- Justice Gogoi was one of the four most senior Supreme Court judges (along with Justices J Chelameswar, M B Lokur and Kurian Joseph) who held the January 12, 2018 press conference bringing up the issue of selective assignment of sensitive cases by recent CJIs to certain judges in the Supreme Court.

3rd ASEM Conference on Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons held in Seoul

The third ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Conference on 'Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons' was held in Seoul, capital of South Korea.

- It was jointly organised by South Korea and National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

Details:

- The 3-day Conference was attended by International Institutions including United Nations, Regional Institutions such as UNESCAP, UNECE, European Union (EU), ASEAN, GANHRI and also International NGOs, Experts etc.
- Indian delegation was led by Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot.
- The Conference reaffirmed the universal value of human rights of older persons, shared information on discrimination against elderly and exemplary cases of long-term and palliative care in Asia and Europe.
- It also discussed operation and tasks of ASEM Global Ageing Centre as implementing institution for mutual cooperation among ASEM members for protection and promotion of human rights of older persons.

- The experience gained from this Conference will be beneficial for Policy formulation and implementation for welfare of senior citizens.

About the Asia-Europe Meeting Summit (ASEM):

- ASEM is a informal process of dialogue and cooperation that brings 53 entities – including 51 countries (including India) from Asia and Europe and two regional bodies European Union (EU) and ASEAN.
- It was officially established in March 1996 at the first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ASEM represents around 62.3% of the world's population, 57.2% of the global GDP and almost 60% of the world's trade.
- The dialogue addresses political, economic and cultural issues between the two regions.
- It also seeks to strengthen relationship between the two regions in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

Government extends Atal Pension Yojana indefinitely

Union Cabinet has decided to indefinitely extend the Atal Pension Scheme, which had lapsed in August 2018.

- It has also broadened its scope by keeping it open-ended.
- The extension was given by taking into consideration of mass participation.

About the New Provisions:

- To further incentivize people's participation in the scheme, the age criterion for participation has been revised.
- Earlier, people of age 18 to 60 years were entitled to enroll in this scheme.
- But now it has been relaxed further to 65 years, taking into consideration rise in average age-expectancy.
- Henceforth the scheme will expand its focus to target individuals, instead of households.
- Moreover, all accounts opened after August 2018 will have accident insurance limit of Rs 2 lakh, double than earlier Rs 1 lakh limit.
- The overdraft facility of the scheme was also increased from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

About the Atal Pension Yojana (APY):

- It is a social security scheme that aims to provide affordable universal access to essential social security protection to the unorganized work force of the country, which constitute more than 85% of the workforce.
- It had replaced earlier government-backed pension Swavalamban scheme targeted at the unorganised sector.

- It was launched in June 2015.
- It is available to all citizens of India in the age group of 18-40 years (making minimum period of contribution by subscriber- 20 years).
- There is no exit to scheme before maturity age.
- In case of death of a subscriber, the spouse of subscriber is entitled for same amount of pension till his or her death.

Dataset Search: Google launches new search engine for scientific community

Search engine giant Google has launched "Dataset Search", a new search engine for the scientific community that will help them make sense of millions of datasets present online.

- It will also help scientists, data journalists and geeks to find data required for their work and their stories or simply to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.

About Dataset Search:

- The new search engine will work like Google Scholar, which is the company's popular search engine for academic studies and reports.
- It will help to find datasets wherever they are hosted, whether it is the publisher's site, digital library or an author's personal web page.
- It can be used to find references to most datasets in environmental sciences, social sciences, as well as government data and data provided by news organizations.
- It will have twin benefits of creating a data sharing ecosystem that will encourage data publishers to follow best practices for data storage and publication and give scientists a way to show impact of their work through citation of datasets that they have produced.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh re-elected as Regional Director of WHO's South-East Asian Region

Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh was unanimously re-elected as World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for South-East Asia for another five-year term beginning February 2019.

- She was re-elected by 11 member states of the Region during elections held at the ongoing Regional Committee meeting of WHO South-East Asia.
- With this, India has retained top WHO position in South-East Asia Region.

About Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh:

- She had served as a civil servant in India, as member of the Indian Administrative Services for over two decades.
- She was the Health Secretary of Punjab.

- Dr Khetrupal Singh's ongoing first term as WHO Regional Director South-East Asia had started on 1 February 2014.
- It had made her the first woman to have been elected to the position of Regional Director.
- Prior to her WHO career, she had served in the health sector in various senior positions during her stint in the IAS and in World Bank.
- She also worked in WHO Director-General's cabinet in Geneva, as Executive Director of Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments in WHO headquarters and was the Deputy Regional Director WHO South-East Asia Region from 2000-2013.

About WHO South East Asia Region:

- It was established in 1948 and was the first of its six regions.
- It has 11 Member States: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste.
- It provides leadership on health matters, articulates evidence-based policy options, provides technical support to countries and monitors health trends in the region.
- It also fosters collaborative efforts of WHO for improving the health of the people in the region.

India, Bulgaria sign MoUs on civil nuclear cooperation, S&T, investment & tourism

India and Bulgaria have signed four MoUs in the fields of Civil Nuclear cooperation, investment, Tourism and establishment of a Hindi chair at Sofia University.

- Both countries also signed a program of Cooperation on science and Technology.
- These agreements were signed after President Ramnath Kovind and his Bulgarian counterpart Rumen Radev held talks in Sofia, capital of Bulgaria.
- President Ram Nath Kovind visited Bulgaria on the second leg of his three-nation visit (Cyprus, Bulgaria and Czech Republic) to Europe to continue India's high-level engagements with the European countries.
- President Kovind was the fifth Indian President to visit Bulgaria and first in 15 years.

Details of President's visit:

- India called for collaboration with Bulgaria in fields of innovation and R&D as it can offer exciting eco system for it.
- It was also held that India and Bulgaria can cooperate in devising technologies to clean rivers and to explore the potential of a blue economy.
- Both countries have also agreed to substantially upgrade their economic partnership in line with the depth of robust political relations.
- Bulgaria can become a key partner for India in the defence sector under the 'Make In India' programme and in technology: India and Smart Cities programmes of the Government.

- Bulgaria supported India on issues like entry into Nuclear Suppliers Group and permanent membership of UN Security council.

India Blue wins 2017-18 Duleep Trophy

India Blue has won 2017-18 Duleep Trophy by defeating the defending champion India Red by an innings and 187 runs in the final match played at NPR College ground in Dindigul, Tamilnadu.

- India Blue's spinners Deepak Jagbir Hooda (5 for 56) and Saurabh Kumar (5 for 51) just needed 10.5 overs on fourth day of final match to bundle out India Red for 172 in second innings.
- Himachal Pradesh batsman Nikhil Gangta was named man of match for his superb knock of 130.

Score Card:

- India Blue scored 541 runs with all out in 167.3 overs (N R Gangta 136, Anmolpreet Singh 96, Swapnil Singh 69, Parvez Rasool 4 for 150, Mihir Hirwani 3 for 190).
- They defeated India Red 182 all out in 69.1 overs (B Sandeep 57, Swapnil Singh 5 for 58) and 172 all out in 38.5 overs (Abhinav Mukund 46, Saurabh Kumar 5 for 51, Deepak Hooda 5 for 56) by innings and 187 runs.

About Duleep Trophy:

- It is a domestic first-class cricket tournament played between teams representing geographical zones of India.
- This tournament was instituted in 1961-62 by BCCI.
- It is named after Kumar Shri Duleepsinhji of Nawanagar.
- It is previously contested by three teams, namely India Red, India Blue and India Green.
- Since 2016-17, the tournament is played by teams chosen by selectors from Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), apex governing body of cricket.
- It is now also played in day/night format with a pink ball.

India, France ink agreement to collaborate for Gaganyaan mission

India and France have signed an agreement to collaborate for ISRO's first human space mission- Gaganyaan to be launched in 2022.

- Both countries have also announced a working group for Gaganyaan.
- The announcement was made at the sixth edition of Bengaluru Space Expo (touted to be the largest space conference in Asia and held in Bengaluru).
- So far, French-Indian space cooperation was in the domain of climate monitoring, with a fleet of joint satellites devoted to research and operational applications.

About the agreement:

- Under this agreement, ISRO and French space agency CNES will form a working group to exchange expertise in fields of astronaut life support, radiation protection, space debris protection and personal hygiene systems among others.
- CNES will be sharing its expertise acquired from France's first human spaceflights of Thomas Pesquet's Proxima mission in November 2016, when European Space Agency's (ESA) astronaut Pesquet was on a six-month mission at the International Space Station (ISS).
- Pesquet had conducted 50 scientific experiments for CNES and ESA.
- It is also envisioned that French space training infrastructure such as CADMOS centre for development of microgravity applications and space operations or MEDES space clinic will be used for training of future Indian astronauts, as well as exchange of specialist personnel.
- The partnership between CNES and ISRO will also allow French space agency to learn from India's developments in the field of crew transport.

About the Gaganyaan Mission:

- It will be India's first manned space mission.
- Under this mission, India is planning to send three humans (Gaganyatris) into space by 2022 for period of five to seven days.
- The mission was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his 72nd Independence Day speech.
- It will make India fourth nation in the world after USA, Russia and China to launch a human spaceflight mission.
- The crew of three astronauts will conduct experiments on microgravity in space.
- They will be selected jointly by Indian Air Force (IAF) and ISRO after which they will undergo training for two-three years.
- GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle, having necessary payload capability will be used to launch Gaganyaan.

India and France sign implementation agreement on Mobilise Your City

India and France have signed an implementation agreement on Mobilise Your City (MYC) to support three pilot cities- Nagpur, Kochi and Ahmedabad for reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport.

- It was signed between Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Agence Française de Développement (AfD).

About the agreement:

- MYC aims at supporting three pilot cities viz. Nagpur (Maharashtra), Kochi (Kerala) and Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in their efforts to reduce their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions related to urban transport

by implementing urban mobility plans at local level and to help India at the national level to improve their sustainable transport policy.

- The three pilot cities selected under programme as well as MoHUA will benefit from the technical assistance activities to be carried out under MYC.
- The main components of the proposed assistance are to support planning and implementation of sustainable urban transport projects, support to strengthening institutional capacity for regulating, steering and planning urban mobility, and learn and exchange formats with other cities across India for exchanges on best practices.
- The details of the project activities will be worked out by AFD in consultation with MoHUA and three partner cities including institutions such as respective Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for Smart Cities, Municipal Corporations and any transport authority or transport related SPV.

About Mobilise Your City (MYC):

- MYC is a global and inclusive network of cities and countries as well as an umbrella brand of European development cooperation particularly related to field of sustainable urban transport.
- It aims at assisting beneficiary partners- i.e. national and local governments in their preparation of National Urban Mobility Policies and Investment Programs (NUMPs) and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs).
- It facilitates establishment of framework conditions for effective investment and sustainable development of urban transport infrastructure and services as well as regulatory soft measures.
- MYC is part of an international initiative which is supported by French and German Governments.
- It was launched at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) meeting in December, 2015.

Temasek inks agreement to invest \$400 million in NIIF Master Fund

Singapore-based global investment firm Temasek has signed an agreement to invest up to Rs 2,750 crore (\$400 million) in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund's (NIIF) Master Fund.

- With this investment, NIIF Master Fund is now one of the largest infrastructure funds in India which invests in core infrastructure sectors in India with focus on energy, transportation and urban infrastructure.

About this agreement:

- As part of this agreement, Temasek will join Government of India (GoI), Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), HDFC Group, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance and Axis Bank as investor in NIIF's Master Fund and as shareholder in National Investment and Infrastructure Limited (NIIFTL), investment management company of NIIF.
- With this agreement, NIIF now has agreements totalling almost Rs. 10,000 crore, with ADIA having committed to invest up to \$1 billion (about Rs 6,500 crore) and domestic financial institutions, about

Rs. 500 crore.

About the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF):

- NIIF was set up in December 2015 to catalyse funding into the country's infrastructure sector by serving as a quasi sovereign wealth fund (SWF).
- It has been set up as a fund of funds structure with an aim to generate risk adjusted returns for its investors alongside promoting infrastructure development.
- It aims to maximize economic growth of country mainly through infrastructure development in commercially viable projects (both greenfield and brownfield) and also in stalled projects.
- NIIF has been registered with Securities and Exchange Board of India as a Category II Alternate Investment Fund.
- It has targeted a corpus of Rs 40,000 crore to be raised over the years- 49% of it will be funded by government and remaining 51% will be raised from domestic and global investors, including international pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, multilateral/bilateral investors.
- NIIF's Governing Council is chaired by Finance Minister and act as an advisory council.
- Moreover, two companies viz. NIIFTL, a trustee of fund and NIIFL, an investment management company of NIIF were incorporated in 2015.
- NIIF is also planning a third fund to be called as strategic investment fund, which could be of similar size to its master fund.
- This third fund will target investments in greenfield projects and will be long-tenure fund of 15 years.

Yudh Abhyas 2018: India, US annual combat exercise to be held Chaubatia in Uttarakhand

India and United States will conduct their annual combat exercise "Yudh Abhyas" at Chaubatia in Uttarakhand from 16 to 29 September, 2018.

- The exercise will be held soon after both countries hold their inaugural top-level "2+2" dialogue in New Delhi.

Details:

- It will be the fourteenth edition of exercise in the Yudh Abhyas series which was started in 2004 under US Army Pacific Partnership Program.
- This year's Yudh Abhyas drills will be upgraded to battalion-level field training exercise (FTX) and division-level command post exercise (CPX).
- It will see participation of around 400 soldiers from each side, increase from around 200 each earlier.
- India will be fielding 15 Garhwal Rifles.
- Last year, Yudh Abhyas was held at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord in the US.

Interesting to know:

- The defence and security cooperation between India and US has witnessed new momentum in last couple of years.
- Earlier in September 2017, both countries had signed Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) which will allow Indian defence forces to receive military-grade communications equipment from US and ensure access to real-time encrypted information.
- It will also help India to obtain critical defence technologies from US.
- India and US have also decided to hold their first-ever mega tri-Service amphibious exercise off eastern coast of India in 2019.
- This will be only second time India will deploy assets and manpower from its Army, Navy and Air Force together for exercise with foreign country after tri-service Indra wargames were held with Russia at Vladivostok in 2017.
- In July 2018, US had announced granting India status of Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1) country, making it the first South Asian nation to be given designation along with US' NATO allies like South Korea, Australia and Japan.
- STA-1 status will help India get critical technology from US in defence and certain other key areas.
- It will also further facilitate India-US trade and technology collaboration in defence and high technology areas.
- In June 2016, US had designated India as a major defence partner intending to elevate defence trade and technology sharing with India to level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners.

Odisha Assembly passes resolution for creation of Legislative Council

The Odisha State Assembly has passed a resolution seeking creation of Legislative Council (Vidhan Parishad or second house of legislature).

- The resolution was passed with as many as 104 of total 147 legislators casting their votes in its favour.
- The resolution now will be sent to Central Government (Union cabinet) for approval, following which it will be tabled in both houses of the Parliament.
- Thereafter, Presidential assent is required to make it an Act.

Details:

- The proposal for creation of Legislative Council in Odisha was passed by State Cabinet chaired by the Chief Minister in August 2018.
- The proposed Council will have 49 members (one-third the size of state assembly).
- State government plans to function legislative council from the old assembly building while the existing assembly secretariat will cater to its administrative needs.

About Legislative Council:

- India has a bicameral system of legislature.

- Just as Parliament has two Houses, States can have Legislative Council (LC) in addition to the Legislative Assembly if they choose to.
- This option is available under Article 171 of the Constitution.

Constitutional provisions:

- Under Article 169, legislative council can be formed if state legislative assembly passes resolution to that effect by majority of total membership of assembly and by majority of not less than two-thirds of members of assembly present and voting (i.e. by Special Majority).
- Parliament can then pass a law to this effect.
- Currently, seven states have Legislative Councils viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana.
- Apart from these, Tamil Nadu Government had passed a law to set up a Council but it was withdrawn in 2010.
- Andhra Pradesh's Legislative Council, set up in 1958, was abolished in 1985, but was again reconstituted in 2007.
- Proposals to create Councils in Rajasthan and Assam are pending in Parliament.

Members of LC:

- Under Article 171 of Constitution, Legislative Council of state cannot have MLCs more than one-third of total number of MLAs of state assembly and not less than 40 members.
- Jammu & Kashmir is exception, as Section 50 of state's Constitution, Assembly has 87 members and Legislative Council 36.
- The tenure of Member of Legislative Council (MLC) is six years (similar to Rajya Sabha MPs), with one-third of members retiring every two years.
- One-third of MLCs are elected by state's MLAs, another 1/3rd by special electorate comprising sitting members of local governments such as municipalities and district boards, 1/12th by electorate of teachers and another 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are appointed by Governor for distinguished services in various fields such as literature, science, art, co-operative movement and social service (in case Rajya Sabha, President can nominate 12 members from field of literature, science, art and social service).

Powers of LC vis-à-vis Rajya Sabha:

- The legislative powers of Legislative Councils are limited compared to Rajya Sabha and State Assembly.
- Rajya Sabha has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, but Legislative Councils lack constitutional mandate to do so.
- State Assemblies can override suggestions and amendments made to legislation by Legislative Council.

- Again, unlike Rajya Sabha MPs, MLCs cannot vote in elections for President and Vice President.
- Vice President is ex officio Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, whereas MLC elected by Council members is its Chairperson.

Arguments in of favour LC:

- It can help check hasty actions by directly elected House, and also enable non-elected and eminent personalities to contribute to the legislative process.

Arguments against:

- Legislative Council can be used to delay legislation and to park political leaders who have not been able to win election.

ONGC discovers oil, gas reserves in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal

ONGC hits jackpot!

- State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has made oil and gas discoveries in Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal that may potentially open up two new sedimentary basins in the country.
- They are category-III basins, having hydrocarbon and are considered geologically prospective for exploration.

Details:

Madhya Pradesh:

- The gas deposits were discovered in a block in Vindhyan basin.
- This find is at 3,000-plus meters deep and is being now tested.
- Four wells were drilled after discovery and now hydro-frack will be undertaken to test commerciality of this field.

West Bengal:

- Oil and gas were discovered in a well in Ashok Nagar of 24 Parganas district.
- Around one lakh cubic meters per day of gas has flowed from one object that was tested.

One must know:

- India has 26 sedimentary basins, of which only seven category-I basins have commercial production of oil and gas.
- Except for Assam shelf, ONGC opened up all the other six basins, including Cambay, Mumbai Offshore, Rajasthan, Krishna Godavari, Cauvery, and Assam-Arakan Fold Belt for commercial production.

- The seventh basin was opened way back in 1985.
- **It is in the process of adding an eighth basin by putting Kutch offshore discovery (it holds about one trillion cubic feet of gas reserves) to production.**

26 sedimentary basins (category wise):

Category-I basins:

- Cambay, Mumbai Offshore, Rajasthan, Krishna Godavari, Cauvery, Assam Shelf and Assam-Arakan Fold Belt.
- They have been established for commercial production.

Category-II basins:

- Kutch, Mahanadi-NEC (North East Coast), Andaman-Nicobar, Kerala-Konkan-Lakshadweep.
- They are known for accumulation of hydrocarbons but no commercial production has been achieved so far.

Category-III basins:

- Himalayan Foreland Basin, Ganga Basin, Vindhyan basin, Saurashtra Basin, Kerala Konkan Basin, Bengal Basin.
- They are having hydrocarbon and are considered geologically prospective.

Category-IV basins:

- Karewa, Spiti-Zaskar, Satpura-South Rewa-Damodar, Chhattisgarh, Narmada, Deccan Syncline, Bhima-Kaladgi, Bastar, Pranhita Godavari and Cuddapah.
- They have uncertain potential which may be prospective by analogy with similar basins in the world.

SLINEX-2018: India and Sri Lanka conducts joint naval exercise at Trincomalee

India, Sri Lanka joint naval exercise SLINEX-2018 are held at Trincomalee, Sri Lanka from September 7 to 13, 2018.

- SLINEX exercise started in 2005 was previously held once in two years and now it has been converted to an annual event, this year onwards.

About SLINEX-2018:

- **The exercise is conducted in two phases, namely Harbour and Sea Phase.**
- **These exercises will involve joint training, exchange of expertise, helicopter and maritime patrol aircraft operations, search and rescue, and maneuvers at sea.**
- The exercise will also involve sports fixtures and cultural events to provide opportunity for personnel

from both navies to learn from each other and to build individual bonds of friendship and camaraderie.

- The scope of exercise is significantly increased this year, as it is seeing participation of three ships, two maritime patrol aircraft and one helicopter participating from the Indian side.
- In addition, Sri Lanka Air Force personnel are also participating in the exercise for the first time.

Why is SLINEX significant?

- SLINEX exercise is a continuation of ongoing operational interaction between both navies wherein regular ships visits are being undertaken between the two countries.
- Converting it into annual event signifies the desire of both countries to enhance co-operation in maritime domain and further strengthen mutual trust and interoperability between two navies.
- SLINEX 2017 was held at Visakhapatnam in September 2017 wherein two ships SLNS participated from Sri Lanka Navy.

Pakistan could become world's 5th largest nuclear weapons state: Report

According to a recent report, Pakistan could become world's 5th largest nuclear weapons state after Russia, United States, France and China in terms of possession of total nuclear warheads.

- Pakistan currently has 140 to 150 nuclear warheads and its stockpile is expected to increase to 220 to 250 by 2025 (surpassing United Kingdom) if its current proliferation trend continues.

Details of the report:

- The current estimate of 140 to 150 nuclear weapons with Pakistan exceeds projection made by US Defense Intelligence Agency in 1999 that Pakistan would have 60 to 80 warheads by 2020.
- Pakistan is continuing to expand its nuclear arsenal with more warheads, delivery systems and growing fissile materials production industry.
- The size of increase in Pakistan's nuclear arsenal will depend on many factors.
- Two key factors will be how many nuclear-capable launchers Pakistan plans to deploy, and how much Indian nuclear arsenal grows.
- Pakistan is developing several nuclear weapons delivery systems, four plutonium production reactor, and its uranium enrichment facilities are further expanding.
- Pakistan is also modifying its nuclear posture with new short-range nuclear-capable weapon systems to counter military threats below the strategic level.
- Its nuclear program seeks to create full-spectrum deterrent that is designed not only to respond to nuclear attacks, but also to counter an Indian conventional incursion onto Pakistani territory.

Government doubles monetary limit for filing cases in DRT

Union Finance Ministry has doubled pecuniary limit to Rs. 20 lakh from Rs.10 lakh for filing loan recovery application in Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRT) by banks and financial institutions.

- It means that bank or financial institution or consortium of banks or financial institutions cannot approach DRTs if pecuniary limit amount due is less than Rs 20 lakh.
- This move is aimed at helping reduce pendency of cases in DRTs.

Interesting to know:

- Banks and financial institutions' recovery of dues (loans) takes place on an ongoing basis through legal mechanisms, which inter-alia includes **Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002; Recovery of Debts to Banks and Financial Institution (DRT) Act, 1993** and Lok Adalats.
- The borrowers of such loans continue to be liable for repayment even when the loans have been removed from the balance sheet of the bank(s) concerned.
- To make recovery tribunals more effective and to facilitate fast disposal of debt recovery cases, government has made several amendments in different laws, including SARFAESI Act.

About Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRT):

- DRTs were first set up under Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act 1993, also known as DRT Act.
- Under it, DRTs were established to facilitate debt recovery involving banks and other financial institutions with their customers.
- Under existing norms, DRT is supposed to dispose of the matter referred to it within 180 days of receipt of application and appeal can be filed against DRT order with Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunals (DRATs).
- There are 39 DRTs and 5 DRATs functioning at various parts of the country.

Bengaluru airport set to become first in Asia to use face recognition as boarding pass

Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru, capital of Karnataka is set to become the first airport in Asia to introduce face recognition based passage system technology from 2019.

- To implement this, Bengaluru International Airport Ltd. (BIAL), which operates KIA has signed agreement with Portuguese software firm Vision Box.

Details:

- The face recognition based passage system will allow passengers to board flights and move across different sections of the airport using automatic biometric boarding procedure instead of manual boarding passes verification.
- In this case, face will serve as the boarding pass.
- The first implementation milestone of this system at KIA will be completed in the first quarter of 2019, with Jet Airways, Air Asia and SpiceJet passengers as first users.

Benefits:

- Face recognition based passage system will simplify journey of air passengers by making it paperless from registration to boarding.
- Biometric technology will identify passengers by their face as they move across airport, avoiding stops and repeated presentation of boarding passes, passports or other physical identity documents.
- It will enable seamless journey for passengers, without obstacles, waiting lines or hassles, from registration to boarding.

Significance:

- On complete implementation, this will be first end-to-end face recognition-based walk through experience in Asia and largest in the world.
- It is also one of the most significant steps towards Digital India campaign endorsed by Central Government.

Note:

- Voice Box had showcased its face recognition-based passage system for first time for Lufthansa passengers at kiosks at Los Angeles airport in US in March 2018.
- It had allowed Lufthansa passengers to use biometric boarding procedure instead of boarding passes.

Hima Das appointed as Sports Ambassador of Assam

India's ace sprinter Hima Das was appointed as Sports Ambassador of Assam to inspire budding players of northeastern state to aim big and the young generation to take up sports seriously.

Who is Hima Das?

- She was born 9 January 2000 at Kandhulimari village near Dhing Town of Nagaon district, Assam.
- Her parents are rice farmers.
- She was the first Indian athlete to win gold medal in a track event at IAAF World U20 Championships held in Tampere, Finland.
- In 2018 Asian Games (Jakarta), she had won silver medal in 400 m final. She is nicknamed 'Dhing Express' after her village in Assam.

Medals won in 2018 Asian Games:

Gold medal:

- Women's 4 × 400 metres relay along with M. R. Poovamma, Sarita Gayakwad and V. K. Vismaya.

Silver medal:

- Mixed 4 × 400 metres relay along with Muhammed Anas, M. R. Poovamma and Arokia Rajiv.

Silver medal:

- Women's 400 m individual race (time: 50.79).
- She had set a national record by clocking 51.00 to qualify for the 400 metre final.

Nepal refuses to participate in first BIMSTEC joint military exercise

Nepal has refused to participate in the inaugural joint military exercise of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) countries scheduled to be held in Pune, Maharashtra.

- Nepal's withdrawal comes in wake of stringent criticism from ruling and opposition parties in the country.

Reasons for Nepal's backing out:

- Nepal is saying that the BIMSTEC military drill is beyond the agenda of BIMSTEC.
- It also goes against the country's history of following policy of keeping equal distance from its neighbours, without ever being part of a regional bloc militarily.
- Experts believe that non-participation of Nepal in such 'military drill' certainly seems like a political call and comes at a time when Nepal-China relations are on upward trajectory and BIMSTEC connectivity seen as counter to China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiative).

About the BIMSTEC Military Exercise:

- The first BIMSTEC field training exercise will be conducted at the Foreign Training Node at Aundh in Pune, Maharashtra from September 10 and 16, 2018.
- Armies of BIMSTEC members including India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Nepal were to participate in it.
- The theme of exercise includes counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain and cordon and search.
- The main aim of this military exercise is to promote strategic alignment among the member-states and to share best practices in the area of counter-terrorism.
- The exercise is required to have platoon-level participation of around 30 soldiers from each BIMSTEC member countries for exercises involving counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain and cordon & search.
- Now, Nepal will be only sending a three-member observer team.
- Apart from Nepal, Thailand will also not be participating in the military exercise and will be represented by observer.

Snow Leopard spotted in Lippla-Asra wildlife sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh

A Snow Leopard was spotted at a height of about 4,000 metres in Lippla-Asra wildlife sanctuary in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

- Its picture was captured by a camera-trap installed by State Wildlife Department.
- These findings have ascertained that Snow Leopards are inhabiting in new areas.

About Snow Leopard:

- Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*) is a large cat native to mountain ranges of Central and South Asia- including Himalayas, and Russia's remote Altai mountains.
- It inhabits in alpine and subalpine zones at elevations from 3,000 to 4,500 m.
- In northern range countries, it is also found at lower elevations.
- It mostly feed on wild animals, but also prey on livestock.
- It usually hunts at dawn and dusk and is able to kill prey up to three times its own weight.
- In India, it is found in states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

Threats:

- It is threatened by poaching for their fur, habitat destruction by infrastructure developments and climate change.

Protection Status:

- It has been listed in Schedule I under Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, Appendix I of Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and Appendix I Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).
- In September 2017, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had downgraded conservation status of Snow Leopard to "vulnerable" from "endangered".
- It is the National Heritage Animal of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Project Snow Leopard:

- It was launched in 2009 to safeguard and conserve Snow Leopard (an unique natural heritage of high-altitude) and its habitats by promoting conservation through participatory policies and actions.

About the Lippla-Asra wildlife sanctuary:

- The sanctuary is a part of district Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh and also is a part of Moorang town.
- It was established in 1974 and is spread over an area of 3089 hectares.
- It hosts a wide range of flora and fauna due to varied elevation, different climatic situation and

topographical type of weather found in its vicinity.

- This type of weather conditions thus helps in the survival of different type of species that are housed in the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary has diversified wildlife that forms part of it.
- It houses wild species of animal like Yak, Ibex, Blue Sheep, Himalayan Musk Deer, Goral, Brown Bear and Himalayan Black Bear.
- The dry alpine scrub and dry coniferous type of forest are main type of flora found in this sanctuary.
- Besides, dwarf juniper scrub, coniferous forest and temperate type of forest of the Himalayan region is also found in this sanctuary.

WOSA-2018: 4th World Summit on Accreditation held in New Delhi

The World Summit on Accreditation (WOSA-2018) was held in New Delhi.

- It was inaugurated by Union Minister for Human Resource Development (HRD) Prakash Javadekar.
- WOSA-2018 was organized by National Board of Accreditation (NBA) with main focus (theme) on "Challenges and Opportunities in Outcome Based Accreditation".

About WOSA-2018:

- The Summit facilitated exchange of information on various challenges being faced during transition between input-output based accreditation to outcome based accreditation.
- It saw participation of accreditation agencies from across world on common platform to share best practices.
- WOSA 2018 also provided opportunity for academia and industry to explore avenues for future partnerships and to create an environment for open dialogue to facilitate mobility of students and professionals world-wide to gain international experience.

Sub-themes of WOSA 2018:

- Achieving excellence through learning outcomes, role of industry in technical education, ranking and rating of higher education institutions- Do they have Role in Quality Improvement, linking government funding with quality and use of ICT in accreditation in large jurisdictions.

Interesting to know:

- World Summit on Accreditation (WOSA) is a biennial Summit organised by NBA, which provides platform to stakeholders to share their knowledge and information on accreditation.
- So far, NBA has organised three Summits in the past. In 2012 (theme: Achieving Excellence through Accreditation), 2014 (International Recognition of Education Qualifications) and 2016 (Quality Assurance through Outcome Based Accreditation).

About the National Board of Accreditation (NBA):

- It is an autonomous organisation under Union Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- It is engaged in quality assurance of programs offered by professional and technical institutions in India through accreditation.
- It has been accorded Permanent Signatory Status of Washington Accord since June, 2014.
- NBA has adopted internationally implemented outcome based assessment and accreditation for ensuring that graduates of NBA accredited programs are globally competent and relevant.

Delhi Government launches India's first scheme for doorstep delivery of essential government services

Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi Government has launched a scheme for doorstep delivery of 40 essential government services like caste and marriage certificates, driving license and new water connections.

- It is the first home delivery scheme of various essential government services in the country.
- It will help to deal with corruption in delivery of essential government services and promote transparent governance.

Salient Features of the Scheme:

- Under this scheme, Delhi government will provide 40 services such as caste certificate, driving licence at doorstep of people in the first phase.
- Eventually, more services will be added to the list in later phases.
- These essential government services will be delivered by mobile sahayaks with fee of Rs 50.
- For implementation of this scheme, Delhi government has an intermediary agency which has set up call centres and hired mobile sahayaks (facilitators).
- For availing doorstep delivery of services, Delhi citizens need to call the centralised number to set up a home visit with the mobile sahayak.
- The mobile sahayak will be equipped with all necessary equipment such as biometric devices and camera.
- These sahayak will help user fill out application, pay fee and collect documents needed for service.
- Then completed certificate will then be posted to the applicant.
- For certificates that mandate visit to office concerned, such as test for driving licence, applicant will be required to personally visit to office after sahayak helps with initial application at home.
- This scheme will cover doorstep delivery of various certificates including caste, new water connection, income, driving licence, ration card, domicile, marriage registration, duplicate RC and change of address in RC, among others.

Nomadic Elephant 2018: India, Mongolia joint exercise held in Ulaanbaatar

India, Mongolia joint exercise Nomadic Elephant 2018 commenced at Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) Five Hills Training Area in Ulaanbaatar (capital of Mongolia).

- Nomadic Elephant is annual bilateral military exercise started in 2006.
- It is designed to strengthen partnership between Indian Army and Mongolian Armed Forces.

About Nomadic Elephant 2018:

- This year it is the thirteenth edition of the exercise aimed at developing mutual understanding and respect between armies of both countries and facilitate in tackling the world wide phenomenon of terrorism.
- The 12 days long joint exercise will be conducted from 10 to 21 September 2018.
- This exercise will seek to improve tactical and technical skills in joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural and urban scenario between both countries under United Nations mandate.
- Indian contingent is represented by the contingent of 17 PUNJAB Regiment while Mongolian contingent is represented by the Unit 084 of Mongolian Armed Forces.
- During the exercise, armies of both countries will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed tactical drills for neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario.
- Moreover, experts from both sides will also conduct detailed discussions to share their experience on varied topics for mutual benefits.

India, Bangladesh jointly inaugurate three projects

- India, Bangladesh jointly inaugurated three projects related to power supply and rehabilitation of existing railway section.
- These projects were jointly inaugurated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina through video conference.

Details of the three projects:

Rehabilitation of Kulaura-Shahbazpur section of Bangladesh Railways:

- Under this project, bridge and a bridge building will be constructed, station with platform and shed along with reformation of level crossing and railway line will be also built.
- Mainline of 44.77 km and loop line of 7.77 km was also renovated.

500 MW additional power supply from India to Bangladesh:

- It will be transferred through existing Bheramara (Bangladesh)-Baharampur (India) interconnection.
- With completion of this project, India will be supplying around 1.16 Gigawatts of power to Bangladesh.
- This project was announced during PM Modi's visit to Bangladesh in 2015.

Akhaura–Agartala Rail Link:

- The railway project was conceptualized in 2010.
- Later, both the countries had signed MoU on this railway project in 2013.
- It is expected that railway line will become operational in 2019.
- The railway project consists of constructing a 15.054 km long railway line.
- It will provide another link in the cross-border connectivity between two countries by connecting Akhaura in Bangladesh with capital city of Tripura, Agartala through Nischintapur in Indo-Bangla border.
- It will help to develop socio-economic as well as cultural bond between the two neighbouring countries.

Ethanol plant: Haryana Government inks MoU with IOC to stop straw burning

Haryana Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to set up an ethanol plant at village Bohali in Panipat district with an outlay of over Rs. 900 crore.

- The MoU will be valid for one year.
- This plant will motivate farmers in its 50 km radius area to manage crop residue and prevent straw burning and help to fulfill increasing demand of ethanol and also bio-fuels for consumers of petroleum product.

About the plant:

- The proposed capacity of this ethanol plant will be of producing 100 kilolitres of ethanol per day.
- It will help to manage crop residue and prevent straw burning before upcoming paddy season.
- 10 cooperative and three private sugar mills in the state will provide raw fuel to this plant.
- There will be regular supply of raw material to this plant as paddy crop residue will be provided as raw material after end of paddy season in October and November and after that sugarcane crop residue will be supplied in cyclic manner.

What is Bioethanol?

- It is an alcohol derived by the process of fermentation mostly from carbohydrates of agricultural residue and feedstocks.
- It acts as a quasi-renewable energy, as it can be easily blended with petrol or diesel, thus making it sustainable transport fuel.
- Its long-term usage will help to reduce emissions and dependency on imported fossil fuel.
- It will benefit farmers economically, as they will be paid for their agro-based produce to extract bio-ethanol.
- It would also help in preventing loss of fertility of soil and damage to environment by reducing air pollution caused by burning of leftover agro-based produce.

First wet mid-air refuelling of LCA Tejas successfully carried out using IL-78 MKI tanker

Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully carried out first ever mid-air refuelling of indigenously developed Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas MK-1 over Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

- With this, India joins in elite group of countries which have successfully developed air-to-air refuelling system for military aircraft.

More about LCA Tejas mid-air refuelling:

- It was the first wet mid-air refuelling of LCA Tejas (LSP8) carried out by transferring 1,900 kg of fuel from IAF's Russian-origin Ilyushin-78 (IL-78) tanker at altitude of 20,000 feet.
- This operation had refueled all internal tanks and drop tanks of LCA Tejas.
- Before this wet contact trial, IAF had successfully conducted 'dry-air refuelling contact trials' where drogue (basket) extended from tanker aircraft IL-78 by fuel hose, which was only tracked and plugged into using LCA's Tejas' refuelling probe without transferring fuel.

What is the significance of this?

- With this first trial of air-to-air refueling, LCA gets much closer to the important battle-ready tag, called final operational clearance (FOC).
- Besides, air-to-air refuelling capability for LCA will be a force multiplier for IAF as it enhances potential of aircraft to stay airborne for much longer periods of time, thus increasing its range and endurance.
- It will also enable IAF options to exploit operational potential of LCA as well as to participate in international exercises without having to stop or stage through several locations enroute.

Interesting to know:

- IAF currently operates nine LC Tejas fighters built to Initial Operating Clearance (IOC) standard built indigenously by Hindustan Aeronautical Limited.
- These jets are being flown by No. 45 Squadron named Flying Daggers (It is first LCA Tejas Squadron) based at Sullur Air Force Station in Tamil Nadu.
- IAF has placed order of 123 LCA Tejas variants at cost of Rs 70,000 crores to Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL).
- Among the 123 planes on order, 20 each are in IOC and more advanced final operational clearance (FOC) configurations, while remaining 83 are in Mk-1A configuration that comes with additional improvements.

Apsara: BARC recommissions upgraded version of India's oldest research reactor

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Trombay has recommissioned India's oldest nuclear research

reactor named 'Apsara', which was shut down permanently in 2009 for repair.

- The refurbished version of this reactor has been named as 'Apsara-upgraded' (Apsara-U) and also has a double capacity compared to its earlier version.
- It is located within India's nuclear weapons facility at BARC's Trombay campus (Maharashtra).

About Apsara:

- Apsara was the first nuclear research reactor in Asia.
- It had become operational in BARC's Trombay campus in August 1956.
- It was the first nuclear research reactor indigenously developed in India.
- The design was conceptualised in 1955 by Dr Homi Bhabha, the father of Indian Nuclear programme.
- Its name Apsara was coined by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Apsara was a light water moderated (swimming pool-type) reactor with maximum power output of 1 megawatt thermal (MWt).
- It burned enriched uranium in form of aluminum alloyed curved plates.
- It was utilised for various experiments including neutron activation analysis, radiation damage studies, forensic research, neutron radiography, and shielding experiments.
- It was shut down in 2009, after more than five decades of service.

The upgraded version of Apsara:

- The upgraded version, like its ancestor, is indigenously made.
- It uses plate type dispersion fuel elements made of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU).
- It will help to increase indigenous production of radio-isotopes for medical application by about 50% mainly due to higher neutron flux.
- It will also be extensively used for research in nuclear physics, material science and radiation shielding.
- The radioisotopes produced by it will be also used in the field food preservation, agriculture, and other industries apart from medicine for diagnosis and therapy.

About Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC):

- BARC is India's premier nuclear research facility based in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- It is a multi-disciplinary research center with extensive infrastructure for advanced research and development.
- Its R&D covers entire spectrum of nuclear science, engineering and related areas.
- BARC's core mandate is to sustain peaceful applications of nuclear energy, primarily for power generation.

e-VBAB Network Project: MEA, TCIL inks agreement to provide e-health and education in Africa

Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) have signed an agreement for implementation of e-VidyaBharat and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project in Africa.

- The project is seen as a digital bridge of knowledge and health between India and Africa.
- It is also considered as an important milestone in India's development partnership with Africa.

About the e-VBAB Network Project:

- It is a technological upgrade and extension of Pan-African e-Network Project (Phase 1) which was implemented in 48 partner countries across Africa from 2009 till 2017.
- The phase 1 of project had successfully imparted tele-education and tele-medicine by linking educational institutions and hospitals in India with those from participating countries from Africa.
- e-VBAB Network Project is completely funded by Government of India for its entire duration.
- It is open for participation to all India's partner countries in Africa.
- Over its five-year duration, this project will provide free tele-education courses to 4000 students every year from African countries.
- It will also be utilized for providing free continuing medical education (1000 every year) to doctors, nurses, para-medical staff from Africa.
- Further, Indian doctors, through this project will also provide free medical consultancy to those African doctors who seek such consultancy.

India- The focus country in Turkey's Izmir International Trade Show

India was the focus country of the 87th Izmir International Trade Show held in Izmir, the third most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara from 7th to 11th September, 2018.

- Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) had led a 75-member Indian delegation for this trade show.

About the Source India pavilion:

- In this tradeshow, India displayed a mega business standalone pavilion 'Source India'.
- This pavilion had hosted 75 Indian companies with an aim of tie-ups in order to increase India's exports to Turkey and other neighbouring countries.
- It had showcased a multi-product pavilion, including companies displaying products like ceramics, cereals and mechanical appliances.
- This pavillion was part of a series of Source India pavilions that TPCI is hosting in important tradeshow across the world for boosting India's exports.

TPCI:

- It is the trade and investment promotion organization of Department of Commerce, Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- It works to open new areas for co-operation in trade and investment between India and rest of the world.

NITI Aayog, Intel and TIFR collaborate to set up Model International Center for Transformative AI

NITI Aayog, Intel, and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) are collaborating to set up the Model International Center for Transformative Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI) in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- This collaboration is part of NITI Aayog's 'National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence' Discussion Paper that focuses on establishing ICTAI in the country through private sector collaboration.

About Model ICTAI:

Objectives:

- It will aid in Developing and deploying AI-led application-based research projects.
- It will conduct advanced research to incubate AI-led solutions in three important areas- healthcare, agriculture and smart mobility- by bringing together expertise of TIFR and Intel.
- It will experiment, discover and establish best practices in domains of ICTAI governance, fundamental research, physical infrastructure, compute and service infrastructure needs, and talent acquisition.

Significance:

- Through this collaborative effort, model ICTAI will develop AI foundational frameworks, tools and assets, including curated datasets and unique AI algorithms.
- It will also develop standards and support policy development related to IT such as data-storage, information security, privacy, and ethics for data capture and use.
- It will also develop AI foundational technologies to promote applied research that can scale for national impact and will lead to the creation of a vibrant and self-sustaining ecosystem.
- ICTAI will also collaborate with industry leaders, startups, and AI services and product companies to productize technologies and IP that are developed by it.
- It will also support skilling and talent development for world-class AI talent.
- The learning and best practices developed through this model ICTAI will be used by NITI Aayog to set up future ICTAIs across country.

Rail Sahyog web portal launched for corporates to fund creation of amenities at Railway stations

Union Ministry of Railways has launched Rail Sahyog web portal (www.railsahyog.in).

- It will provide a platform to Corporates and PSUs to fund creation of amenities at railway stations through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

About the Rail Sahyog portal:

- This portal will allow companies to register their requests for contributing to create amenities at railway stations through their CSR funds.
- These requests will be processed by Railway officials and based on the principle of first come first serve, requests will be shortlisted.
- Selected applicants will be intimated to deposit the funds with Railways or its nominated agencies like RITES or RAILTEL etc.
- The nominated agency will get the work executed thereafter.
- The portal will provide simplicity and transparency for companies to fund creation of amenities at Railway stations through CSR funds.
- It will provide opportunity for industry, companies, associations to collaborate with Indian Railways.
- Fund utilized for creation of amenities will be beneficial for passengers and for neighbourhood of railway vicinity.

Government launches Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund Scheme

Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has launched Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF) Scheme with an outlay of Rs. 10881 crore.

- Under this fund, first installment of Rs. 440 crore was given to National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

About the Dairy Processing & Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF) Scheme:

- This scheme was approved by Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) in September 2017 with an aim to boost the dairy sector.
- It is managed by NDDB and will be implemented from 2017-18 to 2028-29.
- Milk unions, multi-state milk cooperatives, state dairy federations, milk producer companies and NDDB subsidiaries can avail loan under this scheme after meeting the eligibility criteria.
- Under this scheme, eligible milk organisations will be provided financial assistance in the form of a loan at 6.5% interest for building an efficient milk procurement system and other dairy processing infrastructure.
- This loan will be reimbursed over period of 10 years.
- It also has provision of interest subsidy on loans.
- The loan proceeds will be provided for putting in place efficient milk procurement system by setting up of chilling infrastructure and installation of electronic milk adulteration testing equipment.

- It will be also used for creation, modernisation and expansion of processing infrastructure and manufacturing faculties for value-added dairy products.
- **The scheme will benefit 95,00,000 farmers in about 50,000 villages.**
- **In addition to this, it will provide direct and indirect employment to many skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.**
- It will also help in creating additional milk processing capacity of 126 lakh litre per day, milk drying capacity of 210 MT per day, milk chilling capacity of 140 lakh litre per day.

Ministry of Water Resources institutes National Water Awards

Union Ministry of Water Resources has instituted National Water Awards with an objective to encourage all stakeholders to manage their water consciously in the country.

- The awards will be given for 13 categories.

Aim & Objective of National Water Awards 2018:

- **The objective of these awards is to encourage all stakeholders including NGOs, Gram Panchayats, Urban local bodies, water user associations, institutions, corporate sector, Individuals etc. for adopting innovative practices of ground water augmentation by rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge.**
- **It also seeks to encourage water use efficiency, recycling and reuse of water and creating awareness through people's participation in targeted areas for ground water resources development, adequate capacity building etc.**

13 Categories for which the awards will be given:

1. Best State
2. Best District
3. Best Village Panchayat
4. Best Municipal Corporation
5. Best research, innovation and adaptation of new technology for water conservation
6. Best educative and mass awareness efforts
7. Best TV show for promoting water conservation
8. Best Newspaper
9. Best School

10. Best Institution for successful campus water usage
11. Best Resident Welfare Association (RWA)
12. Organizations for Best Religious and Recreational & Tourism Water Uses
13. Best Industry for industrial water conservation

Ministry of Minority Affairs launches National Scholarship Portal Mobile App

Union Ministry for Minority Affairs has launched the country's first National Scholarship Portal Mobile App (NSP Mobile App).

- It aims to provide smooth, accessible and hassle-free scholarship system for students from poor and weaker sections.

About NSP Mobile App:

- The mobile app will be beneficial for beneficiary students in many ways as they will get all information regarding various scholarships on this mobile app, they will be able to apply for scholarships sitting in their home.
- By using it, students can also upload necessary documents and can check the status of their application, scholarship disbursement etc.
- Students from far-flung, hilly areas and North East will be the most benefitted from this app.

Interesting to know:

- Ministry of Minority Affairs has completely gone online to provide benefits of every scheme directly to the needy without any obstacle and eliminating middlemen.
- Transparent and hassle-free scholarship system has helped in this endeavor by going online.
- All the scholarships are being given directly into bank accounts of needy students under Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode through National Scholarship Portal which has removed any scope for duplication and leakage.
- Moreover, Central Government's "Empowerment without Appeasement" policy has ensured that record about 3 crore students belonging to poor and weaker sections of Minorities have been benefitted from various scholarship programmes.
- The beneficiaries include about 1 crore 63 lakh girls.

Secondary Steel Sector Awards given for contribution to National Economy

Union Ministry of Steel for the first time gave away Secondary Steel Sector Awards to 26 mini steel

companies in recognition of their contribution to the national economy.

- 12 companies were awarded Gold Certificates and 14 Silver Certificates for their performance during 2016-17.
- These awards were given in order to enhance global competitiveness of companies involved in secondary steel sector.
- It will also encourage secondary steel sector to strive for improving performance as well as quality of production.

About the Secondary Steel Sector:

- The secondary steel sector is a critical and important segment of market spanning from construction, cold rolled products, machine tools, pipes, stainless steel, galvanized and color coated steel as well as exports.
- It contributes to more than half of the total steel production in the country.
- It plays an important role along with integrated steel players in order to achieve the steel production capacity of 300 million tonne by year 2030-31.
- At present India has 134 MT capacity.

About the Steel Sector in India:

- Steel is one of the core sectors of the Indian economy.
- India is the 3rd largest steel producer in the world.
- Steel contributes to over 2% to India's GDP and creates a virtuous cycle of employment generation throughout the economy.
- The steel consumption of India has almost touched 70 kg per capita.

First Tribal Circuit Project under Swadesh Darshan Scheme inaugurated in Chhattisgarh

Union Ministry of Tourism has inaugurated India's first Tribal Circuit Project connecting 13 tourism sites in Chhattisgarh under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

- The circuit connects Jashpur, Kunkuri, Mainpat, Kamleshpur, Maheshpur, Kurdar, Sarodadadar, Gangrel, Kondagaon, Nathiya Nawagaon, Jagdalpur, Chitrakoot, and Tirthgarh in Chhattisgarh.

About the Tribal Circuit Project:

- Major components sanctioned under tribal circuit project in Chhattisgarh includes developing eco log huts, craft haats, souvenir shops, open amphitheatre, tribal interpretation centres, workshop centres, tourist amenities centres, viewpoints, nature trails, solar illuminations etc.
- These components will improve the existing tourist facilities, enhance the overall tourist experience and help in getting more visitors which in return will increase job opportunities in the area.

Some details to look at:

- **Development of tribes and tribal culture is one of the prime area of focus for the Tourism Ministry.**
- It is carrying out an array of activities for development and promotion of tourism in the tribal region.
- Under Tribal Circuit theme of Swadesh Darshan Scheme, Tourism Ministry has sanctioned four projects to Nagaland, Telangana and Chhattisgarh for Rs. 381.37 crore.
- **Chhattisgarh was considered for the first Tribal Circuit theme for acknowledging the sovereignty of tribes and to promote the rich and diverse primitive assets in the state.**
- Chhattisgarh is known for its exceptional scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage.
- **Tribes make up over one-third of state population who have retained their culture and traditions for centuries.**

About the Swadesh Darshan scheme:

- **The scheme was launched by Union Tourism Ministry with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country.**
- These tourist circuits will be developed on principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
- **Under this scheme, 13 thematic circuits have been identified for development.**
- They are Buddhist Circuit, North-East India Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.
- It is 100% centrally funded scheme for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- **It also has a provision for leveraging voluntary funding under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.**
- The funding of projects under this scheme varies from state to state.
- **It is finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by Programme Management Consultant (PMC) which is a national level consultant for implementing the scheme.**
- **So far, Tourism Ministry has sanctioned 74 projects worth Rs. 5997.47 crore to 31 states and Union Territories under this scheme.**

CCEA approves 100% Electrification of Railways by 2021-22

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved 100% electrification of broad gauge routes of Indian Railways (IR) by 2021-22.

- The 100% electrification will reduce use of imported fossil fuels thereby improve energy security.
- Reduction in consumption of high speed diesel oil will also result in reduction of GHG emissions, thus, reduce environmental impact of Railways.

Details:

- CCEA's decision covers only electrifying remaining 13,675 kilometers (16,540 track kilometers).
- Currently, around 48% of the country's 61,680 km broad gauge railway network is electrified.
- However, this approval does not cover 3,479 km of metre gauge and 2,209 of broad gauge network.
- After completing the electrification, India will be having second largest electrified railway networks in the world after China, which has 87,000 km electrified network (around 68% of its network) and only large railway with 100 % electrification.
- The proposed electrification is mainly for the missing links and last mile connectivity that will increase the operational efficiency, enhance line capacity and improve average speed of trains.

Benefits of 100% electrification:

Capacity & Speed:

- It will provide seamless train operation by eliminating detention of trains due to change in traction from diesel to electric and vice versa.
- It will help Railways in enhancing line capacity due to higher speed & higher haulage capacity of electric locomotives.

Safety:

- It will result in improved signalling system which will lead to enhanced safety in train operation.

Energy Security and Energy bill savings:

- It will reduce fossil fuel consumption of about 2.83 billion liters per annum.
- Thus, reduce dependence on imported petroleum based fuels will ensure energy security to the nation.
- It will help Indian Railways to save Rs 13,500 crore annually on fuel bill.
- Moreover, maintenance of electric locomotive is less compared to diesel locomotive maintenance cost.

Sustainability:

- It is considered as an environmentally friendly option as it will reduce carbon footprint of Indian Railways as environmental cost per tonne Km for electric traction is less as compared to diesel traction.
- Total shift to electric traction will reduce CO2 emission of Railways by 24% till 2027-28.
- It is also in line with India's commitment in COP21.

Employment Generation:

- It will generate direct employment of about 20.4 crore man days during the period of construction.

What about existing diesel engines?

- Indian Railways has a fleet of 5,526 diesel engines.
- With change traction policy, operational diesel engines will be converted into electric ones during periodic overhaul, so that the diesel fleet gradually turns electric.
- Domestically manufactured new diesel locomotives will be exported.
- Even after 100% electrification, diesel engines will be used in emergencies and for strategic use such as in the border areas.

CCEA approves continuation of Capacity Development Scheme

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved continuation of Capacity Development Scheme for the period of 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- It is an ongoing Central Sector Scheme of Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI).

About the Capacity Development Scheme:

- Its objective is to augment infrastructural, technical as well as manpower resources for making available credible and timely official statistics for policy makers and public at large.

Two Sub-schemes under it are:

Economic Census:

- It includes listing of all non-agricultural establishments and is undertaken periodically, which forms the basis for conducting detailed socio-economic surveys.
- The last (61) Economic Census was conducted during January 2013 to April 2014.
- Government is now aiming to conduct this census once every three years in future.

Support for Statistical Strengthening (SSS):

- It seeks to strengthen State and sub-State level statistical systems and infrastructure to facilitate development of a robust national system.
- Under this Scheme, funds are released to States and UTs after detailed examination of their proposals.

Major ongoing activities carried out under this scheme:

- Augmenting resources for bringing out important statistical products such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), Index of Industrial Production (IIP), Statistical classifications, etc.
- Conducting various Socio-Economic surveys, capacity building and strengthening statistical coordination and improving Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), a continuous survey to assess quarterly labour data in urban areas and annual labour data for the whole country (urban and rural areas).
- Three new surveys: Time Use Survey (TUS), Annual Survey of Service Sector Enterprises (ASSSE), and

Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) will be also undertaken for better statistical coverage of sectors/areas.

Hyderabad International Airport gets World no. 1 Airport award

Hyderabad International Airport (Rajiv Gandhi International Airport) was awarded Airports Council International Airport Service Quality World no.1 airport award in the 5-15 Million Passengers Per Annum (MPPA) category.

- This is for the second consecutive year, Hyderabad airport has won this award.
- It was adjudged World no. 1 Airport in this category earlier in 2016.
- The award was bestowed in recognition of airport's relentless efforts towards service excellence and customer delight.

About the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport:

- It is an international airport that serves Hyderabad, capital of Telangana.
- It is located in Shamshabad, about 24 kilometres south of Hyderabad.
- It is operated by GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, a public-private venture.
- It was opened in March 2008 to replace Begumpet Airport as primary commercial airport for Hyderabad.
- It is named after Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India.
- It is the sixth busiest airport by passenger traffic in India.

Rajasthan's first lion safari inaugurated at Nahargarh Biological Park

Rajasthan's first lion safari was inaugurated at Nahargarh Biological Park.

- The park is located on Delhi-Jaipur National Highway in the Aravalli foothills, nearly 12 kilometers from state capital Jaipur (known as Pink City).
- It will be open for visitors from October 2018.

About the Lion safari:

- The lion safari project is located at a biological park spread across 38 hectare.
- The park was inaugurated by Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje in June 2016.
- Lions in this park were brought from Junagarh, Gujarat under an exchange programme.
- Total of 10 lions will be released in the park in a phased manner.
- The park will serve for breeding lions and also as a centre of attraction for tourists.
- It will provide a new habitat to the lions and also add a tourism venue to the Pink City.
- Visitors will be able to see lions in their natural habitat in the park in an enclosure by a fence.
- They will be taken on a nearly 4 kilometer safari in a closed bus.

- Apart from lion, the park also hosts wolves, jackals, and hyenas.

INMAS develops India's first indigenous anti-nuclear medical kit

Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) has developed India's first indigenous medical kit for protection against nuclear warfare or radioactive leakage.

- The kit will ensure protection from serious injury and aid faster healing of wounds due to nuclear warfare or radioactive leakage.

About the Anti-nuclear medical kit:

- The kit has been developed after 20 years of work by INMAS scientists.
- It has 25 items which include radioactive protectors which can absorb 80-90% of radiation, nerve gas agents, bandages that absorb radiation as well as tablets and ointments.
- The kit is seen as a potent alternative to similar imported kits that were till now procured from US and Russia at much higher prices.
- It has been developed for armed, paramilitary and police forces only as they are first ones likely to get exposed to radiation during nuclear, chemical and biomedical (NCB) warfare or rescue operation after nuclear accident.

Few important items of the kit:

Prussian blue tablet:

- It is highly effective in incorporating Radio Cesium (Cs-137) and Radio Thallium, among the most feared radioisotopes in nuclear bombs that destroy human body cells.
- It provides 100% absorption from gut and other portals of entry to human body.

Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) injection:

- It traps uranium in the guts and blood of victims during a nuclear accident or warfare.

Ca-EDTA Respiratory Fluid:

- It is inhalation formula for chelation, or grabbing of heavy metals and radioactive elements deposited in lungs through inhalation at nuclear accident sites.
- EDTA after being injected into veins, grabs heavy metals and minerals and removes them from the body.
- It reduces the body burden of radioactivity by 30-40% in controlled conditions and is highly useful for the rescue teams and victims after a nuclear accident.

Radioactive Blood Mopping Dressing:

- It is special kind of bandage that absorbs radiation to prevent spread of radiation from radioactive patients to others.
- It will make safer for medical staff to handle radioactive patients as it reduces chances of them getting contaminated.

Radioactive urine/biofluid collector:

- It is cost-effective, easy to store and can safely dispose of the urine of person affected by radiation.

Anti-gamma ray skin ointment:

- It protects and heals the radiation damage on the skin.

Amifostine injection:

- It is US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved conventional radiopharmaceutical that limits damage from gamma radiation.

Indranil 150 mg tablet:

- It is reserve emergency therapeutic drug for services, rescue workers and places where high acute exposures are expected and lives will be at stake.
- Preliminary tests have shown that if it is given as prophylactic, 80-85% animals survive at 100% lethal gamma radiation.

About the Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS):

- INMAS is the laboratory of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It was established in 1961 and is located in New Delhi.
- It is involved in nuclear medicine research and responding to nuclear accidents and explosions.
- Since 1968, Department of Nuclear Medicine in INMAS is offering a two-year diploma in radiation medicine.
- It is the first formal training program in nuclear medicine in the world.

Power Ministry launches Chiller Star Labelling Program on energy efficiency in chillers

Union Ministry of Power has launched Chiller Star Labelling Program to encourage deployment of energy efficient chiller systems in the country.

- It was launched as part of occasion of 24th World Ozone Day and 31st Anniversary of Montreal Protocol, which will be observed on 16th September 2018.

About the Chiller Star Labelling Program:

- The program was formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- It envisages providing star rating in terms of its energy performance.
- Initially, the program has been launched on voluntary basis and will be valid upto 31st December 2020.
- BEE has developed online registration platform for easy and expeditious approval under this program.
- It will allow manufacturers to register online for availing appropriate star rating of chiller equipment.
- Based on test certificate from designated agencies and after due verification from BEE, star label on the scale of 1 (less efficient) to 5 (most efficient) will be provided.

What is the significance of star labelling of chillers?

- It will help promote advancement of technology for central HVAC (Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems and will also facilitate energy efficient solutions for large commercial and industrial applications.
- It will also help to save more than 500 million units of electricity in 2019 along with Green House Gases reduction of 0.5 million-ton equivalent of CO₂.
- It will also save more than 4 billion units of electricity by 2030 with CO₂ emission reduction of 3.5 million ton.

Interesting to know:

- Chillers are used extensively for space conditioning of buildings and for industrial process cooling applications.
- The size of Indian chiller market which stood at 1 Million Tonne per year at 2017 and is projected to grow at CAGR of 3.6% fuelled by growth in the retail, hospitality and infrastructure projects.
- Chillers, being energy intensive system, contribute more than 40% of total energy consumption in commercial buildings.
- Therefore, it is important to optimize energy performance of chillers and create awareness amongst the end users to adopt transition towards energy efficient chillers.

Erratic monsoon rainfall in India partly due to air pollution: Study

According to a recent study by scientists from IIT Kanpur, erratic behaviour of monsoon rainfall, including phenomenon of concentrated heavy rainfall on small number of days in localized area can be attributed to the rising air pollution, especially the increase in suspended particles in the atmosphere.

- The study has found that high pollution levels are not just changing cloud shape and size and depth, but also its microstructure.

Key Findings of this study:

- Excess aerosols, suspended solid particles like dust, smoke and industrial effluents in atmosphere is

changing cloud patterns, its shape, size and other properties like temperature, which in turn is resulting in variability in rainfall over Indian sub-continent during monsoon season.

- Aerosols are extremely important for cloud formation.
- In absence of aerosols, no clouds can be formed and consequently no rainfall will take place.
- But due to increase in aerosol content in atmosphere, there is direct consequence of rising air pollution interfering with stable cloud formation system and influencing rainfall patterns.
- In short term, these changes in cloud structure and cloud dynamics lead to sharp variability in rainfall, which is similar to rainfall patterns witnessed very often in India in last few years.
- In the long term, it is likely to lead to overall suppression of rainfall during the monsoon season.

What is the significance of this study?

- The linkage of air pollution to rainfall activity is not new and has been established in many earlier studies as well.
- But this is for the first time, a study has given details of the exact changes that take place in clouds over India as a result of increase in aerosols.
- It also shows how it is leading to reduction in difference in day and night temperatures and also impacting rainfall activity.
- For this study, researchers have analyzed satellite data and data from atmospheric computer models from last 16 years to make an assessment of likely impacts of changes in cloud behaviour over land area of about 16 lakh square kilometres.

EyeROV TUNA: India's first underwater robotic drone handed over to NPOL

India's first underwater robotic drone EyeROV TUNA was handed over to Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

- This underwater drone will be used by NPOL for research and development activities which in turn would result in commercial product for defence purposes.

About EyeROV TUNA:

- EyeROV TUNA has been designed and developed indigenously by Kochi-based start-up IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd (EyeROV).
- It is a smart micro-ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) or underwater drone.
- Its design is at par with global standard and has operational capabilities to work in harsh and mission-critical underwater environment.
- It is designed to perform visual inspection and surveys of submerged structures up to a depth of 100 metres.
- It can be-controlled using a laptop or joystick.
- It is fitted with a camera that helps to give live HD video feed of the submarine environment.

- It is also equipped to perform variety of functions, including inspection of ship hulls, undersea cables or bridge moorings, fish farms, dams, port structure and bridge foundations and also in various underwater research operations.
- Its commercial use will eliminate need for costlier and riskier manual inspection by divers.

About IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd:

- **IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd is backed by Kerala Start-Up Mission, oil and gas firm BPCL and Department of Science and Technology.**
- **It has been founded by Johns T Mathai, an IIT-Delhi alumnus and Kannappa Palaniappan P (IIT-Madras).**
- **The company also has mentors and advisors who were earlier with DRDO, Indian Navy and marine industry.**
- **It is now incubated at Maker Village, Kochi, an initiative of Union Government and Kerala Government.**

Vijaya: Indian Coast Guard commissions indigenously built patrol vessel

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has commissioned indigenously built patrol vessel ICGS Vijaya in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

- It is second in the series of 98 m offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) commissioned by ICG.

About ICGS Vijaya:

- **It has been designed and built indigenously by Larsen & Toubro (L&T).**
- **It is a 98-metre long ship.**
- **It can carry one twin engine helicopter and four high speed boats, including two inflatable boats for boarding.**
- **It is fitted with advanced technology navigation and communication equipments and sensors.**
- **It is fitted with a 30 mm gun and will be fitted with 12.7 mm gun with fire control system.**
- **On joining ICG fleet, ICGS Vijaya will be based at Paradip, Odisha.**
- **It will be manned by 12 officers and 91 men.**

What is the significance of this vessel?

- **It will be deployed extensively for Exclusive Economic Zone surveillance and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard charter.**
- **It will also undertake search and rescue, law enforcement and maritime patrol operations.**
- **It will help to enhance ICG's operational capability to discharge its multifarious maritime tasks.**
- **It will also give fillip to maritime protection of Eastern seaboard in general and the maritime states of Odisha and West Bengal in particular.**

- It is also capable of carrying limited pollution response equipment to contain oil spill in the sea.

National Hindi Divas: 14th September

National Hindi Divas (हिंदी दिवस) is observed every year on 14 September in Hindi speaking regions of India and other countries with Hindi speaking population.

- Observance of this day aims to propagate Hindi language and its cultural heritage and values.
- It also seeks to promote Hindi as the matra bhasha (mother tongue) of India and show its importance as a language in the country and world at large.
- **On this occasion, President Ram Nath Kovind presented Rajbhasha awards for Year 2016-17 at Rashtrapati Bhawan.**
- These awards were instituted by Department of Official Language of Union Home Ministry to recognize excellent contribution of Ministries, Departments and Nationalized Banks in the field of Hindi.

About National Hindi Divas:

- Hindi Divas is celebrated to mark adaptation of Hindi language as the official language of India by the Constituent Assembly of India on 14 September 1949.
- The decision of using Hindi as official language was ratified by Constitution of India which came into effect on 26 January 1950.
- Under the Article 343 of Indian Constitution, Hindi written in Devanagri script was adopted as the official language.
- But presently, there are 2 official languages: Hindi and English.

About the Hindi Language:

- Hindi is one of the main languages of India and is spoken by around 40% of the Indian population.
- It belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European language family.
- As per 2011 census, 43.63% of Indians speak Hindi as their mother tongue i.e. around 258 million people.
- It is native language for most people living in Hindi belt of North India comprising Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.
- It is also spoken in many countries of the world including Pakistan, Mauritius, Trinidad, Surinam etc.
- Outside Asia, Hindi is the official language in Fiji along with other two official languages, namely English, Fijian.
- The dialect of Hindi spoken there is known as Fiji Hindi or Fiji Baat.

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer: September 16

The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on September 16 for the preservation of the Ozone Layer.

- This year, the theme for the Day is 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.
- **The day was designated by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 19, 1994.**
- Its observance commemorates the date in 1987 on which Montreal Protocol was signed on substances that deplete the ozone layer.
- It is also intended to spread awareness of the depletion of the Ozone Layer and search for solutions to preserve it.

About the Ozone Layer:

- **The Ozone layer is a fragile shield of gas which protects Earth from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation of Sun and thus helping preserve life on the planet.**
- **It contains high concentrations of ozone (O₃) in relation to other parts of the atmosphere.**
- **Stratospheric Ozone is not harmful, but its presence on land it is harmful.**
- **Substances like Chlorofluorocarbons, halons, Carbontetrachloride are responsible for ozone layer depletion.**

About the Montreal Protocol:

- **It is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out production of numerous Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) that are responsible for ozone depletion.**
- **It was agreed on 26 August 1987 in Montreal, Canada and entered into force on 26 August 1989.**
- It was followed by a first meeting in Helsinki, May 1989.
- Under this protocol, production and consumption of key ODSs like chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs), Methyl Chloroform, CTC halons and Methyl Bromide have been phased-out globally.
- **It is legally binding on the member countries.**
- It has been ratified by 197 parties making it a universally ratified protocol in UN history.
- It is also a highly successful international arrangement, as it has phased-out more than 95% of the ODS so far as per its main mandate in less than 30 years of its existence.
- **It has helped in recovering the ozone hole in Antarctica.**

About the Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer:

- **It is a multilateral environmental agreement agreed upon at the 1985 Vienna Conference and entered into force in 1988.**
- It is one of the most successful treaties of all time in terms of universality.
- It has been ratified by 197 states (all UN members as well as the Niue, Holy See and the Cook Islands) as well as European Union.
- It acted as a framework for international efforts to protect the fragile ozone layer.

- These are laid out in accompanying Montreal Protocol.
- However, it does not include legally binding reduction goals for the use of CFCs, the main chemical agents causing ozone depletion.

ISRO launches two satellites NovaSAR and S1-4 using PSLV-C42

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched two satellites- NovaSAR and S1-4- belonging to United Kingdom (UK) based Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL).
- Both satellites were injected into Sun Synchronous Orbit (pole-to-pole orbit) at an altitude of 583 km after the launch.

About the launch:

- These satellites were launched on board of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C42) from first launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- This was the 44th flight of PSLV and the 12th flight of Core Alone version of the vehicle.
- Core Alone version of PSLV is lightest version without six strap-on motors.
- It is used for launching smaller payloads.
- It was ISRO's first fully commercial trip of the year.
- This launch helped Antrix Corporation, the commercial arm of ISRO to earn more than Rs. 220 crore.
- As on date, ISRO has launched 239 foreign satellites of 28 countries.

Details:

S1-4 Satellite:

- It is a high resolution earth observation satellite meant for surveying resources, environment monitoring, urban management and disaster monitoring.

NovaSAR Satellite:

- It carries the S-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) and Automatic Identification Receiver payloads.
- It is a technology demonstration mission designed to test capabilities of new low cost S-band SAR platform.
- Its applications include forestry mapping, land use and ice cover monitoring, flood and disaster monitoring and maritime missions.
- It will be operated from SSTL's Spacecraft Operations Centre in Guildford, UK.

About PSLV:

- PSLV is the third generation launch vehicle of India, designed and developed by ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram.

- **It is hailed as the reliable and versatile workhorse launch vehicle of India.**
- It consists of four stages, using solid and liquid propulsion systems alternately.
- Each stage of PSLV is self-contained and the vehicle is capable of functioning independently with own propulsion systems.
- It is capable of launching 1600 kg satellites in 620 km sun-synchronous polar orbit and 1050 kg satellite in geo-synchronous transfer orbit.
- **There are three variants of PSLV, namely, PSLV-G, PSLV-CA, PSLV-XL.**
- **In the standard configuration, it measures 44.4 m tall, with a lift off weight of 295 tonnes.**
- **Some notable payloads launched by PSLV include India's first lunar probe Chandrayaan-1, India's first interplanetary mission, Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) and India's first space observatory, Astrosat.**

ISRO inaugurates S-Band Polarimetry Doppler Weather Radar at Sriharikota spaceport

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has inaugurated S-Band Polarimetry Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota spaceport, Andhra Pradesh.

- It will be used for observation of weather system up to a range of 500 km and also for early warning of severe weather events.

About the Doppler Weather Radar (DWR):

- **The radar has been indigenously developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), Bengaluru under ToT (Training of Trainers) from ISRO.**
- **It is the seventh radar of such type manufactured in the country under "Make in India".**
- It will provide advanced information, enhances lead-time essential for saving lives and property in event of natural disaster associated with severe weather.
- It will also provide detailed information on storm's internal wind flow and structure as compared to conventional radars which are only able to track and predict cyclones.
- **Polarimetric capability of this radar will significantly help to improve accuracy of rainfall estimation leading to accurate and timely flash flood warnings.**
- **With its help, severity of weather systems can be quantitatively estimated and more precise advanced warnings can be generated for saving human lives and property.**

Mt Everest Friendship Exercise

Nepal and China conducts second joint military exercise in Sichuan province

The second edition of Nepal-China joint military exercise named Mt Everest Friendship Exercise-2018 (Sagarmatha Friendship-2018) commenced in China's southwestern Sichuan province.

- The 12 day long joint exercise will focus on combating terror and disaster management trainings.
- **Sagarmatha is the Nepali name for Mt Everest, which stands in between both the countries.**

About the Mt. Everest Friendship Exercise:

- **This will be the second time** that Nepal Army will participate in joint military drill with People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China.
- **The first such exercise was held in April 2017** at Nepal Army's Para Training School in Maharajgunj in Kathmandu (capital of Nepal).
- **This joint exercise is aimed at promoting military relations and enhance interoperability between the armies of Nepal and China.**
- In the second edition of exercise, 12 military personnel from Nepali Army will visit China.
- It will mainly focus on anti-terrorism activities.
- **Disaster management training will also be imparted in this edition of exercise.**

Interesting to know:

- **The joint training with China marks Nepal's extension of military diplomacy.**
- Nepali army has long been conducting joint military drills with countries like India and United States.
- **This exercise does appear unconventional as Nepal has been conducting battalion-level exercises named 'Surya Kiran' with the Indian Army for last 13 years, engaging some 300 personnel from both sides** (It is largest exercise in terms of troop's participation in a series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries).
- However, Nepal's bilateral military engagement with China does not violate India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) which permits free movement of people and goods between the two countries and a close relationship and collaboration on matters of defence and foreign affairs.

Kerala Tourism wins two Pacific Asia Travel Association gold awards

Kerala Tourism has won two prestigious gold awards of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for its innovative marketing campaigns.

- These awards were won by Kerala Tourism's **Yalla Kerala print campaign** and **Live Inspired Posters** under PATA's Travel Advertisement Print and Travel Poster categories respectively.
- Both campaign and posters were developed and designed by Stark Communications which is the advertising agency of Kerala Tourism.

Details:

Yalla Kerala:

- **It was the print media travel advertisement campaign launched in Gulf countries.**
- **It showcased state's greenery and backwaters.**

- With the punch line 'Yalla Kerala', this campaign had triggered a lot of interest for Kerala as a tourism destination in Gulf countries.

Live Inspired Posters:

- It was developed for the third edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale (KMB), the biggest contemporary art show in South Asia.
- **It was a live-inspired poster that had featured a colourful boat and fishermen and could be put up straight as well as upside down.**

About the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) awards:

- **These awards are given by PATA and are sponsored by Macau Government Tourism Office (MGTO).**
- PATA Awards are presented to outstanding entries in four principal categories: Marketing; Education and Training; Environment, and Heritage and Culture.
- **These awards are presented every year in recognition of the achievements of 25 separate organisations and individuals.**
- **PATA is membership association working to promote the responsible development of travel and tourism in the Asia Pacific region.**

7th UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism held in Seoul

7th UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism is being held in Seoul, capital of South Korea from 16 to 19 September, 2018.

- **The theme of the summit was 'A 2030 Vision for Urban Tourism'.**
- The summit was co-organized by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Seoul Metropolitan Government and supported by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of South Korea, Korea Tourism Organization and Seoul Tourism Organization.

About the UNWTO Global Summit on Urban Tourism:

- **The summit provided a unique platform to discuss key issues shaping future of urban tourism in the context of the 2030 Urban Agenda.**
- It had brought together high-level representatives from National Tourism Administrations, city authorities and related stakeholders, serving as platform to exchange experiences and expertise.
- **It has a shared vision on urban tourism that embraces innovation, digital transformation and sustainability.**

About the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):

- **UNWTO is a United Nations agency responsible for promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.**

- It is a leading international organization in the field of tourism, which promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability.
- **Its membership includes 156 countries, 6 territories and over 500 affiliate members** representing private sector, tourism associations and local tourism authorities etc.
- **Its headquarters are located in Madrid, Spain.**

Functions of UNWTO:

- **UNWTO offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.**
- **It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and practical source of tourism knowledge.**
- **It encourages implementation of Global Code of Ethics for Tourism** to maximize contribution of tourism to socio-economic development, while minimizing its possible negative impacts.
- It is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards eliminating poverty and fostering sustainable development and peace worldwide.

MPATGM: DRDO successfully tests low-weight indigenously developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted first successful trials of indigenously developed third generation Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).

- Two rounds of missile were flight tested in operational configuration in two days from Ahmednagar range in Maharashtra.

About the Test:

- **The two tests were intended for two different ranges.**
- After its launch from platform, the missile tracked target all through its trajectory and destroyed it with high precision.
- The missile performed as expected during the test by meeting all mission objectives successfully and validated its maximum range capability.
- Apart from stand alone and warhead testing, the missile also had undergone series of tests including integrated static trial to characterise trust vector control.

About the MPATGM weapon system:

- **MPATGM is third-generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) indigenously developed by DRDO.**
- It is best in its class in the world.
- **It is yet to be formally named.**
- **It is expected to replace second generation French origin anti-tank guided missile Milan and Soviet**

semi-automatic wire-guided missile Konkur, which are in service with Indian Army.

- This missile is considered as major boost to Make-in-India initiative.
- **It has a strike range of 2.5 km.**
- **It weighs around 14.5 kg to maintain man portability.**
- **It is capable of being fired from shoulder and can be used during day and night.**
- It has minimum lateral centre and gravity offset.
- **It is fitted with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead.**
- **It works on fire and forget principle** and is known for its top attack capabilities.
- It is effective against both stationary and moving targets.
- **It will be deployed in Infantry and Parachute battalions of Indian Army.**
- Its development was necessitated after armed forces sought low-weight and man portable weapon systems as per battle ground requirements.
- At present, India Army has indigenously developed third generation anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) Nag in its arsenal but it is not portable to meet its demand.

India's first 'Smart Fence' pilot project inaugurated along Indo-Pak border

India's first 'Smart Fence' pilot project was inaugurated along two 5-km each patches of India-Pakistan International Border in Jammu and Kashmir.

- It was launched by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh from Border Security Force (BSF) Headquarters in Ploura, J&K.

About the Smart Fence pilot project:

- The initiative has been taken up by BSF as part of the comprehensive integrated border management system (CIBMS).
- The pilot project involves deploying of laser-activated fences and technology-enabled barriers to plug vulnerable gaps along the frontiers.
- It uses number of devices for surveillance, communication and data storage.
- **It also comprises automated surveillance technology and alarm detection systems.**
- **It also has sensors like thermal imager, underground sensors, fiber optical sensors, radar and sonar mounted on different platforms like aerostat, tower and poles as part of the Smart Fence.**
- **The smart fences along with other gadgets are integrated with CCTV-live feed which is routed to BSF post so that immediate action can be taken against any intrusion or infiltration attempt.**
- The shortcomings of this pilot project will be addressed to make Comprehensive Integrated Border Management system fool proof before it is extended to other areas.

Significance of the Smart Fence system:

- **Smart fence system is a technological solution devised to make security system at borders more**

strong and effective.

- It will help to provide round-the-clock surveillance along the border, even in harsh weather conditions such as dust storm, fog or rain.
- It is expected to be a massive boon for monitoring security situations in border areas.
- It will make virtually impossible for terrorists to infiltrate into Indian side of border.

Background of the Smart Fence:

- Earlier this year, BSF had operationalised first smart fence on riverine stretch of Indian border with Bangladesh in Assam.
- The riverine stretch where first smart fence was put up was previously patrolled by BSF speedboats.
- Due to its geographical features, no outpost was erected in the area which often led to incidents like illegal migrations, smuggling etc. going unchecked.
- The introduction of the fence was done to bring down such instances.

Yudh Abhyas 2018: India, US joint military exercise held in Chaubattia, Uttarakhand

India and United States joint military exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018 commenced at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand.

- It will be fourteenth edition of exercise in Yudh Abhyas series which was started in 2004 under US Army Pacific Partnership Program.
- This will be fourth time exercise will be conducted at Chaubattia in Uttarakhand.

About Yudh Abhyas 2018:

- The aim of this exercise will be to enhance interoperability between both the armies.
- It will also focus on enhancing counter-terror cooperation.
- The scope and intensity of this year's exercise is much wider and is in reflection of upswing in defence ties between the two countries.
- This year's Yudh Abhyas drills will be upgraded to battalion-level field training exercise (FTX) and division-level command post exercise (CPX).
- It will see participation of around 400 soldiers from each side, increase from around 200 each earlier.
- US contingent was represented by 1st Infantry Battalion, 23 Infantry Regiment, US Army while Indian side is represented by an Infantry Battalion.
- Participating contingents will hone their tactical and technical skills in countering insurgency and terrorism in United Nations peace keeping scenario involving combined deployment at brigade level.
- They will be also deploying state of the art equipment for surveillance and tracking, specialist weapons for close quarter battle with terrorists, explosive and improvised explosive device detectors, as well as the latest communication equipment.
- Both sides will also jointly train, plan and execute a series of well-developed tactical drills for

neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in UN peace keeping operations during division level command post exercise.

- Experts from both sides will also hold discussions to share each others' experience in varied topics for mutual benefit.

Ministry of Culture releases National Museum Research Bulletin

Ministry of Culture has released the National Museum Research Bulletin Number 10: Special issue.

- The bulletin was revived after a gap of 16 years.
- It has also released "Sindhu Ghati Sabhyata: Ek Parichay", a Hindi version of "An Introduction To Indus Valley Civilization" which is among the bestsellers at the National Museum.

About the National Museum Research Bulletin:

- The bulletin has a number of research papers that highlight collection, display and education aspect that the National Museum engages with.
- It has been illustrated by colored photographs, some of which belong to the reserve collection of national museum to make it appealing to a wider audience.
- The research bulletin will help generate awareness about activities of National Museum.
- It will help to renew the interest of people and inspire them to engage in conversations about National Museum's pivotal role in the public sphere.

About "Sindhu Ghati Sabhyata: Ek Parichay"

- It is the Hindi version of "An Introduction To Indus Valley Civilization" which is among the bestsellers at National Museum, New Delhi.
- It is co-authored by Dr. Sanjib Kumar Singh and Dr, Gunjan Srivastava and Rajesh Kumar.
- **This book throws light on the splendor of the Indus Valley Civilization.**
- It will benefit students, scholars, artists, historians, museum professionals and art lovers among other readers.

Bangladesh to provide India access to key ports

Bangladesh Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has approved the draft agreement allowing India to use its Chittagong and Mongla ports to transport cargo to and from its northeastern states.

- The draft was prepared after both neighboring countries had signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the use of two ports during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in June, 2015.

About the Agreement on sea ports for transporting goods:

- Under this agreement, India can transport goods as per the capacity of two sea ports.

- **Only Bangladeshi vehicles will be used for transportation of goods within its territory.**
- Indian goods can be transported through four entry points viz. **Akhaura (Bangladesh) and Agartala (India's Tripura), Tamabil (Sylhet, Bangladesh) and Dauki (Meghalaya), Sheola (Sylhet) and Sutarkandi (Assam) and Bibirbazar (Cumilla, Bangladesh) and Srimantapur (Tripura).**
- Under this agreement, **India will have to follow General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT)** and Bangladeshi regulations, pay customs duties and buy tax equivalent bonds to transport freight.
- **India will also pay fees for using infrastructure of Bangladeshi land ports.**
- To keep track of cargo new modern tracking system will be used.
- **The agreement will be effective for five years, but it can be extended for another five years automatically.**
- **However, any side can cancel the agreement after giving six months notice and suspend deal.**
- Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) will be prepared for implementing this agreement.
- The SOP will be prepared after consulting with various stakeholders.

Government launches e-Sahaj portal to facilitate security clearances of businesses

Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched e-Sahaj portal to facilitate individuals and private companies in seeking security clearance for setting up businesses in certain sensitive sectors.

- The portal aims to bring greater transparency in accordance with the security clearances to business proposals relating to sensitive sectors and geographical locations.

Interesting to know:

- **MHA is the nodal authority for granting security clearances in certain sensitive sectors before licence, permit, permission, contract etc. is issued to companies, bidders, individuals by the respective administrative ministry.**
- **The objective of national security clearance is to evaluate potential security threats, including economic threats and provide risk assessment before clearing investment and project proposals in key sectors.**

About the e-Sahaj portal:

- **The portal will help to strike a healthy balance between meeting imperatives of national security and facilitating ease of doing business and promoting investment in the country.**
- **It will facilitate the applicant to submit application online and also to view its status from time to time.**
- The online portal will make security clearance process standardised, faster, transparent and easy to monitor.
- Thus it will help to facilitate ease of doing business and promoting investment in the country.

ICAP: India first country in world to develop document on cooling action plan

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), on eve of World Ozone Day (17th September), released draft India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP).

- It makes India first country in world to develop such document.
- The draft was prepared by Ozone Cell of MoEFC.
- It aims to provide sustainable cooling while keeping in mind, at the same time, the need to protect the ozone layer from substances that can deplete it.
- It provides a 20-year perspective, with projections for cooling needs in 2037-38.

About the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP):

- ICAP addresses cooling requirement across sectors and lists out actions which can help reduce cooling demand.
- Its thrust is to look for synergies in actions for securing both environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- ICAP's overarching goal is to provide sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all while securing environmental and socio-economic benefits for the society.

Goals suggested in ICAP are:

- Reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by year 2037-38.
- Reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25 % by year 2037-38.
- Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by year 2037-38.
- **Train and certify 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, in synergy with Skill India Mission.**
- Recognize cooling and related areas as thrust area of research under national science and technology programme to support development of technological solutions and encourage innovation challenges.

Broad objectives of ICAO include:

- Assessment of cooling requirements across sectors in next 20 years and the associated refrigerant demand and energy use.
- Map the technologies available to cater the cooling requirement including passive interventions, refrigerant-based technologies and alternative technologies such as not-in-kind technologies.
- Suggest interventions in each sector to provide for sustainable cooling and thermal comfort for all.
- Focus on skilling of refrigeration and air-conditioning (RAC) service technicians.
- Develop R&D innovation ecosystem for indigenous development of alternative technologies.

Germany rolls out world's first hydrogen-powered train

Germany has rolled out world's first hydrogen-powered passenger train.

- **These locomotives named iLint trains** and emit zero emissions, making them eco-friendly.
- This train technology offers greener and quieter alternative to diesel on non-electrified railway lines.
- **These hydrogen trains are manufactured by French TGV-maker Alstom** and are commercially running on 100km route between towns and cities of Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Bremervoerde and Buxtehude in northern Germany.

About Hydrogen trains:

- Hydrogen trains are equipped with fuel cells that produce electricity by combining hydrogen with oxygen.
- This conversion process only emits steam and water, thus producing zero emissions.
- Excess energy produced is stored in lithium-ion batteries on board.
- These trains also make very little noise.
- Moreover, hydrogen fuel cells have advantages over batteries.
- Instead of recharging, they can easily be refueled like gas or diesel engine.
- It is also easier to build refueling infrastructure for these trains at railway stations.
- **These trains can run for around 1,000 km on a single tank of hydrogen, similar to the range of diesel trains.**
- These trains offer attractive prospect to many cities scrambling to combat air pollution.
- **The only disadvantage these hydrogen trains is that they are more expensive than fossil fuel-based trains.**

Maharashtra Government to set up new Cyber University

Maharashtra Government is setting up a new Cyber University dedicated to mitigating cyber threats.

- **It will train 3,000 professionals** to fight online space cyber-attacks, internet crimes and conduct cyber forensics.

About the Cyber University:

- The Cyber University will provide for and prepare internet professionals on lines of Microsoft Certified Professional Program.
- It will conduct courses in data analytics, cloud computing, blockchain, AI, cyber forensics and cyber investigations.
- It will also impart training in 15 other Internet of Things (IoT) areas such as Data Analytics and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- For this university, state government will provide different levels of training and enable affiliated colleges to impart certification for the 15 courses.
- It will also supply infrastructure for training and education.

What is the Need for a Cyber University?

- **Cyber-attacks India are taking place every 10 minutes as opposed to 12 minutes previously.**
- **The current demand of cyber professionals hovers around 30 lakh.**
- The university will be a remedy for this by providing required human resource and bridge skill gap.
- **Maharashtra Government is also in process of setting up its version of Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) to ward off external cyber threats.**

Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas appointed Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission

Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has appointed renowned scientist Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas as chairman of Atomic Energy Commission and secretary of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

- He will have a tenure till he attains the age of 64 years, i.e. till May 2021.
- **He will succeed Shekhar Basu.**
- Basu was appointed to the post in October 2015 and his tenure was to end in September 2016.
- However, he was given two extension of one year each one in 2016 and another in 2017 till September 2018.

Who is Kamlesh Nilkanth Vyas?

- **Vyas at present is Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).**
- **He is a Mechanical Engineering graduate from MS University, Vadodara.**
- **After completion of training in BARC training school in 1979, he had joined the Fuel Design and Development Section of Reactor Engineering Division of BARC.**
- He has worked for design and analysis of nuclear reactor fuels.
- **He was also responsible for design and development of a novel fuel for strategic applications.**
- He has worked extensively in thermal hydraulics and stress analysis of critical reactor core components.
- He has been conferred several awards including Indian Nuclear Society Outstanding Service Award 2011, Homi Bhabha Science and Technology Award 2006, DAE Awards in years 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2013.
- **He is also a Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineers.**

About the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC):

- **AEC is the governing body of the DAE which is under the direct charge of the Prime Minister.**
- **It was established in 1948 to look after atomic energy activities in the country.**
- Its functions are to organise research in atomic scientists in India, train atomic scientists in the country, promote nuclear research in commission's own laboratories and undertake prospecting of atomic minerals and extract such minerals for use on industrial scale.

Government, FAO launches agriculture project in 5 states with \$33.5 million GEF grant

Union government (Agriculture and Environment ministries) along with UN body Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has launched an agriculture project that seeks to bring transformative change in the farm sector through conservation of biodiversity and forest landscapes.

- It will be implemented in five states viz. Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.

Details:

- The project is being funded with US \$33.5 million grant from Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- It aims to transform agricultural production to generate global environmental benefits by addressing biodiversity conservation, land degradation, climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management.
- It strives to bring harmony between conservation and development efforts of the country.

State of agriculture in India:

- Agriculture along with its allied sectors, is the largest source of livelihoods in India, with 82% of country's farmers being small and marginal.
- Existing unsustainable agricultural practices have resulted in depletion of water tables, biodiversity and habitat loss for wild species and land and soil degradation which have contributed to the environmental crisis in India.
- To overcome it, there is a need for alternative paradigm to current extractive methods of agricultural production systems.
- Scientific research is need of time to focus on achieving greener landscapes along with efficient and effective resource use.
- Moreover, any effort to increase farmers income and food production must be within the framework of sustainable management of natural resources to avoid environmental degradation.

About the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

- It is the specialised agency of UN that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- Its parent organization is UN Economic and Social Council (UNESCO).
- It was established on 16 October 1945 and its headquarters are in Rome.
- It has 194 member states, along with European Union (member organization).

About the Global Environment Facility (GEF):

- It is a 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 is based in Washington DC, United States.
- It addresses six designated focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, international waters, ozone depletion, land degradation and Persistent Organic Pollutants.

India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline Project construction launched

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina jointly launched the construction of India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project through video conferencing.

- It is first such pipeline through which refined diesel will be supplied to Bangladesh from India.

About the India-Bangladesh Friendship Product Pipeline Project:

- The project involves construction of a 130-kilometre long pipeline that will connect Siliguri in West Bengal and Parbatipur in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.
- Of the total stretch, six-kilometre will be in Indian side and remaining 124 kilometres will in Bangladesh.
- Indian leg of the pipeline project will be implemented by Assam-based Numaligarh Refinery Limited and Bangladeshi leg will be implemented by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.
- The pipeline has capacity of 1 million metric tons per annum.
- It will supply refined diesel to Parbatipur depot from Numaligarh of Assam in India.
- Initially, it will supply Bangladesh 2.5 lakh tonnes of diesel every year and gradually it will be increased to 4 lakh tonnes.
- The project will replace existing practice of sending diesel by rail covering distance of 510 kilometers.
- The estimated cost of this pipeline project is Rs. 346 crore and it will be completed in 30 months' timeframe.

DAC approves procurement of upgraded Akash missile system

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has given approval to Indian Army for inducting upgraded variant of indigenously developed Akash short-range surface-to-air missile (SRSAM) system.

- Under this proposal two new regiments of this missile systems will be procured under 'Buy (Indian)' category from Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- Indian Army already has inducted two Akash regiments.
- Induction of upgraded variants will increase total count to four regiments.

About Akash Missile:

- It is a short-range mobile surface-to-air missile indigenously developed by Defence Research and

Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme initiated in 1984.

- It is made by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
- It has range of 25 km and can engage multiple targets at all time in all-weather conditions.
- It has capability to neutralise aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles as well as ballistic missiles.
- It has large operational envelope, from 30 metre to maximum of 20 km.
- Each regiment of this missile system consists of six launchers, each having three missiles.
- It is in operational service with Indian Army and Indian Air Force.

About the Upgraded Akash Missile System:

- The upgraded Akash Missile System will include seeker technology, possess 360 degree coverage and will be of compact configuration with reduced signature.
- The upgraded Akash Weapon System is an operationally critical equipment which will provide protection to vital assets.

MSME Insider: Monthly e-Newsletter of MSME Ministry launched

Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has launched its monthly e-newsletter: MSME Insider.

- The e-newsletter will give information of activities undertaken by MSME Ministry and also act as bridge between Ministry and millions of MSME units spread across the country.

About the MSME Insider e-newsletter:

- The e-newsletter will provide regular flow of information about the sector to MSMEs.
- It will also help in developing a two-way communication between MSME Ministry and its stakeholders.
- It will also create awareness about schemes and other activities undertaken by MSME Ministry and its affiliated organizations.
- It will also provide information about latest innovations in the field of technology, upcoming events and training programs for the month and will also carry interesting articles on relevant topics.
- It will also carry success stories of the entrepreneurs who have benefitted from schemes of MSME Ministry.
- It will be available on website of MSME ministry www.msme.gov.in as well as on websites of its attached organizations.
- It will also be distributed to about 50 lakh MSMEs registered on Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum Portal.

Employee's State Insurance rolls out Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna

The Employee's State Insurance (ESI) has rolled out Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna for providing unemployment allowance to workers rendered jobless due to changing employment pattern.

- It was announced at the 175th ESI Corporation meeting chaired by Union Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar in New Delhi.

What was the need for this scheme?

- Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna was launched keeping in mind the change in the employment pattern.
- The current scenario of employment in India has been transformed from long employment to fixed short term engagement in the form of contract and temping.
- So, there was a need to provide assistance to employees in case they get unemployed for sometime and search new job.

About Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna:

- It aims to financially support those who lost their jobs or rendered jobless for whatsoever reasons due to changing employment pattern.
- Its beneficiaries will be insured persons covered under Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948 for period of two years continuously.
- Under this scheme, relief will be payable in cash directly to the bank account of insured persons in case of unemployment.
- This financial assistance will be given to insured persons even while they search for new engagement.
- Beneficiary insured workers will be paid money, from their own contribution towards ESI scheme, in cash through bank account transfer.
- Under this scheme, workers will be able to draw 47% of their total contributions towards ESIC after remaining unemployed for at least three months from date of leaving their previous jobs.
- They can choose to receive the cash at one go or in installments.
- It will be applicable to all factories and establishments employing at least 10 workers.

About Employee's State Insurance (ESI):

- ESI is a self-financing social security and health insurance scheme for Indian workers.
- It is an autonomous corporation by statutory creation under Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- It is managed by Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) according to rules and regulations stipulated there in the ESI Act 1948.
- It was founded in 1952 and is headquartered in New Delhi.

Aviandra 18: India, Russia Air Force joint exercise commences

India and Russia joint air exercise Aviaindra 18 is being held in Lipetsk, Russia from September 17 to 28, 2018.

- The second session of Aviaindra 18 will be conducted in Jodhpur, Rajasthan (India) from December 10 Dec to 22, 2018.

About Exercise Aviaindra-18:

- Exercise Aviaindra is an Air Force level exercise between India and Russia.
- It was conducted for first time in 2014 and since then it is conducted bi-annually (twice a year) in both countries.
- The aim of this exercise is focused towards anti-terrorist operations in bi-lateral scenario.
- It also seeks to further enhance co-operation and understanding between Air forces of both countries in each other's Concept of Operations.
- Aviaindra-18 saw participation of Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent comprising of 30 officers from different branches and streams of IAF including four women officers of Flying, Admin and Medical Branch.
- IAF's aircraft that participated in the exercise included Su-30 SM, Mig-29, Su-25, Mi-8 and An-26.
- Apart from flying exercise, formal interactions, discussions, exchange of ideas and friendly sports matches were also held to enhance bonhomie between the two Air Forces.

Health Ministry launches sputum sample transportation through Department of Post

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched the pilot project for transport of sputum specimen for Tuberculosis (TB) Diagnosis by utilising the services of Department of Post in Karawal Nagar, New Delhi.

- The learning from this pilot project experience will be useful for adaptation of specimen transport mechanism through Postal Department across the country.

Importance of this move:

- Significant proportion of TB patients in India are not tested for their symptoms because specimen does not reach laboratory due to non-availability of specimen transport mechanisms.
- Transport of collected specimen also spares patient's from travelling to the reference laboratory.
- Prompt transport of specimen followed by efficacious testing will enable appropriate management of TB patients and reduced disease transmission.

Other Initiatives:

- Health Ministry also launched a web-based application of Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP), Nikshay Version 2.0, with a better user interface and data structures.

- It also launched a mobile application for all major functions on Nikshay.
- The web-application is also designed to be mobile friendly, enabling data entry also from the mobile browser.

NIKSHAY:

- NIKSHAY is a web based solution for effectively monitoring of TB patients under Revised National Tuberculosis Programme (RNTCP).
- It was launched by Health Ministry Government with intention of creating a tuberculosis free nation.
- It was developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) in association with Central TB Division (CTD), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- NIKSHAY word is a combination of two Hindi words NI and KSHAY meaning eradication of tuberculosis.
- It covers various aspects of controlling TB using technological innovations.
- **Apart from the web based technology, SMS services have been used effectively for communication with patients and monitoring the programme on day to day basis.**

About Tuberculosis (TB):

- TB is a disease caused by the bacteria "Mycobacterium tuberculosis" that most often affect the lungs.
- It spreads from person to person through the air.
- It commonly affects lungs but can also affect other parts of the body.
- It is the second biggest killer disease worldwide next only to HIV/AIDS.
- India accounts for about a quarter of the global TB burden.
- Worldwide India is the country with the highest burden of both TB and MDR (Multi-drug resistant) TB.
- In March 2017, Government had set aim elimination of TB in India by 2025.

BSE, NSE get SEBI approval to launch commodity derivatives segment

The capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has allowed India's top two stock exchanges BSE Ltd and National Stock Exchange of India Ltd (NSE) to launch commodity derivatives trading from 1 October, 2018.

- This approval is part of SEBI's December 2017 announcement of having unified exchange regime wherein stock exchanges will be allowed to offer trading in commodities derivatives.
- By a unified exchange regime, stock exchanges need not to set up different entities to offer commodity trading.

Details:

- With this approval, BSE will begin trading in commodity derivatives with non-agriculture

commodities like metals initially, followed by agri-commodities subsequently.

- NSE will launch its commodity derivatives segment trading in non-agriculture commodities in initial phase, followed by agriculture commodities, subject to SEBI approval.

Significance of this approval:

- Universal exchanges will help in achieving integration of trading in commodity derivatives market with other segments of securities market at exchange level.
- It will help in providing efficient price discovery, reduction in timelines, cost effective, user-friendly & a robust risk management system with wider market penetration.
- It will help in creating deeper markets with lower spreads and exchange by enhancing competition across all categories of trading.
- It will offer greater convenience as traders will be able to trade all asset categories from single account.
- It may also lead to consolidation of cross-holding norms as mergers between exchanges of different categories appear attractive.
- In the longterm, Indian exchanges will find it easier to compete with their global counterparts that are present in multiple segments.

What is a Commodity exchange?

- It is a market that is mostly related to food, metals or energy derivatives that are important part of everyday life.
- Types of commodities in this market includes metals like gold, silver, etc., energy like crude oil, natural gas etc.
- This trading traditionally move in opposition to stocks, so they are used as significant way to diversify portfolio beyond traditional securities.
- In India, MCX and NCDEX specialise in commodity derivatives.

Union Cabinet approves ordinance to make instant 'Triple Talaq' a penal offence

The Union Cabinet has cleared the ordinance to make the practice of instant triple talaq, a penal offence.

- It was signed by President Ram Nath Kovind later as per Article 123 of the Constitution.
- Compelling reason cited by Government for promulgation of this ordinance was that the practice of triple talaq continues unabated even after annulled by Supreme Court due to absence of a legal framework.

Core components of the ordinance:

- The ordinance makes instant triple talaq illegal and void.
- It prescribes punishment with jail term for three years to husbands practicing triple talaq.

- It also includes certain safeguards such as the addition of a provision of bail for the accused before trial, to do away with fears of misuse of the law.
- The offence of triple talaq will only be cognizable when the victim wife or her relatives by blood or marriage file FIR.
- It is a compoundable offence, meaning that there can be a compromise but only on insistence of wife and the magistrate will have to determine the terms and conditions.
- The offender can be granted bail by the magistrate only after hearing the victim wife as it is a private dispute between husband and wife and the wife must be heard when bail is granted.
- Additionally, the victim wife will get custody of minor children.
- They will be entitled to receive maintenance from husband for herself and children, as decided by the magistrate.

Developments in the past:

- In a landmark 3-2 verdict in August 2017, five-judge Constitution Bench of Supreme Court had declared centuries-old practice of instant triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat unconstitutional.
- Triple talaq is a practice in which Muslim men divorce their wives unilaterally by uttering talaq three times in quick succession.
- Three of five judges of this bench had called this practice un-Islamic and arbitrary.
- They also disagreed with the view that triple talaq was an integral part of religious practice.
- In pursuance of SC verdict, Government had managed to get Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2017 passed in Lok Sabha in December 2017 but it got stuck in Rajya Sabha as it was unable to build consensus among political parties where it does not have majority.
- Government's position on Triple Talaq always had been that it has nothing to do with faith or mode of worship or religion, but it is a pure issue of gender justice, gender dignity and gender equality.

Cyclone-30: India's biggest cyclotron facility becomes operational

India's biggest cyclotron facility named Cyclone-30 became operational at Kolkata-based Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC), which comes under Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

- Cyclotron is used to produce radioisotopes for diagnostic and therapeutic use for cancer care.
- Radiations from these isotopes are used to destroy cancer cells.

About Cyclone-30:

- It will produce radioisotopes vital for diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
- It will be the first and only cyclotron facility in the country to produce Germanium 68 radioisotopes, which is used in diagnosis of breast cancer.

- It will also produce Palladium 103 isotopes, which is used for the treatment of prostate cancer.
- In its future stages, it will also produce Iodine 123 isotopes, which can help detect thyroid cancer.
- It started working for the first time when 30 MeV beam reached Faraday Cup (a metal cup designed to catch charged particles in vacuum).
- The beam from this facility was used to produce fluorine-18 isotope for preparation of radio-pharmaceutical fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG), which is used for diagnose various types of cancer.
- It will start regular production by mid-2019 after supporting nuclear systems and regulatory clearances are commissioned.

Significance of this facility:

- The high-energy and high-yielding Cyclone-30 machine will provide for affordable radio isotopes and related radiopharmaceuticals for entire country, especially for eastern states like West Bengal.
- It will also help in bringing down imports, while raising possibility of exporting radioisotopes in the future.
- It also has an export potential for germanium-68 and gallium-68 generator for in-situ production of gallium-68 and palladium-103 isotopes, which are used for breast cancer diagnosis and prostate cancer treatment, respectively.
- It can also be used for research in the fields of material science and nuclear physics.

One Must Know:

- According to a new study in Lancet Global Health, 8.3% of total number of deaths in India in 2016 was because of cancer and the number of new cases has increased from 5.48 lakh in 1990 to 1.1 million in 2016.
- At present, many radioisotopes for cancer treatment are imported while some are produced in nuclear research reactors such as Apsara at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and remaining in cyclotrons facilities run by large private hospitals, making cancer treatment costly.

Government launches Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children portal

Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) to check objectionable online content.

- The portal will allow citizens to lodge complaints on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material and sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.

About the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) portal:

- The portal will enable citizens to report complaints without disclosing their identity.
- This will help victims, complainants and also help civil society organizations and responsible citizens to anonymously report complaints pertaining to objectionable online content involving women and children.

- It also allows complainants to upload objectionable content and URL to assist in investigation by state Police.
- The complaints registered through this portal will be handled by police authorities of respective State/UTs.
- It also has other features such as report and track option allowing victim or complainant to track his/her report using his/her mobile number.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will proactively identify such objectionable content on receiving complainants and take up with intermediaries for its removal.
- For this, NCRB has already been notified as Central Government nodal agency to issue notices under Section 79(3)b of Information Technology (IT) Act.

Government launches National Database on Sexual Offenders

Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched India's National Database of Sexual Offenders (NDSO).

- With this, India became the ninth nation to maintain such thorough database.
- NDSO will not be available for general public but only to law enforcement agencies for effectively tracking and investigating cases of sexual offences.

About the National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO):

- NDSO is an initiative under National Mission for Safety of Women aimed at curbing crimes against women and children.
- It will mainly include a database of sexual offenders in the country convicted under charges of rape, gang rape, POCSO and eve teasing from 2005 onwards.
- It will have a database containing key details of convicted sexual offenders such as their names, residential address, photographs, fingerprints, DNA samples, Aadhaar numbers and Personal Account Numbers (PANs).
- It will be maintained by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for regular monitoring and tracking by State Police.
- The database will not compromise any individual's privacy.
- At present database contains 4.4 lakh entries.
- State Police will regularly update the database from 2005 onwards.
- As of now, it does not have records of juvenile offenders, but they are likely to be included in at a later stage.
- NDSO will maintain the database of cases classified as posing low danger for a period of 15 years.
- The database of cases, which are classified as moderate danger, will be stored for 25 years.
- The data for cases involving repeat and habitual offenders, criminals, convicted gang rapists and custodial rapes will be stored permanently.

Prahar: Short-range, Quick Reaction tactical ballistic missile tested fired

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully flight tested indigenously developed surface-to-surface short-range tactical ballistic missile 'Prahaar'.

- It was launched from a mobile launcher from Launch Complex-III, Integrated Test Range (ITR), Balasore off Odisha Coast.

About Prahaar Missile:

- **It is a solid-fuelled surface-to-surface short-range tactical ballistic missile.**
- **It has been indigenously developed by DRDO.**
- It has a length of 7.3 meter, diameter of 420 mm and weighs 1,280 kg.
- It has an operational range of 150 km and flight altitude of 35 km.
- **It is a quick-reaction, all-weather, all-terrain, highly accurate battlefield support tactical missile with advance manoeuvring capability.**
- It is capable of carrying multiple types of warheads weighing around 200 kg and neutralizing a wide variety of targets.
- It is fitted with an inertial navigation system.
- **It is also equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, guidance and electromechanical actuation systems with an advanced on board computer.**
- It can be launched from a road mobile system, which can carry six missiles at a time.
- It can also be fired in salvo mode in all directions from a launcher.

Significance of Prahaar Missile:

- Prahaar missile fills the vital gap between Multi Barrel Rocket systems such as 'Pinaka' and Medium Range Ballistic Missiles such as 'Prithvi'.
- It also fills the short-range tactical battlefield missile role as required by Indian Army to take out strategic and tactical targets.
- It is comparable to MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System of United States.

Saudi Arabia to join CPEC as third strategic partner

Pakistan has invited Saudi Arabia to join the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the third strategic partner.

- Formal request in this regard was made after Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan visited Saudi Arabia during his first foreign trip after getting elected.

Details:

- **Saudi Arabia is the first country that Pakistan has invited to become partner in CPEC.**

- **Pakistan's main interest in inviting Saudi Arabia in CPEC is to ensure huge investment from cash rich gulf country.**
- This invitation comes after Pakistan's concern over rising debt levels and especially due to the unsustainable loans from China for CPEC projects, compromising cash-strapped Pakistan's sovereignty.
- **Projects as part of CPEC in which Saudi Arabia will be investing will be smoothed out during the visit of Saudi Arabia's Finance and Energy Ministers to Pakistan in the first week of October 2018.**
- During this visit, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia will also finalise an important economic partnership.

It must be noted:

- **Saudi Arabia has a long history of financially bailing out Pakistan during economic crisis.**
- **Saudi Arabia had loaned Pakistan \$1.5 billion in 2014 to strengthen its rupee currency, six months after Pakistan obtained its last IMF bailout.**

About the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):

- **CPEC is a flagship project as part of China's multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aimed at enhancing China's influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.**
- CPEC aims to construct and upgrade transportation network, energy projects, deep-water port at Gwadar and special economic zones (SEZs) to eventually support Pakistan's industrial development as a manufacturing hub by 2030.
- **CPEC will be linking Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China's North Western region Xinjiang through vast network of highways and railways.**
- **The proposed project is financed by heavily-subsidised Chinese loans, disbursed to Pakistan Government by Chinese banking giants such as China Development Bank, Exim Bank of China and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.**

First General Assembly of International Solar Alliance to be held on 2 October in Delhi

The inaugural General Assembly of International Solar Alliance (ISA) will be inaugurated on 2 October 2018 in New Delhi.

- It will be followed by a ministerial level assembly of ISA the following day which will be held in Greater Noida.

About the International Solar Alliance (ISA):

- **ISA was jointly launched by India and France in November 2015 in Paris on the side lines of COP21 UN Climate Change Conference.**
- Its Framework Agreement came into force in December 2017.
- **It celebrated its founding day on 11th March, 2018.**

- Its founding conference was held on 11 March 2018 in New Delhi.
- ISA is an action-oriented organization that aims brings together countries with rich solar potential to **aggregate global demand**, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating deployment of existing solar technologies at scale and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.
- It also aims at contributing to implementation of Paris Climate Agreement 2015 through the rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.
- ISA is the first international intergovernmental treaty based organization to be headquartered in India.
- It is headquartered at the campus of National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE), Gurugram, Harayana.
- Till date, 47 countries have signed and 19 countries have ratified the Framework Agreement of ISA.
- United Nations is the Strategic Partner of ISA.

Objectives of ISA:

- Undertake joint efforts required to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology.
- Mobilize around US \$1000 billion of investments needed by 2030 for massive deployment of solar energy.
- Pave way for future technologies adapted to needs of solar rich 121 countries lying fully or partially between Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn.

ISA's 4 ongoing programmes:

- Scaling Solar Mini Grids
- Affordable Finance at Scale
- Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use
- Scaling Solar Rooftop catering to the needs of solar energy in specific areas

ISRO setting up a third launch pad at Sriharikota for Gaganyaan mission

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is setting up a third launch pad at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh to undertake the Gaganyaan manned space flight programme.

- ISRO currently has two launch pads which are already full.
- Third launch pad is being set up for the human space flight.
- It will be ready in time for the mission.
- In addition, ISRO is scouting for location on the western sea coast near Gujarat to set up another launch pad for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLV).

About the Small Satellite Launch Vehicles (SSLV):

- ISRO is developing SSLV to offer affordable launch options for smaller satellites through ANTRIX, the space agency's commercial arm.

- The SSLV is expected to reduce launch time as well as cost less to launch small satellites, which are much in demand.
- ISRO currently piggybacks smaller satellites on Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle abbreviated (GSLV) along with bigger satellites.

About the Gaganyaan Mission:

- It will be India's first manned space mission.
- Under it, India is planning to send three humans (Gaganyatris) into space in low earth orbit (LEO) by 2022 i.e. by 75th Independence Day for a period of five to seven days.
- The mission was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his 72nd Independence Day speech.
- Under this mission, crew of three astronauts will conduct experiments on microgravity in space.
- The crew will be selected jointly by Indian Air Force (IAF) and ISRO after which they will undergo training for two-three years.
- India will be fourth nation in the world after USA, Russia and China to launch a human spaceflight mission.

Objectives of Gaganyaan Mission:

- Enhancement of science and technology levels in the country, serve as national project involving several institutes, academia and industry, improve of industrial growth, inspire youth, develop technology for social benefits and improve international collaboration.

ISRO's preparation:

- ISRO has already begun work on manned mission in 2004.
- It already has validated many of the critical technologies required for human spaceflight through various tests such as Space Capsule Recovery Experiment, Crew Module Atmospheric Re-Entry Experiment and Pad Abort Test.
- ISRO will use its GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle which can carry the heavier payload of Gaganyaan.
- This launch vehicle will take off from the new launch pad of ISRO.

Anil Kumar Chaudhary appointed as new Chairman of Steel Authority of India Ltd

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appointed Anil Kumar Chaudhary as the new Chairman of Steel Authority of India Ltd.

- He will in office till his superannuation in December, 2020.
- He will succeed P K Singh, who had retired from the post in June 2018.
- Prior to this appointment, he was serving as Director (Finance) at SAIL.

About the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL):

- SAIL is one of the largest state-owned steel company in India and one of the top steel makers in the world.
- It is India's largest steel making company (annual production capacity of 14.38 million metric tons) and the 24th largest steel producer in the world.
- It was founded in 1954 and incorporated in 1973.
- Its headquarters are in New Delhi.
- It operates and owns five integrated steel plants at Bhilai, Durgapur, Rourkela, Bokaro and Burnpur and 3 special steel plants at Salem, Durgapur and Bhadravathi.

Tamil Nadu Government announces scheme for protection of exotic Neela Kurinji plants

Tamil Nadu government has announced a Scheme for the protection of exotic Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthus kunthianus*) plants that flower only once in 12 years.

- This scheme comes following complaints that these rare and ecologically unique flowers are being packaged and sold on the commercial basis.

About the Neelakurinji plant:

- Neelakurinji is a tropical plant species.
- It is native to the Shola forests in Western Ghats.
- It is also seen in Shevroys Hills in Eastern Ghats, Anamalai hills and Agali hills in Kerala and Sanduru hills in Karnataka.
- It grows at an height of 30 to 60 cm on hills slopes at an altitude of 1300 to 2400 meters where there is no tree forest.
- The flowers of Neelakurinji are purple-blue in colour and blooms once in 12 years.
- The flower has no smell or any medicinal value.
- It is because of these flowers, Nilgiri hills on the southern tip of Western Ghats are called blue mountains.
- It is a rarest of rare plant species that grows in Western Ghats and does not grow in any other part of the world.
- It has been categorized as an endangered species.
- In ancient Tamil literature, Kurinji flowers symbolize love.
- Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu use this flower bloom as a reference to calculate their age.

India's first indigenously developed Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor to achieve criticality in 2019

India's first indigenously developed 500-megawatt (mw) Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu is expected to achieve criticality in 2019.

- It was stated by Sekhar Basu, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy at the 62th General Conference of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria.
- The indigenously developed PFBR is now undergoing sodium commissioning.

What is Criticality of Nuclear Reactor?

- It is an event of nuclear reactor reaching self-sustained chain reaction.
- This means that no external source of neutrons is required to sustain fission in the reactor core.
- It is a precondition of producing useful amounts of energy from the reactor.

About the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR):

- PFBR has been designed indigenously by Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR).
- It is a pool-type reactor with 1,750 tonnes of sodium as coolant.
- It is designed to generate 500 MWe of electrical power, with operational life of 40 years.
- It generates power by burning mixed uranium-plutonium MOX fuel, a mixture of PuO₂ and UO₂.
- PFBR at Kalpakkam was earlier expected to be commissioned in 2012, but has missed several deadlines.
- PFBR design is build on decades of experience gained from operating lower power Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR).
- It comes under the second stage of India's three-stage nuclear power programme.
- **Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (Bhavini), a public sector company under DAE, has been given the responsibility to build these reactors.**
- India is planning to build 21 such reactors by 2030.

RBI shortlists 5 IT firms for implementation of Centralised Information and Management System

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has shortlisted five IT firms for implementation of Centralised Information and Management System (CIMS) for seamless data validations.

- These five IT firms are Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Capgemini Technology Services India, IBM India and Larsen & Toubro Infotech.
- These five firms were selected based on expression of interest (EOI) notified by RBI in July 2018 for identification of solution provider for implementation of CIMS by overhauling its Data Warehouse (DW).

About Centralised Information and Management System (CIMS):

- **RBI has proposed CIMS comprising of DW and Data Lake (DL) to harness power of big data analytics.**
- **CIMS will include seamless data collection from regulated entities** by creating system-to-system interface, system driven data validation and data review, flexible and scalable data repository and providing data dissemination platform.
- **It will also include a centralised analytics platform to facilitate the creation of a RBI Data Sciences Lab.**

Interesting to know:

- RBI in April 2018 had announced to gainfully harness the power of big data analytics by setting up a data sciences lab that will comprise experts and budding analysts, internal as well as lateral trained in computer science, data analytics, statistics, economics, econometrics and finance.
- In pursuance of this goal, it had issued EOI in July 2018 for implementation of CIMS.
- One of functional requirements for CIMS enshrined in EOI was to establish system-to-system interface for automated element based data collection from about 130 banks/entities.

India conducts successful Prithvi interceptor missile test at night

India has successfully conducted an interceptor missile test off the Odisha coast at night.

- With this, Defence Research and Development Organization achieved a major milestone in developing indigenous two-layer Ballistic Missile Defence system.

About the Test:

- **PDV interceptor missile was launched from Abdul Kalam Island (earlier known as Wheeler Island) of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) off Odisha coast.**
- **Its mission was aimed at test-firing of an interceptor missile off the coast of Odisha to intercept an incoming ballistic missile off the Bay of Bengal.**
- **During the test, both PDV interceptor and target missile were successfully engaged in automated operation.**
- **In this operation mode, the radar-based detection and tracking system of the missile system detected and tracked the target ballistic missile.**
- **The computer network with the help of data received from radars predicted the trajectory of incoming ballistic missile.**
- **Based on these inputs PVD was fired for an interception and destroyed the incoming missile target with high accuracy.**

About Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) missile:

- **Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) missile has been developed indigenously by DRDO.**
- **It is a two-stage missile and both stages are powered by solid propellants.**
- **It is intended to replace the existing Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) in PAD/Advanced Air Defence (AAD)**

combination.

- It is designed for engaging targets in exo-atmosphere region at an altitude of 50 km of earth's atmosphere.
- It is guided by a high-accuracy Inertial Navigation System (INS) supported by Redundant Micro Navigation System for estimating the point of interception.
- Once missile crosses the atmosphere, its heat shield ejects and IR Seeker dome is opened to look at the target location as designated by the mission computer.
- With the help of Inertial Guidance and IR seeker, the missile moves for interception.
- The missile is also fitted with Imaging Infrared (IIR) seeker, developed by DRDO, to distinguish between incoming warheads and decoys.

NSE, LSE inks MoU for dual listing of Masala Bonds

National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) and London Stock Exchange (LSE) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on creating dual listing route for masala bonds and foreign currency bonds of Indian issuers.

- Through approval of a single listing document, the issuer can obtain dual listing on LSE's International Securities Market and NSE's GIFT City.
- It will serve as a potential precursor of further joint listings in the future that could see foreign currency bonds in India also being able to list in London.

What are Masala Bonds?

- Masala bonds are rupee-denominated bonds through which Indian entities can raise money from foreign markets in rupee and not in foreign currency.
- Basically, it is a debt instrument used by corporates to raise money from foreign investors in local currency.
- The issuance of rupee denominated bonds transfers the risk associated with currency fluctuations to investors and not to the issuers.
- This is especially during depreciation of domestic currency and when borrowing is in foreign currency as a company has to pay more while repaying its debt, or while servicing interest on such borrowings if the rupee weakened.
- From the issuer's perspective, masala bonds provides cheaper borrowings compared to raising funds in India besides helps in diversifying its sources of fund raising.
- Besides, it also helps in internationalization of the rupee and in expansion of Indian bond markets.
- Its issuance in long term can help to check slide of rupee and also reduce the current account deficit over time.

What is the significance of dual listing of Masala Bonds?

- It will extend access to a wider base of global investors as well as domestic and regional investors registered on NSE's International Exchange and NSE IFSC Limited in Gujarat International Finance Tech City.
- It will also enhance visibility, increase liquidity in secondary markets and enhance efficiency of price discovery for masala bond issuers.
- It will also reduce the cost of raising capital for all issuers and encourage participation of wider variety of issuers in the masala bond market.

Scientists for first time grow miniature human oesophagus in lab

Scientists for first time have successfully grown oesophageal organoids, a miniature, functional version of human food pipe using pluripotent stem cells (PSCs) in laboratory.

- This bioengineered oesophageal organoids paves way for new ways to study and test drugs against gut disorders.
- It may also lead to personalised diagnostic methods and focus in part on developing regenerative tissue therapies to treat or cure GI disorders.
- It will help to study birth defects like esophageal atresia, organoids, eosinophilic esophagitis and Barrett's metaplasia.
- Moreover, bioengineered genetically matched esophageal tissue can also be transplanted in individual patients.

About Oesophagus:

- It is a long muscular tube that is part of the digestive system that connects mouth to stomach to actively pass food.
- It is also called- gastro-intestinal tract (GI tract or gullet or food pipe).
- It is around 25cm long in adults.
- After food is swallowed, the walls of oesophagus squeeze together (contract) and moves the food down to the stomach.
- The area where oesophagus joins stomach is called gastro-oesophageal junction.

Oesophagus has four layers:

Mucosa- Inner layer, which is moist to help food pass smoothly into stomach.

Submucosa- Contains glands that produce mucus (phlegm), which keeps oesophagus moist.

Muscularis- It is muscle layer, which pushes food down to stomach.

Adventitia- It is outer layer, which attaches oesophagus to nearby parts of body.

- Oesophagus can be affected by congenital diseases, such as oesophageal atresia, a medical condition

causing narrowing or malformation of oesophagus due to genetic mutations.

- Other diseases related to it includes oesophageal cancer, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), or rare ailment called achalasia, a disease affecting muscles of lower oesophagus that prevents contraction of organ and passage of food.

What is Stem cell?

- **Stem cell is an undifferentiated cell of a multicellular organism which is capable of giving rise to indefinitely more cells (through mitosis) of same type and from which, certain other kinds of cells may be formed by the cellular differentiation.**

There are two types of stem cells that are widely used:

Embryonic stem cells:

- They come from human embryos that are three to five days old.
- They are harvested during a process called in-vitro fertilization.
- They are known as pluripotent stem cells.
- These cells can give rise to virtually any other type of cell in the body.

Induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs):

- They can differentiate into all types of specialized cells in body.
- They can potentially produce new cells for any organ or tissue.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana: PM launches world's largest healthcare scheme

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the ambitious Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), under Ayushman Bharat umbrella at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- The scheme aims to provide annual health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh to 10.74 crore beneficiary families i.e. over 50 crore beneficiaries across India.
- **It is touted as world's largest healthcare scheme that will serve beneficiary population that equals 27-28 European countries and almost equal to population of Canada, Mexico and US put together.**
- The scheme will become operational from September 25, 2018 i.e. on birth anniversary of Deendayal Upadhyay.

About Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY):

- **PMJAY is a government-sponsored health insurance scheme, that will provide free coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year in any government or empanelled private hospitals all over India.**
- **It will cover beneficiaries families identified on the basis of Socio Economic Caste Survey (SECC) 2011 in 444 districts of 30 states/Union Territories.**

Note: Telangana, Odisha, Kerala, Punjab and Delhi (UT) are the states which have still not signed MoUs for joining this schemes.

- **National Health Agency (NHA) is the apex body for implementing this scheme.**
- States will be required to form State Health Agency (SHA) to implement the scheme and at the district level also, the structure for its implementation will be set up.
- **Around 13000 hospitals both public and private in the country have been coordinated for implementation of the scheme.**
- PMJAY will be funded with 60% contribution from Centre and remaining from the states.
- **NITI Aayog will be working as partner for this scheme** for operationalizing robust, modular and interoperable IT platform which will involve a paperless and cashless transaction.

Salient Features of PMJAY:

- PMJAY is an entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- There will be no cap on family size and age under this scheme.
- The benefit cover under it also includes pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- It also takes into consideration all pre-existing medical conditions.
- It will provide reimbursement for bed charges and drugs and diagnostics two days before, during and 15 days after hospitalisation.
- Beneficiary will also be paid transport allowance for hospitalisation defined under it.
- The payment for treatment will be done on package rate which will be defined by Government in advance basis.
- The package rates will include all costs associated with treatment.
- States and UTs have flexibility to modify these rates within limited bandwidth.
- **PMJAY allows national portability** i.e. resident of any part of country is entitled for free hospitalization at empanelled hospital anywhere in the country.
- It will strengthen healthcare services in India by targeting poor and vulnerable population of the country.
- The scheme allows beneficiary to take cashless benefits from any public or private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- ID documentation required for verifying beneficiary under this scheme may be Aadhaar card or election ID card or ration card.
- Aadhaar is not mandatory.
- Beneficiaries will get QR codes having letters for verification through scanning.

Andhra Pradesh tops Ease of Living Index rankings under AMRUT

Andhra Pradesh has topped Ease of Living Index rankings under AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and

Urban Transformation).

- It was followed by Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- The three states were awarded best-performing states at National Dissemination Workshop on Ease of Living Index, 2018 held in New Delhi.

About AMRUT:

- It is an urban transformation scheme with the focus on the urban renewal projects to establish infrastructure that could ensure adequate robust sewerage networks and water supply.
- It aims at ensuring robust sewage networks, water supply and other infrastructure to improve the quality of life of people in urban areas.

About Ease of Living Index:

- The index was conceived by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in June 2017.
- It aims to help cities assess their liveability vis-a-vis global and national benchmarks and encourage them to move towards 'outcome-based' approach to urban planning and management.
- It was launched to rank 116 cities that are smart city contenders, capital cities and cities with population of 1 million plus based on the liveability parameters.
- The first edition of index released in January 2018 had ranked 111 Indian cities and was topped by Pune.
- It captures quality of life based on data collected from urban local bodies on four parameters, which are further broken down into 15 categories.
- It seeks to help cities undertake a 360-degree assessment of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- The four parameters include institutional (governance), social (identity, education, health, security), economic (economy, employment) and physical factors (waste water and solid waste management, pollution, housing/ inclusiveness, mixed land use, power and water supply, transport, public open spaces).
- Institutional and social parameters carry 25 points each, physical factors have weightage of 45 points and economic factors 5 points totalling to 100 mark scale on which cities were evaluated.

Indian Culinary Institute inaugurated in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI) in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

- It is promoted by Union Ministry of Tourism.
- The ICI building was designed by National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC).

About the Indian Culinary Institute (ICI):

- The main objective of ICI is to institutionalize a mechanism to support efforts intended to preserve,

document, promote and disseminate Indian Cuisine.

- It also seeks to meet the sectoral requirement of specialists specific to Indian Cuisine and promote the cuisine as a niche tourism product.
- It will be a centre of excellence that will offer structured regular programmes of study specific to culinary arts and culinary management.
- It will also promote research and innovation, organize demand driven certificate and diploma courses.
- It will also document and create data base specific to Indian cuisine and commission studies and survey on the cuisine.
- It will also provide appropriate training platform at par with elite "Chef Schools" functioning in different parts of the developed world.

One must know:

- At present In India, there is no formal education specific to Indian cuisine or culinary art.
- Besides, there was no regular credible institutional source at the apex level for supply of cuisine specialists to the sector.
- There was also no institutional mechanism to document and disseminate knowledge related to cuisine and gastronomy.
- There is also a dearth of state-of-the-art training ground to groom top-of-the-line chefs of international standards.
- ICI will help to remove all these bottlenecks.

Pakyong airport: PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Sikkim's first airport

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Sikkim's first-ever airport at Pakyong.

- Prior to this airport, Sikkim was the only state in India remaining without a functional airport.
- Pakyong airport is India's 100th functional airport and one of the country's five highest airports.

About Pakyong airport:

- The airport is spread over 201 acres and was constructed by Airports Authority of India (AAI).
- It is located on top of a hill about two km above Pakyong village at 4,500 feet above sea level.
- It was carved from the mountain side using massive geo technical 'cut and fill' engineering works.
- It is located around 60 km from Indo-China border and around 30km away from Gangtok, capital city of Sikkim.
- It has 1.75 km long runway.
- It has capacity to handle 50 in-bound and as many out-bound passengers flights.
- Initially, this airport will cater only to domestic flights, but later provide international flight services connecting Sikkim with other countries (especially neighbouring) like Paro (Bhutan), Kathmandu

(Nepal) and Dhaka (Bangladesh).

What is the significance of Pakyong Airport?

- **Operationalization of Pakyong airport will give a big boost to connectivity and tourism to the north-eastern state of Sikkim.**
- **It will cut down air travelling time to Sikkim by almost 5 hours** because earlier, the nearest airport for connecting Sikkim was at Bagdogra in West Bengal.
- **It will be a major booster for Sikkim's tourism sector, as it will help to improve air connectivity and save travel time for the tourists.**
- **Its location also makes it strategically relevant from the country's security point of view.**
- **Indian Air Force (IAF) can use this airport for landing and taking off of its aircrafts during critical situations.**

Ministry of Information & Broadcasting joins SDG Media Compact aimed at advancing awareness of SDGs

Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has joined SDG Media Compact, aimed at advancing awareness of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- It is among more than 30 organisations from across the world that have come together to form a global media compact.

About SDG Media Compact:

- **SDG Media Compact is an initiative of United Nations, in collaboration with UN Foundation.**
- **It is an alliance of news and entertainment media and it is committed to work with United Nations to foster public discourse and spur action on SDGs.**
- **It seeks to inspire media and entertainment companies around the world to leverage their resources and creative talent to advance SDGs adopted by all world leaders at UN in 2015.**
- It encompasses more than 100 media and entertainment outlets.
- **It is inclusive and aims to embrace media companies from all regions and all platforms.**
- Collectively, its founding members comprise of audience in billions spanning over 80 countries on four continents and many more companies are expected to join.
- Participating organizations in the Compact will have an opportunity to create content partnerships with UN, whereby international organization will increase its efforts to source and share high-value media content and newsworthy opportunities relating to SDGs.

About Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **SDGs are 17 global non-binding goals featuring 169 targets to be implemented from 2015 to 2030.**

- These goals and targets are a set of ambitious objectives across the three dimensions of sustainable development viz. economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, underpinned by good governance.

WWF Tx2 programme: Nepal becomes first country to double its tiger population

Nepal has become first country in the world to double its tiger population in a decade as a part of World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) 'Tx2' programme which aims to double the number of tigers all over the world by 2022.

- There are now estimated 235 wild tigers in Nepal in comparison to an estimated 121 back in 2009.
- This trend is against the global trend where number of tigers in many countries is witnessing a decline.

Interesting to know:

- The success of Nepal in doubling tiger numbers has been largely attributed to its political commitment and adoption of innovative tools and approaches towards tiger conservation.
- Nepal was the first country to achieve global standards in managing tiger conservation areas, an accreditation scheme governed by Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS).

About the Tx2 programme:

- It was launched by World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) at the 2010 St Petersburg Tiger Summit held in Russia.
- Under it, 13 tiger range countries had agreed to double the world tiger population by 2022, which is the year of tiger in the Chinese calendar.
- These 13 countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- It aims at driving political momentum to ensure tigers remain top priority for world leaders, professionalise wildlife protection by training rangers, developing conservation standards (CA|TS) and technology (SMART) to achieve zero poaching, tackle illegal wildlife trade through partnership with TRAFFIC, focus efforts in key tiger landscapes and ensure there is space for both tigers and people in future.

DAC approves procurement of 1,000 engines for fitment in T-72 tanks

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved procurement of 1,000 engines of 1,000 BHP (brake horse power) for fitment in T-72 tanks of Indian Army.

- These engines will be procured under 'Buy & Make' category at an approximate cost of over Rs 2,300 crore.
- Most of these engines will be manufactured by Ordnance Factories Board (OFB).

- Their fitment will enhance mobility, agility and acceleration of T-72 tanks making them more versatile and effective in the battlefield.

About the amendments to Defence Procurement Procedure(DPP)-16:

- DAC also approved several amendments to Defence Procurement Procedure(DPP)-16, the manual governing defence procurement.
- The amendments aim to reduce timelines in defence procurements and streamline Defence Procurement Procedures.
- The amendments limit the time period for executing Repeat Order to five years after date of completion of warranty of final delivery in previous contract.
- It also extended repeat order provisions to procurements by other services like Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) and Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- The amendments also include permissions to commence with benchmarking of cost for equipment immediately on receipt of trial report in Service headquarter, legislating provisions for exchange rate variations when pursuing procurement with 'Option Clause'.
- It also includes providing clarity on guidelines for easing provisions for imposition of LD Clause in upgradation and alteration cases, automatic incorporation of applicability of latest legislation or changes or amendment of any act or law, rules or regulations.
- These measures will go long way in obviating under procedural delays.
- It will also hasten activities by shrinking procurement timelines and give due preference to indigenization.

WAYU: Air pollution control device inaugurated in New Delhi

Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and Environment Dr. Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the air pollution control device WAYU (Wind Augmentation PurifYing Unit) for traffic junctions at ITO intersection and Mukarba Chowk in New Delhi.

- The device aims at tackling toxicity in air by sucking in particulate matter and release fresh air.

About WAYU (Wind Augmentation PurifYing Unit):

- It has been indigenously developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research- National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI) as part of a Technology Development Project being funded by Department of Science and Technology.
- Its prototype has a capacity to purify air in an area of 500 meter square.
- It consumes only half unit of electricity for 10 hours of running and has a maintenance cost of only Rs. 1500 per month.

About the working of the device:

- The device works on two principles: mainly wind generation for dilution of air pollutants and active pollutants removal.
- It has filters for particulate matter (PM) removal and activated carbon (charcoal) and UV lamps for poisonous gases removal such as Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and Carbon Monoxide.
- It has one fan and filter for sucking and removing particulate matter (PM).
- It also has two UV lamps and half kg of activated carbon charcoal coated with a special chemical: Titanium Dioxide.

Interesting to know:

- CSIR-NEERI is in the process of developing a bigger version of WAYU which can purify air in an area of 10,000 meter square.
- It will also make designs of future WAYU devices better in aesthetics and can be deployed in bus shelters etc.

Government launches Financial Inclusion Index

Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Arun Jaitley launched the Financial Inclusion Index in New Delhi.

About the Financial Inclusion Index (FII):

- The annual FII will be released by Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance.
- It will be a measure of access and usage of basket of formal financial products and services that includes savings, remittances, credit, insurance and pension products.
- The index has three measurement dimensions (i) Access to financial services (ii) Usage of financial services and (iii) Quality.
- It will serve as a single composite index that will give a snap shot of level of financial inclusion which will guide Macro Policy perspective.

What is the Significance of the Index?

- Its various components will help to measure the financial services for use of internal policy making.
- It can be used directly as a composite measure in development indicators.
- It will also enable to fulfil G20 Financial Inclusion Indicators requirements.
- It will also facilitate researchers to study the impact of financial inclusion and other macro-economic variables.

4 Northern states and 2 UTs agree to fix Uniform Tax Rates on Petroleum Products

Northern states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Union Territories of Delhi and Chandigarh have agreed to fix uniform tax rates on petroleum products, amid rising fuel prices.

- Besides, these states and UTs also have agreed to bring uniformity in taxes on liquor and registration of vehicles and transport permit.
- This decision will lead to increase in government revenue and at the same time curb black marketing.
- It will also help to curb diversion of trade.

Details:

- **Decision in this regard was taken at the meeting finance ministers of five states and officials of UT Chandigarh held in Chandigarh to deliberate on fixing uniform rate of taxes on petrol and diesel.**
- The meeting was an initiative of Haryana Finance and Excise and Taxation Minister Captain Abhimanyu.
- **In this meeting it was decided to bring uniformity in VAT rates on petrol and diesel in order to provide relief to consumers.**
- **It was also decided to have a uniform policy for state transport so that there should be no loss of revenue from registration and permit fees because of different tax rates.**
- The participating states also decided to constitute a sub-committee, which would give their recommendation with regard to uniformity in tax rates in next fifteen days.
- Committee of officials has also been set up for excise and transport, which will send report to their respective state governments on the uniformity of rates.

25th September observed as Antyodaya Diwas

25th September was observed as Antyodaya Diwas across the country to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, a noted philosopher, historian and political activist.

- Antyodaya means uplifting of the weakest section of the society.
- Several activities including blood donation camps, seminar, symposia were organised on this occasion across the country.

About Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-68):

- He was a well-known political personality and a thoughtful philosopher.
- He was the coordinator and a famous leader of Jan Sangh, which is considered precursor to BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).
- He was a critic of both capitalism and communism.
- He advocated his own brand of Integral Humanism which combined morality in politics and human centric approach to economics.

- He strongly supported 'swadeshi' and small scale industrialization.
- He upheld nationalistic ideals and believed that blindly adhering to Western ideologies wouldn't be a suitable path for India.
- He founded Rashtra Dharma Prakashan publishing house in Lucknow and launched Rashtra Dharma, a monthly magazine, to advocate principles he held sacred.
- Later he launched weekly Panchjanya and daily Swadesh.
- He wrote the drama Chandragupta Maurya in Hindi and later wrote a biography of Shankaracharya.

Astra: IAF successfully test fires indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile

Indian Air Force (IAF) has successfully test fired indigenously developed Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) Astra from Su-30 fighter aircraft.

- The missile was tested at Kalaikunda Air Force Station, West Bengal.
- During the test, missile successfully engaged a manoeuvring target with high precision, meeting mission objectives.

What is the significance of this?

- The flight test assumes significance as it was part of the series of final pre-induction trials.
- In the series of trials held till date, Astra missile has been launched in complete Su-30 flight envelope.
- So far it has undergone more than 20 developmental trials.

About Astra Missile:

- Astra is a beyond visual range air-to-air missile, indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It is one of the smallest weapon system developed by DRDO, having length of 3.8-metre and weighing 154kg.
- It is a single stage solid fuelled missile and has payload capacity of 15 kg conventional explosives.
- It can be launched from different altitudes and is capable of engaging targets at varying range and altitudes at both short-range targets (up to 20 km) in tail-chase mode and long-range targets (up to 80 km) in head-on mode.
- It is a radar homing supersonic missile having a maximum speed of Mach 4 (four times speed of sound).
- It possesses high Single Shot Kill Probability (SSKP), making it highly reliable.
- It is an all-weather missile with active radar terminal guidance, excellent electronic counter-counter

measure (ECCM) features, smokeless propulsion and process improved effectiveness in multi-target scenario.

- It has advanced on-board electronic counter-measures that jam radar signals from enemy radar, making tracking of the missile difficult.
- It is fitted with terminal active radar-seeker and an updated mid-course internal guidance system that helps missile to locate and track targets.
- **The missile can be integrated with all fighter aircraft of IAF including Sukhoi-30 MKI, Mirage-2000, MiG-29, Jaguar and the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft.**

Navy signs a contract with Hindustan Shipyard Ltd for construction of 2 Diving Support Vessels

Indian Navy has signed a contract with Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) located in Visakhapatnam for construction of two Diving Support Vessels (DSV).

- These vessels will help to augment Indian Navy's submarine support operations on either coast.

Details:

- **The first DSV will be built over a 36 month period and will be followed by second, six months later.**
- **These vessels will be based at Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai respectively.**
- They will be of 118 m in length and shall have approximately 7,650 tonnes displacement capacity.
- **These DSVs will be equipped with Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel (DSRV), which significantly enhances its Submarine Rescue Capabilities.**
- **These vessels are capable of effecting submarine rescue upto depths of 650 meters.**

What is the need for DSV's?

- Indian Navy undertakes diving operations in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in addition to operating submarines to secure our waters.
- This necessitates extensive diving operations to facilitate various activities such as submarine rescue, testing or salvage, under water inspection and recovery of objects/ship/aircraft lost at sea.
- As these activities involve diving operations with divers remaining underwater for prolonged durations, it requires suitable platform for their launch and recovery, as well as for carriage of related tools and equipment.
- Thus, induction of DSVs equipped with DSRV, will go long way in enhancing Indian Navy's capability and reach of submarine rescue operations in IOR.

Cabinet approves conversion of GSTN into government entity

The Union Cabinet has approved the conversion of Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) into a government-owned company.

- Government will now own 100% of GSTN which is the IT backbone to GST regime.
- Majority of Goods and Services Tax (GST) processes including registration, filing of returns, payment of taxes, processing of refunds is IT driven and mainly through GSTN.

Interesting to know:

- Earlier in May 2018, GST Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and comprising state finance ministers had agreed to make GSTN a government company with Centre owning 50% stake and states together holding the remaining 50%.
- **Over 1.1 crore businesses are registered on the GSTN portal.**
- With an enhanced role of GSTN from just collecting taxes to data analytics, Government had felt that it should now be the majority owner in the IT backbone provider.

About the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN):

- GSTN was set up as a not for profit, non-Government, private limited company in 2013.
- It was established primarily to provide IT infrastructure and services to Central and State Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- Currently, Centre and states together hold 49% stake (24.5% each) in GSTN.
- The remaining 51% is owned by five private financial institutions- ICICI Bank, NSE, HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.
- Its revenue model after GST was rolled out, consisted of User Charge to be paid by stakeholders who will use the system, making it a self-sustaining organization.

Finance Ministry launches web portal to grant loans to MSMEs within an hour

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has launched a portal www.psbloansin59minutes.com to enable micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to get in-principle approval of loans within an hour without the need for branch visit.

- The web portal will enable in-principle approval for MSME loans up to Rs. 1 crore within 59 minutes from Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and 5 Public Sector Banks (PSBs).
- It also simplifies the decision making process for a loan officer as the final output provides summary of credit, valuation and verification on a user-friendly dashboard in real time.

About the PSB loans in 59 minutes Portal:

- The portal is a strategic initiative of SIDBI led five PSB consortium, incubated under the aegis of Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance.
- It sets a new benchmark in loan processing and reduces turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes.

- **Subsequent to this in-principle approval, the loan will be disbursed in 7-8 working days.**
- The portal integrates advanced fintech to ensure seamless loan approval and management in MSME banking credit space.
- **The loans under it are undertaken without human intervention till sanction and or disbursement stage.**
- It has a User Friendly Platform, which omits need for physical submission of any physical document for in-principle approval.
- It also uses sophisticated algorithms to read and analyse data points of MSME borrower from various sources such as IT returns, GST data, bank statements, MCA21 etc. in less than an hour.
- It also captures applicant's basic details using smart analytics from available documents.

Government launches online platform for Agmark quality certification

Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched an online software for processing applications for Agmark quality certification mark, for agricultural products.

- It was launched by Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh.

What is Agmark?

- **Agmark is a certification mark that assures conformity to the set of standards approved by Government agency- Directorate of Marketing and Inspection.**
- It is legally enforced by Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937 (and ammended in 1986).
- **The present AGMARK standards cover quality guidelines for 205 different commodities** spanning variety of cereals, pulses, vegetable oils, essential oils, fruits & vegetables, and semi-processed products like vermicelli.
- The term agmark was coined by joining the words 'Ag' to mean agriculture and 'mark' for certification mark.
- This term was introduced originally in bill presented in the Parliament for the Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act.

About the Agmark online system:

- **It is being implemented across the country to conduct quality control functions.**
- **It will be available 24x7.**
- **It will make the process of application- simple, quick and transparent.**
- Through this online system, certificate of authorisation (domestic), permission of laboratories (domestic), permission of printing press and services related to laboratory information management system will be provided online.
- The online system will make processes easy, reliable and cost effective.

- It also has provisions for online receipt of fees from the applicants as payments can be received in digital mode through bharatkosh.gov.in website.

About the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI):

- DMI is an attached Office of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare under Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- It was set up in 1935 to implement agricultural marketing policies and programmes for integrated development of marketing of agricultural and other allied produce in country with view to safeguard interests of farmers as well as the consumers.
- It maintains a close liaison between Central and State Governments.

NITI Aayog and UN sign Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022

NITI Aayog and United Nations in India, signed a Sustainable Development Framework for 2018-2022.

- The agreement is a reflection of commitment and efforts made by India towards attaining Sustainable Development Goals.

About the India-UN Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF):

- **UNSDF 2018-2022 outlines development of a cooperation strategy between Union Government and United Nations Country Team in India in support of achievement of India's key national development priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**
- It was framed following a highly participative process, in consultation with government entities, civil society representatives, academia, and private sector.
- Focus areas under it include poverty and urbanization, health, water, and sanitation, education, climate change, nutrition and food security, clean energy, and disaster resilience; skilling, entrepreneurship, job creation, gender equality and youth development.
- **The total planned budget outlay for implementation of UNSDF is approximately Rs. 11000 crore, of which 47% is planned to be mobilized through course of implementation from multiple sources, including private sector and government.**
- **The programmatic work outlined in UNSDF targets seven low-income states viz. Bihar, Jharkhand, MP, Odisha, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and UP along with North-East region and aspirational districts identified by the NITI Aayog.**
- **It will work on improving lives of most marginalized, poor, and vulnerable communities and people in the country, especially women and girls.**
- UNSDF also includes a set of UN flagship programs that are aligned with major government schemes.
- These flagship programs will be scalable and innovative multi-sectoral solutions to some of the most pressing development challenges that India faces and also serve as catalysts for increased investment of development finance.

- UNSDF programmes range from affordable housing for poor to increasing access to clean energy in rural off-grid areas, protecting all children from vaccine-preventable diseases, providing quality education for all children and skilling for young people, especially young girls and ending stunting to improving child sex ratio.

ADB approves US \$150 million loan for establishing first multi-skills park in MP

Multilateral lender Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide US \$150 million loan for establishing the first multi-skills park in central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

- This new flagship GSP campus will be established in state capital Bhopal from where about 20,000 people are expected to be benefited.

About the Global Skills Park (GSP):

- **The skills park will be equipped with international training facilities to enhance quality of Madhya Pradesh's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system.**
- It will create more skilled workforce that meets the labour market needs of the state.
- ADB's assistance will help open up opportunities to the men and women of Madhya Pradesh to gain high-level skills that increase their employability and capacity to contribute to growth.
- **It will also help in modernising 10 industrial training institutes across state** by renovating training infrastructure and upgrading skills courses to align with industry and market needs.
- It will also help to arrest the skills gap in Madhya Pradesh as it is expected to increase in the next six years, with incremental demand for skilled workers projected to hit 5.6 million in 2024.
- **ADB will also administer US \$2 million technical assistance grant from Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, financed by Government of Japan.**
- It will help assist in preparation of operational guidelines and setting up of GSP Society as well as in development of reform initiatives for industrial training institutes.

Facts related to Madhya Pradesh:

- **Madhya Pradesh has one of the largest working-age populations in India with labour force expected to expand from 48 million in 2016 to 56 million in 2026.**
- However, many in this labour force do not have necessary skills and training that can meet employment needs of state's emerging sectors.
- **As per ADB, more than 55% of the state's workforce is currently in agriculture, while 22% is in industry and 23% in services.**
- **The percentage of people in workforce has undergone any formal vocational training is just 1.2%.**

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"USAID-India End TB Alliance" to eliminate TB announced

United States and India have formed "USAID-India End TB Alliance" comprising leading experts in public and private sectors to combat the menace of tuberculosis.

- It was announced by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) administrator Mark Green at event in New York in presence of Union Health Minister J P Nadda.

About the "USAID-India End TB Alliance":

- **The alliance members include industry and civil society leaders, academics, scientists, innovators, investors, and members of the diaspora.**

- The experts in the alliance will offer innovative approaches to combat tuberculosis in India.
- Its two members include Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Director General of World Health Organisation (WHO) and Blessina Kumar from Global Coalition of TB Activists.
- USAID will make an initial US \$30 million commitment, subject to approval of the US Congress.

About Tuberculosis (TB):

- TB is a disease caused by the bacteria "Mycobacterium tuberculosis" that most often affect the lungs.
- It spreads from person to person through the air.
- It commonly affects lungs but can also affect other parts of the body.
- It is the second biggest killer disease worldwide next only to HIV/AIDS.
- India accounts for about a quarter of the global TB burden.
- Worldwide India is the country with the highest burden of both TB and MDR (Multi-drug resistant) TB.
- It accounts for 27% of the world's TB cases, with 421,000 deaths per year i.e. one TB related death every minute.
- In March 2017, Government had set an aim of elimination of TB in India by 2025.

Senior IPS officer SS Deswal appointed as DG of Sashastra Seema Bal

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed senior IPS officer S S Deswal as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

- He will hold post for a period up to his superannuation on August 2021.
- Prior to this appointment he was the DG of Border Security Force (BSF).
- He is a 1984-batch IPS officer of the Haryana cadre.

About the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB):

- SSB is one of India's Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).
- It is entrusted with guarding the country's border with Nepal and Bhutan.
- It was established in 1963 following the Sino-Indian War.
- It was formerly known as Special Service Bureau.
- It is under administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Its headquarters are in New Delhi and motto is "Service, Security and Brotherhood".
- It has specialist jurisdictions for national border patrol, security, and integrity.

#LooReview Campaign: Government and Google launch campaign to review Public Toilets

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has partnered with Google to launch Loo Review campaign on Google Map.

- The joint campaign has been launched under the aegis of Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban (SBM-U).
- It will run throughout October and November 2018 in an effort to increase awareness and ease of locating public toilets across India.

About the Loo Review campaign:

- This campaign aims to encourage all local guides in India to rate and review public toilets on Google Maps.
- It is a part of a feature which allows all citizens to locate public toilets in their cities on Google Maps, Search and Assistant and also provide feedback on the same.
- 500 plus cities in India with more than 30,000 toilets with name of "SBM Toilet" are currently live on Google Maps.
- The campaign will involve and engage Local Guides in India to rate and review public toilets on Google Maps.
- Besides, use of hashtag #LooReview will give a chance to the users to be featured on Google Local Guides' social channels.
- Local Guides are people who share reviews, photos, and knowledge on Google Maps to help people explore the world.

Interesting to know:

- One of the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban (SBM- U) is to provide sanitation coverage through public toilet facilities across cities in India for achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.
- With around 3400 cities across the country already have achieved ODF status and other cities gearing up towards the same.
- This campaign will address need for ensuring ODF status is sustained through continuous usage and proper maintenance of public toilets.

Government sets up Injeti Srinivas High Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility

The Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has constituted a High Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility- 2018 (HLC-2018) under the Chairmanship of Injeti Srinivas, Secretary, MCA.

- It will review the existing framework and guide, and formulate a roadmap for coherent policy on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

About Committee's Terms of Reference:

- It will review the existing CSR framework as per Act, Rules and Circulars issued from time to time and recommend guidelines for better enforcement of CSR provisions.
- It will analyze the outcomes of CSR activities, programmes and projects and suggest measures for effective monitoring and evaluation of CSR by companies.
- It will also give suggestions on innovative solutions, use of technology, platform to connect stakeholders, and social audit.
- It will submit its report to Government within three months from date of holding its first meeting.

About Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):

- CSR is referred as an initiative undertaken by CST to assess and take responsibility for company's effects on environment and impact on social welfare and to promote positive social and environmental change.
- Its basic philosophy is that income is earned only from the society and therefore it should be given back.
- Thus, CSR aims at promoting responsible and sustainable business through inclusive growth.
- The provisions of section 135 of Companies Act, 2013 (Act) pertains to CSR.
- The existing provisions of in Companies Act, 2013 fully empower the Board of Company to decide on their CSR Policy, approve projects and oversee implementation.
- Under this Act, any company with net worth of Rs 500 crore or more or turnover of Rs 1000 crore or more or net profit of Rs 5 crore or more has to spend at least 2% of last 3 years average net profits on CSR activities as specified in Schedule VII of the Act.

NITI Aayog inks SoI for collaboration against counterfeit drugs in India

NITI Aayog has signed a Statement of Intent (SoI) with Oracle to pilot a real drug supply-chain using blockchain distributed ledger and Internet of Things (IoT) software to fight the growing problem of counterfeit drugs in India.

- Strides Pharma Sciences and Apollo Hospitals will partner in this effort.
- Oracle is a US multinational computer technology corporation that specializes primarily in developing and marketing database software and technology, cloud engineered systems, and enterprise software products.

Need for this collaboration:

- The problem of fake and counterfeit drugs is a major issue, costing Indian pharma industry billions.
- At the same time, it is also putting patients at higher risk.
- This agreement with Oracle, will help ensure that Indian drug manufacturers and healthcare experts have access to standards-based, modern technology platform- blockchain and Internet of

Things (IoT) to help eliminate fake drug distribution.

About Blockchain technology in drug supply-chain:

- Blockchain technology will help to permanently register a drug's record in the manufacturer's drug supply chain (serial number, scanning, labelling).
- This will leave no scope for record tampering.
- At every point of hand change of drug, it records drug's movement from manufacturer to logistics, stockiest, hospital or pharmacy to consumer.
- In case of a fake drug, software will detect irregularity.
- Additionally, critical information such as chemical ingredients of the drug or maintenance of temperature control in case of life saving drugs or vaccines, can also be tracked.

Major Advantages of Blockchain Software:

- It will allow sharing of information across drug supply chain securely with every exchange of information getting recorded.
- This system cannot be tampered with a record of drug movement.
- Besides being a decentralized database, it has the inability to delete any records so there can be no dispute, if offender is caught.

Second Anniversary of Surgical Strike was celebrated as Parakram Parv

Second Anniversary of Surgical Strike was celebrated as Parakram Parv or Surgical Strike Day on September 29-30, 2018 by Indian Army to showcase the gallant action of brave Armymen in the conduct of Surgical Strikes on September 29, 2016.

- This day was also marked to remember the sacrifice of soldiers during 'Uri incident'.

About the Celebrations:

- The Parakram Parv celebrations were inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at 'Combined Commanders' Conference in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
- Exhibition to highlight the valour and accomplishments of the Indian Army was also organised by Konark Corps at the Jodhpur Military station.

A look into the history:

- Indian Army had carried out a Surgical strike on the night of September 28-29, 2016 in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), 11 days after the Uri attack claimed 18 soldiers.
- It was carried out by Para (Special Forces), commonly known as Para SF, which is the special force unit of the Indian Army's Parachute Regiments.
- The four hour surgical strike had inflicted heavy casualties on terrorists along with those protecting them, sending across a message of change of stand on the rules of engagement on the

disputed Line of Control (LoC).

- The strike was conducted to prevent terrorists who were prepping to infiltrate and attack the Kashmir region and metros.
- It was claimed to be first-of-its-kind strike across the Pakistani border and was based on specific intelligence reports.

What is a Surgical Strike?

- It is essentially a swift and targeted attack on specific target that aims to neutralise them while ensuring minimum collateral damage to surrounding areas, general public infrastructure, vehicles, buildings, utilities and most importantly civilians.
- Neutralisation of targets with surgical strikes also prevents escalation to a full blown war between two countries.
- Surgical strikes are part of India's Cold Start doctrine and have proved effective in foiling new infiltration bid by terrorists groups across LoC from Pakistani side who mainly attack several locations in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and other metro cities in India.

Government launches Rail Heritage Digitisation Project in collaboration with Google

Union Railway Ministry has launched the Rail Heritage Digitisation Project in collaboration with Google Arts and Culture Association.

- It can be accessed at: <https://artsandculture.google.com/project/indian-railways>
- It is first-of-its-kind project that aims to showcase India's rail heritage to the national and international audience in an online story-telling platform.
- It is also the largest cultural heritage digitisation project in India and possibly in entire Asia Pacific Region.

Details:

- The collaboration of Google Art and Culture and Indian Railways under this project was able to digitise the National Rail Museum, Rewari Steam Centre, three World Heritage Railways, CSMT Mumbai building and other prominent aspects of country's rail heritage.
- The project was completed after almost 2 years of hard work, research, inquiry and execution.
- Digitization of rail heritage will make India's rich rail-heritage and legacy digitally accessible to people in India and around the world.
- It will also provide an opportunity to contextualize artifact and other heritage assets with stories for next generation.
- Digital heritage provides a universal access to large repository of knowledge and thus removes the bottleneck of being physically there.

- It will also bring alive lost stories and heroic efforts of people like track-man, station master and workshop engineers to celebrate their contribution.

About Indian Railways:

- Indian Railway is one of the most celebrated railway networks in the world with over 151,000 kilometres of track, 7,000 stations, 1.3 million employees and 160 years of history.
- The first railway in India was started on 16th April, 1853 between Bori bundar and Thane.
- Since then it has expanded to become one of largest networks in the world and also significantly contributed to social, technological and economic development of the country.

Pharma Jan Samadhan Scheme

Launched by:

Union Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Shri Ananth Kumar

Aim:

- For redressed of consumers' grievances relating to pricing and availability of medicines.
- Empowering the common man.
- To help both consumers as well as pharma industry.

Facts About the Scheme:

- The pharma industry stands on three pillars-
 - Quality,
 - Availability and
 - Affordability

'Pharma Jan Samadhan' is a step in this direction.

- Compendium has been issued for both consumers and the pharmaceutical industry
- To make medicines available to poor people at cheap rates, the Jan Aushidhi scheme is being Redesigned.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- Web enabled system created by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).
- For protection of interests of consumers, it seeks to serve as a robust E-governance tool through effective implementation of the price of drugs.
- Act as a measure against black-marketing, artificial medicines and also against practices like over pricing of the drugs.

- Provide many facilities, like an on-line facility to consumers and others, to redress their complaints relating to over-pricing of medicines, non-availability or shortage of medicines, refusal of supply for sale of any medicine without good and sufficient reason.
- National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) will initiate within 48 hrs of its receipt, after receiving the complaint.
- It shows that the government or NPPA is not only a regulator but also a facilitator.
- This pharma-literacy initiative would not only create awareness among the people but also act as a deterrence against black-marketing, spurious medicines, and inflated cost of drugs.
- So this is the door for an online facility to register complaints regarding any of the issues below:
 - Redressed of consumers' grievances
 - Overpricing of medication
 - Non-availability or shortage of medication
 - Sale of new medicines without prior price approval of NPPA
 - Prevent spread of spurious medication
 - Stop inflation in the cost of drugs

Government Schemes Related to Banking

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- Hon'ble Prime Minister announced Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana as the National Mission on Financial Inclusion in his Independence Day address on 15th August 2014, to ensure comprehensive financial inclusion of all the households in the country by providing universal access to banking facilities with at least one basic bank account to every household, financial literacy, access to credit, insurance and pension facility.
- Under this, a person not having a savings account can open an account without the requirement of any minimum balance and, in case they self-certify that they do not have any of the officially valid documents required for opening a savings account, they may open a small account.

PMJDY was conceived as a bold, innovative and ambitious mission. In the first phase of the scheme, these households were targeted for inclusion through the opening of a bank account within a year of the launch of the scheme.

Special Benefits under PMJDY Scheme

Interest on deposit.

- Accidental insurance cover of Rs. 1.00 lac
- No minimum balance required.
- The scheme provides life cover of Rs. 30,000/- payable on death of the beneficiary, subject to fulfillment of the eligibility condition.

- Easy Transfer of money across India
- Beneficiaries of Government Schemes will get Direct Benefit Transfer.
- After satisfactory operation of the account for 6 months, an overdraft facility will be permitted.
- Access to Pension, insurance products.
- The Claim under Personal Accidental Insurance under PMJDY shall be payable if the Rupay Card holder have performed minimum one successful financial or non-financial customer induced transaction at any Bank Branch, Bank Mitra, ATM, POS, E-COM etc. Channel both Intra and Inter-bank i.e. on-us (Bank Customer/rupay card holder transacting at same Bank channels) and off-us (Bank Customer/Rupay card holder transacting at other Bank Channels) within 90 days prior to date of accident including accident date will be included as eligible transactions under the Rupay Insurance Program 2016-2017.
- Overdraft facility up to Rs.5000/- is available in only one account per household, preferably lady of the household.

2. From Jan Dhan to Jan Suraksha-

For creating a universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor and the underprivileged the Hon'ble Prime Minister launched three Social Security Schemes in the Insurance and Pension sectors on 9th of May 2015.

3. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)

- **Age Group:** The PMJJBY is available to people in the age group of 18 to 50 years having a bank account who give their consent to join /enable auto-debit. Aadhar is the primary KYC for the bank account.
- **Life cover:** The life cover of Rs. 2 lakh is for the one year period stretching from 1st June to 31st May and is renewable. Risk coverage under this scheme is for Rs. 2 lakh in case of death of the insured, due to any reason.
- Premium is Rs. 330 per annum which is to be auto-debited in one installment from the subscriber's bank account.
- The scheme is being offered by the Life Insurance Corporation and all other life insurers who are willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with banks for this purpose.
- Facts and Figures As on 31st March 2017, cumulative gross enrollment reported by banks subject to verification of eligibility, etc. is over 3.10 crore under PMJJBY. A total of 62166 claims were registered under PMJJBY of which 59118 have been disbursed.

4. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)-

- **Age Group:** The Scheme is available to people in the age group 18 to 70 years with a bank account who give their consent to join/ enable auto-debit on or before 31st May for the coverage period 1st June to 31st May on an annual renewal basis. Aadhar would be the primary KYC for the bank account.
- **Risk Cover:** The risk coverage under the scheme is Rs. 2 lakh for accidental death and full disability and Rs. 1 lakh for partial disability. The premium of Rs.12 per annum is to be deducted from the account holder's bank account through 'auto-debit' facility in one installment.

- **Offered By:** The scheme is being offered by Public Sector General Insurance Companies or any other General Insurance Company who are willing to offer the product on similar terms with necessary approvals and tie up with banks for this purpose.
- **Facts and Figures:** As on 31st March 2017, cumulative gross enrolment reported by Banks subject to verification of eligibility etc. is over 9.94 crore under PMSBY. A total of 12,534 Claims were registered under PMSBY of which 9,403 have been disbursed.

5. Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- APY was launched on 9th May 2015 by the Prime Minister. APY is open to all saving bank/post office saving bank account holders in the age group of 18 to 40 years and the contributions differ, based on pension amount chosen.
- Subscribers would receive the guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 4,000 or Rs. 5,000 at the age of 60 years. Under APY, the monthly pension would be available to the subscriber, and after him to his spouse and after their death, the pension corpus, as accumulated at age 60 of the subscriber, would be returned to the nominee of the subscriber.
- The minimum pension would be guaranteed by the Government, i.e., if the accumulated corpus based on contributions earns a lower than estimated return on investment and is inadequate to provide the minimum guaranteed pension, the Central Government would fund such inadequacy. Alternatively, if the returns on investment are higher, the subscribers would get enhanced pensionary benefits.
- Scenario: In the event of premature death of the subscriber, Government has decided to give an option to the spouse of the subscriber to continue contributing to APY account of the subscriber, for the remaining vesting period, till the original subscriber would have attained the age of 60 years. The spouse of the subscriber shall be entitled to receive the same pension amount as that of the subscriber until the death of the spouse.
- Scenario: After the death of both the subscriber and the spouse, the nominee of the subscriber shall be entitled to receive the pension wealth, as accumulated till age 60 of the subscriber. As on 31st March 2017, a total of 48.54 lakh subscribers have been enrolled under APY with a total pension wealth of Rs. 1,756.48 crore.

6. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana:

- The scheme was launched on 8th April 2015.
- Under the scheme a loan of upto Rs. 50,000 is given under sub-scheme 'Shishu'; between Rs. 50,000 to 5.0 Lakhs under sub-scheme 'Kishore'; and between 5.0 Lakhs to 10.0 Lakhs under sub-scheme 'Tarun'. Loans taken do not require collaterals.
- These measures are aimed at increasing the confidence of young, educated or skilled workers who would now be able to aspire to become first generation entrepreneurs; existing small businesses, too, will be able to expand their activities.

7. Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana

- Based on the success and popularity of Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2003 (VPBY-2003), Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2014 (VPBY-2014) schemes, and to protect elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to the uncertain market conditions, as also to provide social security during old age, it has been decided to launch a simplified scheme of assured pension of 8% called the 'प्रधानमंत्री वय वन्दना योजना'.
- This is implemented through Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India. As per the scheme, on payment of an initial lump sum amount ranging from a minimum purchase price of Rs. 1,50,000/- for a minimum pension of Rs 1,000/- per month to a maximum purchase price of Rs. 7, 50,000/- for the maximum pension of Rs. 5,000/- per month, subscribers will get an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum, payable monthly.

Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme

Launch Date: Introduced in 2003-04

Aim:

- Promoting the development of new talents in the various fields like music and dance, folk and tribal art forms, under the able guidance of Gurus.
- To nurture the young talents and to acquire skills in their chosen field of art, the scheme preserves and promote rare and vanishing art forms whether classical or folk/tribal through some financial assistance by the Zonal Cultural Centre (ZCCs) in the form of scholarship under the guidance of Experts and Masters in these field.
- Also, provide security to a large number of old and retired artists.

Facts:

- Great masters in the field of Music and Dance, folk and tribal art forms will be identified in each zonal cultural centres and pupil will be assigned, under the scheme.
- For encouraging the systematic learning of different art forms, Financial assistance and Scholarship will be given by the government.
- Rs. 343.61 lakhs fund was allocated/spent under the Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme.
- For the fulfilment of the scheme, Government of India has set up seven Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) with headquarters at Patiala, Nagpur, Udaipur, Allahabad, Kolkata, Dimapur and Thanjavur and this Zonal Cultural Centre (ZCCs) organize various cultural activities, workshops, exhibitions, craft fairs etc.
- The number of beneficiaries and the funds allocated/spent under Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme –

Year	Funds allocated/ spent	Number of beneficiaries
2014-15	98.51 lakh	497
2015-16	140.28 lakh	425
2016-17	104.82 lakh	368

Project 'Mausam' by Ministry of Culture

Launch date: 20th June 2014

Launch by: Secretary, Ministry of Culture Shri Ravindra Singh

Objective of this Scheme:

- Under Project Mausam, inscribe places and sites identified as trans-national nomination for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- Focus on monsoon patterns, cultural routes and maritime landscapes, also examine key processes and phenomena that link different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral as well as those that connect the coastal centres to their hinterlands.

Aim:

- Understanding how the knowledge and manipulation of the monsoon winds has shaped interactions across the Indian Ocean and led to the spread of shared knowledge systems, traditions, technologies and ideas along maritime routes.
- Encourage research on themes related to the study of Maritime Routes.

Facts:

- **Project 'Mausam' is of two levels:**
 - Macro-level - re-connect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean world, which would lead to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns.
 - Micro-level - focus on understanding national cultures in their regional maritime milieu.
- 150,244,502/- Rupee fund was approved by Ministry of Culture for two years.
- Major achievements are:
 - A national conference organized by ASI and Kerala Tourism in November, 2014 at Kochi, Kerala.
 - Exhibition on Unearthing Pattanam; Histories, Cultures and Crossings at National Museum in November, 2014.
 - Seventeen lectures were held on various themes related to Project Mausam by IGNCA
 - An exhibition on 'Africans in India: A rediscovery' in IGNCA.
 - Symposium on 'Maritime culture of India and its potential' in January, 2017.

Key Highlights of UDAY (Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana)

Launch date: 05th November 2015

Launch by: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

Aim:

Reforming the power sector.

Objective of this Scheme:

For financial turnaround of Power Distribution Companies.

Facts:

- This scheme empowers DISCOMs with the opportunity to break even in the next 2-3 years through four initiatives.
 - Improving operational efficiencies of DISCOMs.
 - Reduction of cost of power.
 - Reduction in interest cost of DISCOMs.
 - Enforcing financial discipline on DISCOMs through alignment with State finances.
- Through some measures, reduction in cost of power would be achieved such as:
 - Increased supply of cheaper domestic coal,
 - Coal linkage rationalization,
 - Liberal coal swaps from inefficient to efficient plants,
 - Coal price rationalization based on GCV (Gross Calorific Value),
 - Supply of washed and crushed coal,
 - Faster completion of transmission lines.
- States will take over three-fourths of the debt of their respective discoms, Under the scheme.
- Remaining 25 per cent of the discom debt will be dealt by –
 - Conversion into lower interest rate loans by the lending banks.
 - Or be funded by money raised through discom bonds backed by State guarantee.
- Backing from the State will help bring down the interest rate for the discoms.
- For the bailout, in return, the discoms have been given target dates (2017 to 2019) by which they will have -
 - To meet efficiency parameters such as reduction in power lost through transmission, theft and faulty metering, installing smart meters and implementing GIS (geographic information system) mapping of loss making areas.
 - States will also have to ensure that power tariffs are revised regularly.

Awards and Honours September 2018

Name of the Winner	Category	Organized by /Presented by / Some facts
Rikako Ikee	Most Valuable Player (MVP) Trophy Award	Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) has chosen Japanese woman swimmer
Dr Arif ur Rehman Alvi	President	Dr Arif Alvi elected as 13th President of Pakistan
Arpinder Singh	gold medal	won the gold medal in Men's Triple Jump event at 2018 Jakarta- Palembang Asian Games.

Union Territory of Puducherry	National Clean School Award	National Clean School Award given by HRD Ministry for cleanliness.
P.V Sindhu	Forbes list of highest-earning women sportspersons	P.V Sindhu (23) was ranked seventh on Forbes list of highest-earning women sportspersons in the world
Hima Das	Sports Ambassador	Sports Ambassador of Assam to inspire budding players of northeastern state to aim big
Rajiv Gandhi International Airport	World no. 1 Airport award	Hyderabad International Airport was awarded Airports Council International Airport Service Quality World no.1 airport award
India Blue	Duleep Trophy	won 2017-18 Duleep Trophy by defeating the defending champion India Red

