

1. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above.
- The scheme is launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India.
- The programme, which became applicable from January 1, 2017 provides a cash incentive of Rs 5,000 in three instalments to pregnant women and lactating mothers for the first child through Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT).

2. PRASAD Scheme of Ministry of Tourism

- The Centre has included Gangotri and Yamunotri in Uttarakhand, Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and Parasnath in Jharkhand under a central scheme to develop pilgrimage and heritage destinations in the country.
- With the new additions, the number of sites under the PRASAD scheme has now become **41 in 25 states**.
- The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Tourism in 2014-15.
- PRASAD stands for -**Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive**.
- Under the scheme 'Prasad', the Ministry of Tourism provides Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations.

3. Ministry of HRD launches faculty development programmes - LEAP & ARPIT

- A unique initiative of online professional development of 15 lakh higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM, **Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT)** was launched on 13th Nov.

- The ministry of human resource development also launched **Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP)** which will be implemented through 15 top institutions like IITs, TISS, DU, JNU and IISERs and also include a week training in a foreign campus of the likes of Harvard University, Oxford University, Purdue University and NTU Singapore, among others.

About LEAP programme

- LEAP is a three-week flagship leadership development training programme (two-week domestic and one-week foreign training for second level academic functionaries in public funded higher education institutions).
- LEAP programme will be offered by 15 NIRF top ranked Indian Institutions namely, IIT Roorkee, IIT Kanpur, NIT Trichy, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Delhi, IIT Bombay and TISS Mumbai, among others.

Objective of LEAP

- The objective is to prepare second tier academic heads who are potentially likely to assume leadership roles in the future.

About ARPIT programme

- ARPIT is a 40-hour module with 20 hours of video content offered in a highly flexible format and can be done at one's own pace and time.
- There are built-in assessment exercises and activities as part of the academic progression in the course.
- At the end of the course, they will be a terminal assessment which can be either online or a written examination.
- All faculties who have successfully completed the online refresher course will be certified.

4. Eight States achieve 100% household electrification under Saubhagya scheme

- 8 States which achieved 100% household

electrification under Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - Saubhagya scheme are Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Sikkim, Telangana and West Bengal.

- With this, total 15 States in India have 100 per cent household electrification.
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Rs 16320-Crore 'Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana'- Saubhagya on September 25, 2017 to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.
 - The scheme aims to achieve the goal of universal household electrification in the country by March 31, 2019.
- 5. Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** Two North East Circuit Projects inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Union Ministry of Tourism has inaugurated two important projects as part of Development of North East Circuit under Swadesh Darshan Scheme in Arunachal Pradesh.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- It was launched by Union Tourism Ministry in 2015 with objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country.
 - These tourist circuits developed will be developed under on principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in integrated manner.
- 6. SPARC' Scheme** - The Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar launched the 'SPARC' Scheme.
- The objective of the scheme is to boost India specific research in social and pure sciences.
 - Here 'SPARC' stands for - 'Scheme for promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration'.
 - "SPARC will focus on joint research projects in focus areas, including technology, science and social sciences, which are of relevance to India.

Aim of the SPARC scheme -

- SPARC scheme aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world.

Key points of the Scheme:

- The SPARC scheme envisages supporting around 600 proposals for a total outlay of Rs. 418 Crores over two years.

Budget Outlay - Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry announced a budget of Rs. 418 crore from 2018-20 on collaborative research between Indian and foreign institutes.

Collaboration with foreign countries:

- SPARC scheme will facilitate academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions the best institutions in the world from 28 selected nations.

National Coordinating Institute

- Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur is the National Coordinating Institute to implement the SPARC programme.

Eligibility

- All Indian Institutions ranked in the overall top- 100 or category-wise top-100 in the India Rankings (NIRF) is eligible to apply.
- Only such private institutions which are falling in the above category, and also recognised under Section 12(8) of UGC Act are eligible.
- The partner institution shall be in the top-500 of Q5 World University Rankings or in the top-200 of Q5 World University Rankings by subject.

7. Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme

- It is aimed at providing alternative to buying physical gold.
- Under it, bonds are denominated in units of one gram

of gold and multiples thereof.

- These gold denominated bonds are restricted for sale to resident Indian entities, including individuals, Hindu undivided families (HUF), trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- The minimum subscription for individual and HUF is 1 gram and maximum is 4 kg.
- For trusts and similar entities, maximum subscription is 20 kg per fiscal.
- RBI has notified rate of interest of **2.50% per annum** on SGB bonds is payable on half yearly basis.

8. Digi Yatra: Govt. releases policy on biometric based digital processing of passengers at airports

- Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has released policy on biometric based digital processing of passengers at airports called Digi Yatra.
- The initiative seeks to promote paperless and hassle-free air travel.
- It will be operational by end of February, 2019 at Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports.
- In later phase, Airports Authority of India (AAI) will roll out this initiative at Kolkata, Varanasi, Pune and Vijayawada airports by April 2019.

Key points:

- Under Digi Yatra, there will be one-time verification at departure airport while travelling for first time using ID.
- After successful verification, facial recognition biometric will be captured and stored in Digi Yatra ID.
- With this initiative, ticket booking, airport entry and boarding pass security check-in will be made digital.
- For this system, passengers will be registered through centralized system and will be given Digi Travel ID.

9. Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna: The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)

has approved a new scheme- Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna for Insured Persons covered under the Employees' State Insurance Act.

Key points:

- This scheme is a relief payable in cash directly to their Bank Account in case of unemployment and while they search for new engagement.
- The eligibility for availing Super Specialty treatment for dependents of Insured Person has now been relaxed to insurable employment of **one year with 156 days of contributions**.
- The ESIC also approved the proposal for increasing the funeral expenses from existing **10 thousand rupees to 15 thousand rupees** being paid on the death of Insured Person.

10. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 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.

11. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)

- PMJAY is 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.

12. Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) - The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a new

Umbrella Scheme ‘Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan’ (PM-AASHA). The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018.

- **Aim** – The scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce.
- **Objective** – To empower farmers and strengthen the Agriculture sector.
- **Allocation** - The Cabinet has sanctioned **Rs 15,053 crore** to implement the PM-AASHA in the next two financial years, of which Rs 6,250 crore will be spent this year.
- Price Support Scheme (PSS)
- Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)
- Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS).

13. Govt. extends Atal Pension Yojana indefinitely - Union Cabinet decided to indefinitely extend Atal Pension Scheme, which had lapsed in August 2018. To further incentivize people’s participation in the scheme.

Atal Pension Yojana (APY) –

- It is a social security scheme launched by the government in 2015 to provide a defined pension between Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000.
- It had replaced earlier government-backed pension Swavalamban scheme.

Key features of the schemes:

- **Overdraft facility doubled** - The Finance Minister Arun Jaitley stated that the overdraft facility has been doubled from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000 under the

Yojana.

- **Age limit increased** - The age limit has been revised to 18 to 65 years from the earlier 18 to 60 years.
- **Accidental insurance cover raised** - The accidental insurance cover has been raised from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh.

14. Govt. revised Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) – The government has revised the PMJDY scheme, to further incentivize people’s participation in the scheme.

Key points

- **Overdraft facility doubled** - The Finance Minister Arun Jaitley stated that the overdraft facility has been doubled from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000 under the Yojana.
- **Age limit increased** - The age limit for availing overdraft facility under it has also been revised to 18 to 65 years from the earlier 18 to 60 years.
- **Accidental insurance cover raised** - The accidental insurance cover for new RuPay Cardholders has been raised from Rs. one lakh to Rs. two lakh.

15. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) – Govt. has appointed senior bureaucrat Ashish Kumar Bhutani as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).

Key points

- It is farmers’ welfare scheme launched in 2016 to ensure faster insurance services or reliefs to farmers.
- It aims to reduce the premium burden on farmers and ensure early settlement of crop assurance claim for the full insured sum.
- Under this scheme, farmers need to pay uniform premium of only 2% for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
- In case of annual commercial and horticultural

crops, farmers have to pay premium of only 5%.

- The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and balance premium will be paid by Government.
- Moreover, there is no upper limit on Government subsidy, so farmers will get claim against full sum insured without any reduction.

16. CCEA approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) – The scheme was launched on 25 December 2000.

- It aims to provide single all-weather road connectivity to all eligible unconnected habitations in rural areas.
- Union Ministry of Rural Development is nodal ministry for implementation of Scheme.

17. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) – Union Government, NABARD and National Water Development Agency (NWDA) have signed revised Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for funding of central share of 99 prioritized irrigation projects under Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) through Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF).

Key points:

- PMKSY was launched in July 2015 with overarching vision to ensure access to some means of protective irrigation for all agricultural farms in the country and to produce ‘per drop more crop’, thus bringing much desired rural prosperity.
- It is implemented by Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development.
- It has outlay of Rs 50000 crore with implementation period of over five-year till April 2020.

Note:

The government has approved a corpus of **Rs 5,000**

crore for the setting up of a dedicated **micro irrigation fund (MIF)** under the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard).

18. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: Government achieves 5 crore Free LPG Connections Target.

- Union Government has announced that it has reached target of providing 5 crore free LPG connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) almost eight months ahead of schedule (i.e. in 27 months instead of 35 months).
- World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised PMUY as one of decisive intervention by Government to address indoor air pollution which accounts for nearly 10 lakh deaths in year in the country.

Key points:

- Union Government launched PMUY in May, 2016 with tagline of ‘Swachh Indhan, Behtar Jeevan.’
- It aims at providing clean-cooking fuel to poor households, who are otherwise vulnerable to various health hazards associated with indoor air pollution and bringing in qualitative changes in living standards.
- PMUY is implemented by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- Considering its huge success, government had revised target to 8 crores with budgetary allocation of Rs. **12,800 crore.**

Note: Uttar Pradesh has got the maximum number of LPG connections (87 lakh) followed by West Bengal (67 lakh) and Bihar (61 lakh).

19. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) – NITI Aayog identified 117 Districts as Aspirational Districts for RUSA Scheme.

- During the second phase of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), central assistance is

provided for opening of new Model Degree Colleges(MDCs) in 'Aspirational Districts' identified by NITI Aayog and in unserved & underserved districts in North Eastern and the Himalayan States.

- **Note: RUSA** is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), launched in 2013 aims at providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions.

20. Sukanya Samridhi Scheme: The Union Government has reduced the minimum annual deposit requirement for accounts under Sukanya Samridhi Yojana from **Rs 1000 to Rs 250**.

- The minimum initial deposit to open the account has also been reduced to **Rs 250**.
- The move is aimed at enabling more people to take advantage of the girl child savings scheme.

Key points:

- **Aim** - The scheme aims to provide **financial security** to a girl till the time that she gets married.
- **Age limit** - The Sukanya Samridhi Account scheme is meant for **girl children below the age of 10 years**.
- The account matures in **21 years before** which it is in a lock-in period where funds cannot be withdrawn.
- Also, the interest rate for the July-September quarter is **8.1%**.
- **Flexible deposit amounts:** The account can be opened with a **minimum deposit of Rs.250** and in multiples of Rs.100 thereafter.
- A maximum of **Rs.1.5 lakhs** can be deposited per account every year.

21. Suryashakti Kisan Yojana' for Farmers: The Gujarat government launched a solar power scheme for farmers- Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY) enabling them to generate electricity for their captive consumption as well as sell the surplus power to the grid and earn an extra

buck.

22. Seva Bhoj Yojna, Union Ministry of Culture launched a new scheme to provide financial assistance on purchase of specific food items by Charitable Religious Institutions (CRIs) for free distribution among people.

- The Union Ministry of Culture has launched Seva Bhoj Yojna, a new scheme to provide financial assistance on purchase of specific food items by Charitable Religious Institutions (CRIs) for free distribution among people.
- Under this scheme, Centre's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) charged on the raw food materials purchased by the religious institutions will be refunded.
- The scheme has been launched for financial years 2018-19 and 2019-20 with a total outlay of **Rs. 325.00 crores**.

23. 'SWAYAM' - Human Resource Development Ministry has launched an initiative 'SWAYAM' to train teachers using digital platform.

- The government will use the Massive Open Online Courses platform SWAYAM aims to update the teaching technique of 1.5 million higher education faculty with focus on new and emerging trends.
- To achieve this, in the first phase, 75 discipline-specific National Resource Centres (NRCs) have been identified to prepare online training material and keep the teachers well-informed of latest developments in their disciplines through the online refresher course.
- Several institutions such as Central, State and Open Universities, National Institutes for Technical Teachers Training, IITs, IIITs, NITs and other have been notified as NRCs in this regard.

24. 'Project Dhoop' - In order to address rising incidence of Vitamin 'D' deficiencies, particularly amongst the young people, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has launched a unique

initiative, 'Project Dhoop' in association with NCERT, NDMC and North MCD Schools.

- This unique initiative urges schools to shift their morning assembly to noon time mainly between 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to ensure maximum absorption of Vitamin D in students through natural sunlight.
- **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** is an autonomous body established under the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**.
- Current Union Minister of Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda.
- He is a member of Rajya Sabha from Himachal Pradesh.

25. 'Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan' - Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan' at Ram Nagar in Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh.

- The objective of the scheme is to enhance capacities and effectiveness of Panchayats and the Gram Sabhas.

26. Atal New India Challenge - On 26th April 2018, NITI Aayog launched **Atal New India Challenge** under Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) with an aim to bring-in innovations and technologies relevant to the people.

Key points-

- **Grant** - Under the Atal Innovation Mission grants of **up to Rs 1 crore** will be provided to the applicants showing capability, intent, and potential to productize technologies.
- **Objective** - The objective of this initiative is to solve problems in different 17 areas, which would have direct impact on improving lives of citizens and also generate employment.
- **Partnership** - under this new initiative, Atal Innovation Mission has partnered with the Ministries of Road Transport and Highways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Agriculture and

Family Welfare, Drinking Water & Sanitation and the Railway Board.

27. Unnat Bharat Abhiyan - The **Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD)** launched the second edition of the **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan** in New Delhi.

- The objective of this mission is to students from 750 colleges and universities across the country will adopt the nearby villages and visit them to get familiar with the life of the village people and the problems faced by them in the day to day life.

28. 'Atal Amrit Abhiyan' - Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu launched an ambitious health assurance scheme 'Atal Amrit Abhiyan' in **Assam** state.

- The scheme will offer free medical care of up to **2 lakh rupees** for every individual from Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) families.
- The scheme will cover 92% of the state's population with annual income below 5 lakh rupees.
- The Assam govt. earmarked 400 crore rupees for the scheme in the financial year 2018-19.

29. Ganga Haritkala Scheme (Ganga Hariyali Yojana) - started by the state of Uttar Pradesh.

- The main objective of this scheme is to increase the green cover in the catchment areas of Ganga River and to control the erosion of land.

30. Operation Green - On the lines of "Operation Flood" a new Scheme "Operation Greens" is announced in the Union Budget 2018.

- **Aim** - The aim of Operation Green scheme is to promote farmer producers organisations, agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management.
- It is a price fixation scheme that aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce.

- The operation aims to aid farmers and help control and limit the erratic fluctuations in the prices of onions, potatoes and tomatoes.
- **Budget Allocation – Rs. 500 crore**
- **Objective** - to double the income of farmers by the end of 2022.

31. National Bamboo Mission (NBM) – Terming Bamboo as ‘Green Gold’, the Union Finance Minister announced the scheme in the Union Budget 2018. It is a wholly-sponsored central scheme.

- **Objective** - to promote the bamboo sector in the country. This will help the people of rural and tribal areas.
- **Budget Allocation - Rs. 1,290 crore.**

32. Gobar Dhan Yojana - Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resource Fund Scheme - In Union Budget 2018, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has announced the new scheme for the villagers.

Objective - To make the villages open defecation free and improving the lives of villagers.

Key points

- Under this scheme the solid waste and cattle dung will be composed into useful elements such as Bio-CNG and Bio-Gas that are needed in agricultural sector.

RASHTRIYA EKTA DIWAS

- Rashtriya Ekta Diwas; also known as National Unity Day was celebrated throughout India on October 31, 2018 to commemorate the 143rd birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated world’s tallest ‘**Statue of Unity**’ to the nation at Kevadiya in Narmada district of Gujarat. The bronze statue has been constructed on a river island called the

Sadhu Bet on the Narmada River in Kevadiya town.

- 182 metres tall statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel will be the tallest statue in the world, surpassing the height of Spring Temple Buddha in China, which had previously held the record at 153 metres.
- The Prime Minister also unveiled the ‘Wall of Unity’, a wall created with the earth samples collected from various states across the country.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

- Independent India’s first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister; Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was born on 31 October, 1875 at Karamsand, Gujarat. He was a supporter of Gandhiji and organized peasants’ movements in Bardoli and Kheda in Gujarat. He became a follower of Gandhiji in 1918 during Kheda Satyagraha.
- Also referred to as the “Bismarck of India”; He played an important role in the integration of the over 500 princely states with India during 1947-49. He is also remembered as Patron Saint of India’s civil servants for establishing modern All-India services.

TRAIN 18

- Train 18 is India’s first engine-less semi-high speed train with a speed of 160 Km/hr.
- Currently rolled out for a test run; Train 18 has been manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai.
- It has been manufactured under the ‘Make in India’ initiative at a cost of Rs. 100 crore.
- Train 18 is a 16 coach fully AC train set that doesn’t require an engine to run as it will be self-propelled on electric traction like the metro trains.

- Train 18 has an aerodynamic driver cabin at each end. It has centrally operated automatic doors with sliding footsteps to bridge gap between platform and train. The coach entry area also has automatic sliding doors with optical sensors.

TAPI GAS PIPELINE PROJECT

- TAPI gas pipeline project is a proposed trans-country natural gas pipeline from Caspian Sea; Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan. The abbreviation TAPI itself indicates its member countries-Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The pipe line connects central Asia with south Asia covering 1,840 km.
- The pipeline begins from Turkmenistan's Galkynysh field (formally known as South Yoyotan Osman) that has gas reserves that are 16 trillion cubic feet.
- The estimated construction cost of the project is 10 billion UN dollars and is being funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Assam NRC Issue

National Register of Citizens, 1951

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a document manufactured by the Government which contains the names of Indian citizens. The updation of the NRC is a periodical process. It requires to be updated at regular intervals so as to ensure proper documentation of the citizens as well as to check possible illegal migration.
- In Assam, the updation of NRC could not be carried out since 1951 due to several political compulsions.
- The Assam Movement in 1980's, the language Movement and such other identity movements fought on ethnic lines have heavily impinged on the

system of governance in the state thereby leading to a stalemate on the NRC updation issue. After five decades of the stalemate, the present government has initiated steps to update the NRC under the direct supervision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Background of migration

- The history of Muslims in Assam dates back to the 8th century when, according to some scholars, Turks and Arab traders and sailors came to the Brahmaputra Valley and settled in the Darrang region.
- After the British annexed Assam as part of the Bengal Presidency in 1826, migrant labourers were brought in from central India to work in tea plantations and this necessitated the production of more food, which the local population could not manage on its own.
- Moreover, a spurt in demand in the jute market necessitated an increase in jute cultivation in Bengal, which again was not possible. Both these reasons were behind the migration of Muslim farmers of East Bengal to Assam, first in small numbers. But by the turn of the 20th century, there was a huge influx of migrants to the chars, or river islands, in lower Assam from Bogra, Rangpur, Pabna and Mymensingh districts of Bengal.

Is This the First such register?

- No, there was an NRC across the country in 1951, but that was based on the Census of that year. and this is the first time it is being revised and only in Assam and it is not based on the census.

Who will be considered Indian citizen?

- Those whose names were in the 1951 NRC or in any of the electoral rolls up to

the midnight of March 24, 1971 and their descendants

What is the procedure?

- To apply for inclusion in the NRC, one's name or one's ancestor's name must be in the 1951 NRC or in any voter list up to the midnight of March 24, 1971, the cut-off date agreed upon in the Assam Accord.
- If the applicant's name is not on any of these lists, he can produce any of the 12 other documents dated up to March 24, 1971, like land or tenancy record, citizenship certificate or permanent residential certificate or passport or court records or refugee registration certificate. March 25, 1971 is when the Bangladesh Liberation War began.
- If the applicant's ancestor's name is on any of these lists, the applicant will have to prove his relationship to his ancestor by producing his board or university certificate, ration card or any other legally acceptable.
- An Indian citizen from another state who moved to Assam after the specified date is not eligible for inclusion in the NRC though he can continue to vote.

What is Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

- Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 those who came from Bangladesh between 1966 and 1971 will have to register themselves with the Foreigners Regional Registration Officer, and will be included in the NRC, but will not have voting rights for 10 years from the date of registration.
- But According to Article 6 of the Constitution, the cutoff for determining citizenship in India is July 19, 1948.

Why is an updation necessary?

- It is the struggle of those who wanted to save their culture from being extinct and be reduced to an ethnic minority section in their homeland
- The Indigenous people of Assam fear that the unabated influx or growing stream of immigrants and infiltrators from across the border would one day reduce them into a small minority
- Immigration problem has been regarded as a "Security Threat" as it creates problem not only for personal security and human rights issues but also creates internal and international security problem.
- The NRC is to be updated to comply with the demands in the Assam Accord. Signed in 1985 by Rajiv Gandhi and leaders of the Assam Movement.

What happens to those who came from neighbouring countries after March 24, 1971?

- While the demand has been that such people be sent back to the countries they came from, India needs to sign repatriation treaties with Bangladesh and Nepal for the same.

NRC and Controversies

- Many Question the validity or the 1951 NRC since it was incomplete.
- People complain that the government has not made available all electoral rolls up to 1971 in all districts. The government says it has provided whatever is available.
- Doubtful voters will have to have their names cleared by the Foreigners Tribunal before their inclusion in the NRC.

- One of the oft-repeated complaints is the discrepancy in names in different government documents, caused by misspelling of names and inclusion or nicknames instead of actual names.
- There has been concern from Indigenous tribes who may not have any pre-1971 documents to prove their Identity. While all original inhabitants of Assam are to be included in Assam, the modalities for the same have not been finalized.
- Many of the Muslims who had fled Assam could only return later, thereby not being included in the 1951 Census and NRC.

Opposition to NRC revision

- There are writ petitions pending before the Supreme Court to declare the cut-off year as 1951 instead of 1971.
- There is a question about the validity of 1951 NRC data because it was incomplete.
- Few support NRC to be updated on the basis of 2014 electoral roll.
- Few feel this revision exercise should be carried out in the entire country instead of being selective to Assam.

Post NRC revision

- The treatment to those who will be left out of NRC revision will become a political issue.
- As per the Assam Accord, the foreigners who came post 1971 were to be evicted. However, it is much easier said than done. From 1985 to 2012, the government has been able to send back only around 2500 out of over 55000 identified illegal migrants.
- India needs a repatriation treaty with Nepal and Bangladesh to push back

those who will be excluded from NRC.

- There are claims for religion-based differentiation of illegal migrants which may further complicate the settlement process. Some political parties claim that the Hindus who came from Bangladesh are not foreigners and should be given citizenship.
- Since Bangladesh is not ready to take them back, lakhs of such Indian citizens, who have had their names on the Indian electoral rolls for the past four decades, and who are in possession of Electoral Photo Identity Cards, would be rendered stateless.

Why update NRC in Assam?

- The NRC is being updated in Assam to detect Bangladeshi nationals, who may have illegally entered the State after the midnight of March 24, 1971, the cut-off date.
- This date was originally agreed to in the 1985 Assam Accord, signed between the then Rajiv Gandhi government and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU).
- In 2005, another agreement was signed between the Centre, the then Tarun Gogoi government in Assam and the AASU where it was decided to update the NRC that was first published after the Census data of 1951 in post-Partition India.

Is the NRC a court-mandated exercise?

- The publication of the first draft of the NRC by December 31, 2017, was ordered by the Supreme Court.
- The top court has been hearing this case since July 2009 when Assam Public Works moved court to intervene in detecting and deporting Bangladeshis.

NRC Data published:

- Second and final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published with 2.9 crore names out of the total 3.29 crore applicants in Assam.
- The names of 40.07 lakh applicants did not find a place in the historic document, touted to be a proof of Assamese identity.
- The first draft of the NRC was published during the intervening night of December 31 and January 1 this year, containing 1.9 crore names.
- The process for making claims and objections will begin on August 30 and continue till September 28. Adequate and ample scope will be given to people for making objections.

Barak Missile

- Barak is a Hebrew word for **lightening**.
- It is an Indian-Israeli Long Range surface-to-air missile.
- It is nuclear capable ballistic missile.
- It is designed to defend against any type of airborne threat including aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs as well as cruise missiles and combat jets out to a maximum range of 70 km.
- It has maximum speed of Mach 2 with maximum operational range of 70 km (which has been increased to 100 km).
- Both **maritime** and **land-based versions** of the system exist.
- Jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and DRDO.

Spike Missile

- Spike is an Israeli anti-tank missile.

- It is man-portable fire-and-forget missile.
- It is an anti-tank guided missile.
- India is likely to soon finalise with Israel purchase of a batch of Spike anti-tank guided missiles.

Agni V

- It is an intercontinental ballistic missile.
- It is three-stage solid propellant nuclear-capable missile.
- It is a surface-to-surface missile.
- Developed by DRDO.
- Range : 5500-5800km.
- Engine : 3 stage solid fuel.
- Capable of carrying nuclear warheads of over one tonne.
- It carries Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRV) payloads. A single MIRV equipped missile that can deliver multiple warheads at different targets.
- It is also a fire and forget missile, which once fired cannot be stopped, except by interceptor missile which only US, Russia and Israel have.

Arctic Council

- The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental organisation
- It has eight member-states, six independent permanent participating organisations and observers which are non-Arctic states like India and China.
- Finland is holding the Chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2017-19.
- The Arctic Council is currently formulating a long-term strategy for action looking into the 2030s based on its founding charter.

- **India** is an **Observer** in Arctic Council.

Chandrabhaga beach

- It is located on Konark coast of Odisha
- It is the first beach in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification – the tag given to environment-friendly and clean beaches, equipped with amenities of international standards for tourists.

Bank NPAs

Facts:

- NPA of commercial banks have increased by around 4% in the last one year
- NPA in Dec 2017 is 10.41%

What is NPA as per RBI?

Non-Performing assets in respect to banks are defined as the **loans on which interest or principle is not being paid for 90 days.**

IBSA

- IBSA stands for India-Brazil-South Africa.
- Aims at galvanizing South-South cooperation.
- All Developing Democracies.
- The forum provides the three countries with a platform to engage in discussions for cooperation in the field of agriculture, trade, culture, and defence among others.
- IBSA was formalised and launched through the adoption of the “Brasilia Declaration” in **2003**.
- **Brasilia Declaration (2003)**: Approved urgent need for reforms in the United Nations, especially the Security Council.

Global Peace Index 2018

- India is ranked 136/**163** countries.
- Last year India was ranked 137.
- Index is released by Sydney-based think tank Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).
- **Iceland** was ranked most peaceful country in the world and it managed to retain its position since 2008.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- UNSC is one of six principal organs of the United Nations Organisation (UNO).
- Its mandate is to maintain international peace and security.
- UNSC has 15 members, including five permanent viz. China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States.
- Each of the five permanent members has veto power.
- 10 non-permanent members are elected for **two-year terms** each.
- Non-permanent members are:
 - Belgium
 - Côte d’Ivoire
 - Dominican Republic
 - Equatorial Guinea
 - Germany
 - Indonesia
 - Kuwait
 - Peru
 - Poland
 - South Africa
- It is the **only UN body** with the authority to issue **binding resolutions** to member

states.

- **General Assembly** elects **each year** five non-permanent members of the Security Council.
- Non-permanent members of the Council should be elected according to the following pattern:
 1. Five from African and Asian States.
 2. One from Eastern European States.
 3. Two from Latin American States.
 4. Two from Western European and other States.

World Trade Organisation (WTO)

- WTO is an inter-governmental organization for governments to negotiate global trade agreements and progressively liberalizing trade.
- It operates system of trade rules that apply to all its members.
- It is also a place for Member governments to settle their trade disputes.
- Its headquarters are located in **Geneva**, Switzerland.
- It was established on 1 January **1995** and its official languages are English, French and Spanish.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**
- It is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organization.
- Founded in **2001** in **Shanghai**.
- SCO evolved from Shanghai Five (All above minus Uzbekistan).
- On July 10, 2015, the SCO decided to

admit **India** and **Pakistan** as full members, and they joined as full members in 2017.

- Main activities: cooperation on security, military activities, and economic and cultural cooperation.
- Member countries are rich in energy resources (both fossil fuels and uranium).
- Members represent over 40% of humanity and nearly 20% of the global GDP.
- HQ : **Beijing**, China.

World Hindi Conference

- The eleventh edition of World Hindi Conference (विश्व हिंदी सम्मेलन) will be hosted by Mauritius in its capital city Port Lois in August 18-20, 2018.
- The conference provides common platform to several Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world to contribute to the language.
- It will be organised by Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India in association with Government of Mauritius.
- It is organised every third year.
- The theme of the Conference is “**Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti**”.
- World Hindi Conference was started in **1975** to make Hindi language a medium of service and knowledge and enable it to move forward with time.

Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL)

Ministry/ Department : Ministry of Communications

Objective : Bharat Net seeks to connect all of India's households, particularly in rural areas, through broadband by 2017, forming the backbone of the government's ambitious Digital India programme.

Project:

- BharatNet is Union Government's ambitious rural internet connectivity programme which is implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL).
- Earlier National Optical Fibre Network or NOFN failed due to slow implementation.
- NOFN is now rebranded as Bharat Net.

Swajal Yojana

Ministry/Department: Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Scheme:

- Swajal is community owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.
- The scheme aims at ensuring availability of clean drinking water to every household round year and also generate employment.
- Under it, 90% of the project cost is borne by Government and remaining 10% cost is contributed by the community.
- The Operations and management of the project will be taken care by the local villagers.
- Under this scheme, government aims to provide villages with piped water supply powered by harnessing solar energy.

Indian Science Congress

- 105th session of Indian Science

Congress (ISC) is held at Manipur Central University in Imphal.

- Focal Theme is "**Reaching the Unreached Through Science & Technology**"
- 106th Indian Science Congress will be held at Lovely Professional University (LPU) in Jalandhar, Punjab from January 3 to 7, 2019.
- Theme will be : 'Future India: Science & Technology.'
- It will be organised by the **Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)**, a premier scientific organisation of India.

Nalanda University

- Nalanda University is revived version of ancient Nalanda University located at **Rajgir** in Nalanda District of present **Bihar**.
- It is non-state, non-profit, secular and self-governing **international institution**.
- Its idea was mooted by former President **APJ Abdul Kalam** in 2006.
- It was established through **Nalanda University Act, 2010** on basis of Joint Press Statement at **4th East Asia Summit held in Thailand** in October 2009.
- It functions **under Ministry of External Affairs**.
- It is mandated to be engaged in pursuit of intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies.
- Teaching in this university was inaugurated in September 2014.
- At present, it has 116 students in three schools of studies namely School of

Ecology and Environment Studies, School of Historical Studies and School of Buddhist Studies.

- This includes 35 international students from 21 foreign countries.

Glomass

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

Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)

- Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) is a multinational body concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation by **controlling the export and re-transfer** of materials that may be applicable to nuclear weapon development and by improving safeguards and protection on existing

materials.

- NSG was set up in 1974 as a reaction to India's nuclear tests to stop what it called the misuse of nuclear material meant for peaceful purposes.
- Currently, it has 48 members.
- India is **not a member** yet.
- India sought membership of the NSG in 2008.
- India's application has not been decided upon because signing the NPT or other nuclear moratoriums on testing is a prerequisite and India has not signed NPT.
- However, India has received a special waiver to conduct nuclear trade with all nuclear exporters.
- India, Pakistan, Israel and South Sudan are among the four UN member states which have not signed the NPT, the international pact aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Benefits of being an NSG member:

- Gets timely information on nuclear matters.
- Contributes by way of information.
- Has confirmed credentials.
- Can act as an instrument of harmonization and coordination.
- Is part of a very transparent process?

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

IRDA is an apex **statutory** body that regulates and develops insurance industry in India. It was constituted as per provisions of Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999. Its headquarter is in **Hyderabad**.

Functions of IRDA

- Protect the rights of insurance policy holders.
- Provide registration certification to life insurance companies.
- Renew, modify, cancel or suspend this registration certificate as and when appropriate; promote efficiency in conduct of insurance business.
- Promote and regulate professional organisations connected with insurance and reinsurance business; regulate investment of funds by insurance companies.
- Adjudication of disputes between insurers and intermediaries or insurance intermediaries.

International Yoga Day

- **21 June**
- Every year
- Started in **2015**
- Celebrated to spread awareness about practicing yoga
- In December 2014, UNGA had unanimously adopted India-led resolution to observe 21st June as 'International Day of Yoga'.
- Theme for 2018 : **Yoga for Peace**

Why 21 June?

- 21st June was selected because it represents summer solstice (one of the two solstices) and it is the longest day in the Northern Hemisphere which has special significance in many parts of the world.

UNHRC

- It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system

- It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It was created by UNGA on 15 March **2006** by adopting resolution **60/251** to promote human rights globally.
- It had replaced former UN Commission on Human Rights.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Members:

- UNHRC is made up of 47 UN member states which are elected by UN General Assembly (UNGA) with specific number of seats allocated for each region of the globe.
- The term of each seat is three years, and no member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

Space Junk (Kessler Syndrome)

- More than 5 decades of human space exploration since the first Soviet-launched Sputnik satellite in 1957 has produced a hazardous belt of orbiting debris in the space.
- There are estimated to be more than 100 million pieces circling our planet in the lower orbit, posing a growing threat to future space exploration.
- These pieces of debris travel at high speeds. A relatively small piece of orbital debris can inflict a great deal of damage on satellites or spacecraft orbiting in the space.

NIIF

- NIIF stands for National Infrastructure and Investment Fund.

- It is a fund created by the Government of India for enhancing infrastructure financing in the country.
- Established in 2015.
- It is registered as a category II alternative investment fund with the Securities and Exchange Board of India.
- A sort of sovereign fund, for development of infrastructure projects, including the stalled ones.
- It is India's first sovereign wealth fund.

Chilika Lake

- It is Asia's **largest brackish water lagoon**.
- It is the **largest coastal lagoon in India** and the second largest coastal lagoon in the world.
- It lies in Odisha state on the eastern coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya River flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- Because of its rich bio-diversity and socio-economic importance, Chilika was designated as a **Ramsar site** in 1981 to afford better protection.
- It was first waterbody in Indian to be designated as wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent.
- It was put under Montreux Record (record for such sites where there has been or likely to be adverse ecological change due to manmade activities), but was later removed from it due to conservation efforts.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

- This is an international financial institution.
- It aims to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia Pacific region.
- It is an initiative of government of China.
- Started operation in **2016**.
- **HQ : Beijing, China.**
- **86** members (More are expected to join).
- The capital of the bank is \$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
- China will remain the biggest shareholder in the bank (**India second largest**), and the shares of non-Asian countries will be restricted to 25% of the total.
- China is the largest shareholder with 26.06% voting shares. India is the second largest shareholder with 7.5% voting shares followed by Russia (5.93%) and Germany (4.5%).
- The purpose of the multilateral development bank is to provide finance to infrastructure projects in the Asia Pacific region.
- AIIB is regarded by some as a rival for the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which the AIIB says are dominated by developed countries like the United States and Japan.
- AIIB will concentrate on **infrastructure**.

United Nations Peacekeeping

- United Nations Peacekeeping was created in **1948**.
- Its first mission involved the

establishment of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which served to observe and maintain ceasefire during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

- UN Peacekeeping maintains three basic principles:
- Consent of the parties,
- Impartiality
- Non-use of Force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.
- The UN Peacekeepers are led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DKPO).
- There are currently 17 UN peace operations deployed on four continents.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- It is an inter-governmental policy making body.
- It aims to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.
- It was established in **1989** during the G7 Summit in Paris (France) to combat the growing problem of money laundering.
- It comprises **over 39** countries.

India is a member

- FATF Secretariat is housed at the headquarters of the OECD in **Paris**.
- Initially it was only dealing with developing policies to combat money laundering. But in 2001 its purpose was expanded to act against terrorism financing.

Tejas – Light Combat Aircraft

- Made in India
- Single-seat

- Single-jet engine,
- Multi-role light fighter
- It has been pegged as world's smallest and lightest supersonic fighter
- LCA Tejas is **not** the first indigenous fighter to be inducted into the IAF. In April 1967, IAF had formed the first operational squadron with the indigenous HF-24 Marut fighter
- Designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Made under Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- It is equipped with satellite-aided Inertial Navigation System.
- It has digital computer-based attack system and autopilot mode.
- It has limited reach of a little over 400-km.
- It will be mainly used for close air-to-ground operations.
- **Why in news?** Tejas Squadron formally commenced operations.

RCEP

- RCEP stands for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- It is a proposed free trade agreement between countries of ASEAN (10 countries) and 6 other countries with which ASEAN has existing FTAs (including India).

Eight Core Sectors

- Core industry can be defined as the main industry. In most countries, there is a particular industry that seems to be the

backbone of all other industries and it qualifies to be the core industry.

1. Refinery products (28.04%)
 2. Electricity (19.85%)
 3. Steel (17.92%)
 4. Coal (10.33%)
 5. Crude oil (8.98%)
 6. Natural gas (6.88%)
 7. Cement (5.37%)
 8. Fertilisers (2.63%)
- These eight Core Industries comprise nearly **40.27%** of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures factory output.
 - Index of Eight Core Industries is released by Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in **Paris**.
- Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.
- It is the successor of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.
- UNESCO has **195 member states** and ten associate members.
- UNESCO pursues its objectives through

five major programs: education, natural sciences, social/human sciences, culture and communication/information.

- Projects sponsored by UNESCO include literacy, technical, and teacher-training programmes, international science programmes, the promotion of independent media and freedom of the press, regional and cultural history projects, the promotion of cultural diversity, translations of world literature, international cooperation agreements on secure the world cultural and natural heritage (World Heritage Sites) and to preserve human rights, and attempts to bridge the worldwide digital divide.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Why in news?

- India was re-elected as member of executive board of United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO).
- Executive board is UNESCO's top decision-making body.

Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)

- CACP is an expert body which recommend minimum support prices (MSPs) to Government (CCEA) by taking into account cost of production, trends in domestic and international prices.
- It is a statutory panel under the Ministry of Agriculture.
- It makes the recommendations for MSPs for 23 kharif and rabi crops.
- It came into existence in January 1965.
- Currently, CCEA comprises Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member

(Official) and two Members (Non-Official).

- The non-official members are representatives from farming community and usually have active association with farming community.
- Its suggestions are not binding on the government.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

National Green Tribunal:

- The NGT was established in 2010 under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**, passed by the Central Government.
- The stated objective of the Central Government was to provide a specialized forum for effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to violation of environmental laws or conditions specified while granting permissions.
- It draws inspiration from **Article 21 of Constitution** of India, which assures the citizens of India the right to a healthy environment.

Structure:

- The Principal Bench of the NGT has been established in the **National Capital – New Delhi**, with regional benches in :
 - Pune (Western Zone Bench),
 - Bhopal (Central Zone Bench),
 - Chennai (Southern Bench) and
 - Kolkata (Eastern Bench).
- Each Bench has a specified geographical jurisdiction covering several States in a region. There is also a mechanism

for **circuit benches**.

- The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, Head Quarters in Delhi. Other Judicial members are retired Judges of High Courts.
- Each bench of the NGT will comprise of at least one Judicial Member and one Expert Member.
- Expert members should have a professional qualification and a minimum of 15 years' experience in the field of environment/forest conservation and related subjects.

Legal jurisdiction of NGT: The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues and questions that are linked to the implementation of laws listed in Schedule I of the NGT Act. These include the following:

1. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;
2. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977; (yes, cess act).
3. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;
4. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981;
5. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; (aka EPA)
6. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991; (good option to confuse)
7. The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

NOTE: The NGT has **not been vested** with powers to hear any matter relating to the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, the **Indian Forest Act, 1927** and various laws

enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc. Therefore, specific and substantial issues related to these laws cannot be raised before the NGT.

Principles of Justice adopted by NGT:

- The NGT is **not bound** by the procedure laid down under the **Code of Civil Procedure**, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- NGT is also **not bound** by the rules of evidence as enshrined in the Indian **Evidence Act**, 1872. Thus, it will be relatively easier for conservation groups to present facts and issues before the NGT, including pointing out technical flaws in a project, or proposing alternatives that could minimize environmental damage but which have not been considered.
- While passing Orders/decisions/awards, the NGT will apply the **principles of sustainable development**, the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principles.
- It is mandated to make an endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally **within 6 months of filing**.

Review and Appeal: Orders can be appealed to the **Supreme Court within 90 days**.

Can court sessions be live-streamed?

Background:

- Some judges in the constitutional court in India had historically been reluctant about the idea of recording court proceedings because it would “capture every sentence” in the banter between judges and lawyers which were merely a way to elicit responses and not a sign of

how the judge would finally decide the case.

- The Supreme Court, in a bid to usher in transparency, had earlier allowed the installation of CCTV video recording with audio in trial courts and tribunals.

Challenges in Streaming live:

- Agreements entered with broadcasters should be on a non-commercial basis.
- No one should profit from the arrangement. There should be no unauthorized reproduction.
- Due concern should be taken care for cases involving national security concerns, matrimonial disputes and rape cases.
- A public viewing of marital dispute and rape case proceedings would seriously affect justice and amount to a violation of the fundamental right to privacy. So an alternative mechanism should be present.

Significance

- Live stream is an extension of the ‘open court’ system, where the public can walk in and watch court proceedings.
- With court proceedings beamed live on air, litigants, law students and the public can watch them as they happen.
- Would keep a check on lawyers’ conduct inside the courtrooms.
- With the entire country watching them, there would be fewer interruptions, raised voices and adjournments from the lawyers.

Practice around the world:

- Some courts allow publication after a gap of 30 minutes, some ban recording of proceedings only in trial courts as that

would compromise witnesses, some give edited versions of the proceedings, some record the proceedings but do not air it in public, some give out transcripts of proceedings.

Other Organs of the government

- To promote transparency, live-streaming has been allowed for both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings since 2004.
- Similarly, the recording of videos in the highest courts in Canada and Australia, the International Court of Justice, shows that this exercise is neither novel nor so difficult.

Citizen's right to know

- Citizens have the right to information and matters of constitutional and national importance can be live-streamed.
- If live streaming of top court's proceedings is not possible, then alternately the video recording should be allowed.

Digitization of courts

- While the courts are now opting for digitization, with online records of all cases, a provision for filing FIRs online, an automated system of case rotation, etc.
- In the light of these technological advancements, Live streaming of court cases can be needed for the cases though not for all.
- Those matters that are of great public importance should be available for all to see.
- Therefore, matters which have a privacy dimension, such as family matters or criminal matters, or matters with legal

procedural intricacies, such as most trial court matters, can be out of its scope.

- But matters which have a bearing on important public interest issues such as the constitutionality of the Aadhaar scheme, or the legality of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, all of which are pending before the Supreme Court, should be available for all to watch.

Lower judicial appointments acts:

- There are about **25% vacancies in lower judiciary.**

Issue:

- The recruitment process of district judges is now the subject matter of a public interest litigation filed in the Supreme Court.
- The matter has now come to a standstill given opposition by States to a centralised selection mechanism for judges.
- This is not the first time that the Supreme Court has tried to streamline the examination process for the lower judiciary.
- In **Malik Mazhar v. U.P. Public Service Commission (2008)**, it highlighted the importance of a prescribed time-schedule for judicial service examinations and laid down stage-wise time lines for lower judicial appointments — for civil judges (junior division) and district judges (direct recruitment) in 321 days and 183 days, respectively. An examination cycle is calculated from the date of notification to the last date for joining.

Problem in fixing timelines:

1. The rationale behind arriving at this timeline is unclear.

2. It is an inaccurate benchmark to measure performance as it does not consider different sanctioned strengths and State resources in conducting such exams.
3. Strict adherence to such timelines affects aspirants.

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Established in **1966**
- **HQ : Manila, Philippines**
- It is a multi-lateral lending agency.
- It is modeled on the World Bank.
- It has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed based on member's capital subscriptions.
- ADB borrows from international capital markets with its capital as guarantee.
- Japan and USA are its major donors.
- There has been criticism that ADB's large scale projects cause social and environmental damage due to lack of oversight.
- India has about **6% voting rights** (4th highest; Japan highest, USA 2nd highest)
- It is owned by **67** members – 48 from the region including India.
- It is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- It provides finance to both **sovereign countries** as well as to the **private parties**.
- It provides hard loans to middle-income countries and soft loans to poorer countries.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

Important: IIP series changed in May 2017 **

Main Changes:

- Base year has been changed from 2004-05 to 2011-12
- Number of items has been changed (See details below).
- There will be **407** item groups.
- The new series of IIP will include technology items like smart phones, tablets, LED television etc.
- A technical review committee has also been established to identify new items by ensuring that the series remains relevant. The committee is slated to meet at least once a year.
- The revised IIP (2011-12) reflects the changes in industrial sector and also aligns it with base year of other macroeconomic indicators like Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

About IIP

- IIP is compiled and published by Central Statistics Office(CSO).
- It is published every month.
- It covers **865** (Older series 682) items comprising:
 - Manufacturing (809 items, Older series 620 items),
 - Mining (55 items, Older Series 61 items) &
 - Electricity (1 item).

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- NCPCR is a **statutory body** set up

in 2007 under Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.

- Its objective is to protect, promote and defend child rights in India including rights adopted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 1989, ratified by India in 1992. (This convention defines child as a human being below 18 years of age).
- It falls under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**.
- The Child is defined as a person in the **0 to 18 years age** group.

Brahmos

- Supersonic cruise missile.
- Designed and developed by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture of India and Russia.
- It has derived its name from the names of two rivers, India's Brahmaputra River and Russia's Moskva River.
- It operates on fire and forget principal.
- Capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air against sea and land targets.
- Carrying capacity: 300 Kg (both conventional and nuclear).
- Speed : Mach 3 (that is, three times the speed of sound)
- Max Range: 290 Km. its range was extended to **450 km** and plan is to increase it to 600km.
- It is two-stage missile, the first one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant.
- BrahMos missile already has been inducted into the Indian Army and Navy

New Developments

- India and Russia have agreed to double the range from 290 to 600 kms.
- Earlier, India was denied access to the missile technology with range over 300 km as it was not member state of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). But India's recent accession to MTCR, allowed Russia to provide the critical systems and technology to extend the range of the missile beyond 300km.
- It is successfully test fired from Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jets. It makes IAF first air force in world to have successfully fire air-launched 2.8 Mach surface attack missile of this category.

Direct Cash Transfer

Facts:

- The Union Government has saved around Rs 57,000 crore in 2016-17 through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme under which subsidies are given directly to beneficiaries.
- In 2017-18, the beneficiary base rose from 10.71 crore in 2013-14 to 35.62 crore. A total of 485 schemes have been identified from 60 ministries for the DBT.
- Savings:
 - PAHAL: Rs 30,000 crore
 - PDS: Rs 14,000 crore
 - MGNREGA: Rs 12,000 crore
 - National Social Assistance Program: Rs 400 crore.

Basics about DBT:

- The DBT Scheme, a major reform initiative to check graft in welfare funds was launched by then UPA Government

on 1 January 2013.

- It aims at transferring benefits of various central government-run social welfare schemes directly to the bank accounts of beneficiaries.
- Its objective is to reform Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of funds/information and ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, reduce duplication and fraud.

UN Global Compact on Migration

- UN Global Compact on Migration is the first inter governmentally negotiated agreement under auspices of UN to cover all dimensions of international migration in holistic and comprehensive manner.
- **It is not legally binding.**
- Its genesis can be found in New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted in September 2016 by UN General Assembly.
- Under this declaration, signatory UN member countries had decided to develop global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.
- The process to develop this global compact for migration was started in April 2017.
- It was to reach international consensus at the UN in 2018.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

Summary Note on Act:

- It replaced the 1995 Act.
- It brought the Indian law in line with the United National Convention on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.

- Disability has been defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept.
- The types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21 and the Central Government will have the power to add more types of disabilities.
- Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time.
- Acid Attack Victims have been included.
- Dwarfism, muscular dystrophy has been indicated as separate class of specified disability.
- The New categories of disabilities also included three blood disorders, Thalassemia, Haemophilia and Sickle Cell disease.
- In addition, the Government has been authorized to notify any other category of specified disability.
- Responsibility has been cast upon the appropriate governments to take effective measures to ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others.
- Additional benefits such as reservation in higher education, government jobs, reservation in allocation of land, poverty alleviation schemes etc. have been provided for persons with benchmark disabilities and those with high support needs.
- Every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years shall have the right to free education.
- Government funded educational institutions as well as the government

recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities.

- It provides for penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities and also violation of the provisions of the new law.

Salient Features:

Definition of disability:

- It has defined based on an evolving and dynamic concept to include 21 conditions as disable.
- Expands the list of disabilities from seven to 21.
- It also defines Persons with benchmark disabilities as those with at least 40% of any of the above specified disabilities.
- Speech and Language Disability and Specific Learning Disability have been added for the first time.
- Acid Attack Victims have been included.

Rights of persons with disabilities:

- Persons with disabilities (PwDs) shall have the right to equality.
- They shall not be discriminated against on grounds of their disability.
- Rights include protection from inhuman treatment and equal protection and safety in situations of risk, humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters and armed conflict.
- All existing public buildings shall be made accessible for disabled persons.

Education and skill development:

- It provides for the access to inclusive education, self-employment and vocational training to disabled persons.
- At least 5% seats in all government

institutions of higher education and those getting aid from the government are required to reserve seats for persons with benchmark disabilities. Earlier it was only 3%.

Employment:

- The Union and State governments will ensure that at least 4% of the vacancies in identified establishments are filled by persons or class of persons with at least 40% of any of the disabilities.
- The reservation must be computed on the basis of total number of vacancies in the strength of a cadre. Government can exempt any establishment from this provision of reservation.

Legal Capacity: Disabled persons have the equal right to own and inherit movable and immovable property, as well as control their financial affairs in par with others.

Guardianship: The district court may order guardianship to the disable person if found a mentally ill person and not capable of taking care of himself or of taking legally binding decisions.

District level committees:

- It will be constituted by the State Governments to address local concerns of PwDs.
- Details of their constitution and the functions of such committees would be prescribed by the State Governments in the rules.
- Special Courts will be designated in each district to handle cases concerning violation of rights of PwDs.

Central and state advisory boards on Disability:

- They will be constituted by Central and

State governments respectively.

- They will advise governments on policies and programmes on disability.
- They will also review the activities of organisations dealing with disabled persons.

National and State Fund: It will be created to provide financial support to the persons with disabilities. The existing National Fund for PwDs and the Trust Fund for Empowerment of PwDs will be subsumed with the National Fund.

Punishment: It provides for imprisonment ranging from six months to two years, along with a fine ranging from Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 5 lakh, for discriminating against differently abled persons.

Leprosy

Facts:

- India is home to largest number of leprosy patients.
- India accounts for 60% of new cases of leprosy worldwide.
- Leprosy patients cannot run for elections.
- Leprosy patients cannot obtain driving license.
- According to National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP), a centrally-sponsored scheme, India achieved the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem, defined as less than 1 case per 10,000 population till December, 2005
- Mahatma Gandhi did lot of work for upliftment of people affected with leprosy.

UK referendum – Brexit

What is Brexit?

- An unofficial word given to the exit of Britain from EU. A referendum to leave European Union (EU) was held in which UK has decided to leave EU.
- The process of leaving has a time limit, which ends on March 29, 2019. The UK has to negotiate with the European Commission.

Britain = England+Scotland+Wales

UK = Britain + Northern Islands

Is this the first such referendum?

- No, this is the second referendum on Britain's relationship with the European project.
- In 1975, in a referendum on whether the U.K. should stay or leave the European Community (Common Market) Area, the country voted for staying in with a resounding 67.2 per cent vote

Trademark

- Trademark refers to graphical representation of goods or services to make it distinguishable from others.
- It can be words, symbols, sound, colours, shape of goods, graphics representation or packaging etc.
- It protects owner against unfair competition, prevents damage to reputation of owner and consumer welfare.
- In India, trademarks are governed under **Trademarks Act, 1999** (it deals with precise nature of rights one can acquire in respect of trademarks), under aegis of **Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP)**, Ministry of Commerce.

- The implementing body is Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks.

Anti-Lynching Law

Facts:

- 28 people were killed in 63 such incidents from 2010 to 2017 in cow vigilantism.
- About 86% of those killed were Muslims. In 21% of the cases, the police filed cases against the victims/survivors.

What is lynching?

- Lynching is a premeditated extrajudicial killing by a group. It is most often used to characterize informal public executions by a mob in order to punish an alleged transgressor, or to intimidate a group.
- It is an extreme form of informal group social control and often conducted with the display of a public spectacle for maximum intimidation.
- It is to be considered an act of terrorism and punishable by law. Instances of lynching and similar mob violence can be found in every society.

Who is responsible to manage it?

- As per the Constitution, 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects and State governments are responsible for controlling crime, maintaining law and order and protecting the life and property of the citizens.
- National Crime Records Bureau does not maintain specific data related with respect to lynching incidents in the country.

Why anti-lynching law is necessary?

- It fills a void in our criminal

jurisprudence.

- At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).
- Under **Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)**, to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the "same transaction".
- But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs.

Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2018

Bill Intent:

- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2018, proposes to give the Centre the power to set the tenure and salaries of State and Central Information Commissioners.
- The current law gives Information Commissioners tenure of five years and salaries which match those of Election Commissioners.

EC v/s CIC

- The functions being carried out by the Election Commission of India and the central and state Information Commissions are totally different.
- While the Election Commission is a constitutional body, the Information Commissions are statutory bodies, and their differing mandates mean that their status and service conditions need to be rationalised accordingly.

Concerns

- The Bill is being opposed by several Opposition political parties and RTI activists, who warn that the amendments will dilute the RTI law and compromise the independence of the Information Commissions.
- This is simply a way of giving the Central government a greater grip on Information Commissioners, who have been giving orders which the government finds inconvenient.
- The Centre usurping the power to decide the tenure and salaries of State Information Commissioners raises key issues of federalism.
- The secrecy around the amendments has prevented any meaningful debate or public engagement with the proposed changes. There has been no debate around the Bill.

Delhi Dialogue

- Delhi Dialogue is premier annual event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement **between India and ASEAN**.
- It has been held annually **since 2009** and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
- It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.
- The theme of tenth edition of dialogue was **“Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation**.

NABARD

- NABARD is an apex development bank in India.

- The Reserve Bank of India (**RBI**) holds the majority stake in it.
- **Headquarters:** Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- **Established:** 1982 on the recommendations of **Shivaraman Committee** to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act, 1981.
- It has been entrusted with matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India.
- It is active in developing financial inclusion policy and is a member of the Alliance for Financial Inclusion

No-Confidence Motion

- In a parliamentary democracy, government can be in power only if it commands majority in directly elected House.
- **Article 75(3)** of our Constitution of India embodies this rule by specifying that Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to Lok Sabha.
- But there is **no mention** of a no-confidence motion **in the constitution**.
- The Rule 198 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha provide mechanism for testing this collective responsibility.
- **Rajya Sabha does not have procedure** for moving of no-confidence motion against Government and also adjournment motion, censure motion.
- The rule allows any **Lok Sabha MP** who can garner support of 50 colleagues, to introduce motion of no-confidence against the Council of Ministers.

- Motion of No-confidence need not set out any grounds on which it is based.
- If there are 50 MPs in favour, the motion is admitted and speaker allots date for discussion on the motion. Thereafter, discussion on motion takes place.
- MPs who support motion highlight government's shortcomings.
- Then Prime Minister or ministers reply to the charges made.
- If the government loses trust vote, it is expected to resign.

QR Code

- QR code (Quick Response code) is a two-dimensional (matrix) machine-readable bar code made up of black and white square.
- This code can be read by the camera of a Smartphone.
- It is used for storing URLs or other information that link directly to text, emails, websites, and phone numbers.
- It is capable of 360 degrees (omni-directional), high speed reading.
- QR Code can store up to 7089 digits as compared to conventional bar codes which can store max 20 digits.
- It encodes same amount of data in one-tenth the space of a traditional bar code.
- It carries information both horizontally and vertically.
- It has error correction capability and data stored in it can be restored even if it is partially damaged or dirty.

International Solar Alliance

- The ISA was launched at the 2015 Paris Climate Change Summit (COP21) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and **French** President Francois Hollande.

- It seeks to empower solar-rich countries located between the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn to make collaborative efforts to harness solar energy to generate the electricity.
- Under this alliance, 121 countries that fall within the tropics have been invited. Most of these countries fall within Asia, Africa and South America.
- Originally member countries are to be those that enjoy 300 or more days in a year of bright sunlight. But now membership is thrown open to all countries that want to join the grouping. There will be no restrictions on duration of sunlight or geographical location.
- The ISA Framework Agreement entered into force in **December 2017** making ISA treaty based International Intergovernmental Organization with headquarters at **Gurugram, India**.
- As of now the ISA Framework Agreement has been signed by 68 countries.

Objectives of ISA

- Undertake joint efforts required to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology;
- Mobilize more than 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.

Sukanya Samridhi Scheme

Objective: Aims to ensure equitable share to a girl child in resources and savings of a family

Scheme:

- It is **small deposit scheme** for girl child launched under “**Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**” Scheme
- The scheme offers higher interest rate than PPF.
- But it is **only for girls below age of 10 years** with longer lock in period.

Factual Information:

- Started in **2015**
- Investment type: small deposit account.

GDP deflator**What is GDP deflator?**

- The GDP deflator, also called implicit price deflator, is a measure of inflation.
- It is the ratio of the value of goods and services an economy produces in a particular year at current prices to that of prices that prevailed during the base year.
- This ratio helps show the extent to which the increase in gross domestic product has happened on account of higher prices rather than increase in output.
- GDP price deflator measures the difference between real GDP and nominal GDP. Nominal GDP differs from real GDP as the later doesn't include inflation, while the former does.

Girinka

- It is a flagship programme of the government of **Rwanda**.
- The Girinka (meaning ‘May you have a cow’) programme started in 2006 to provide one cow to every poor family for their nutritional and financial Security.

- In addition, it serves as a source of soil nutrients via manure to assist in small-scale cropping activity.
- It is helping to transform rural livelihoods and address poverty alleviation.
- The programme was set up with the central aim of **reducing child nutrition rates and increasing household incomes of poor farmers**.
- **Why in news?** The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, donated 200 cows under this program.

Mahanadi River

- Mahanadi is Major River in East Central India.
- It drains an area of around 141,600 square kilometres and has total course of 858 kilometres.
- It flows through **Chhattisgarh and Odisha**.
- It originates from highlands of Chhattisgarh through collection of array of streams and reaches Bay of Bengal.
- Its left bank tributaries are Shivnath, Mand, Ib, Hasdeo and right bank are Ong, parry river, Jonk, Telen.
- Mahanadi valley is known for its fertile soil and flourishing agriculture. Hirakud Dam across the river is longest major earthen dam in India.

What is Shale gas?

- Shale gas is natural gas formed from being trapped within shale formations.
- It is unconventional source of methane, like coal-bed gas (in coal seams) and tight gas (trapped in rock formations).
- It is colourless, odourless gas, lighter than air.

- It is cheaper than natural gas, releases 50% less CO₂, hence better source for generating electricity.
- It also provides feedstock for petrochemicals industry, which is turned into fertilizer, plastics and other useful stuff.
- In India, potential shale gas sites are Cambay, Gondwana, Krishna-Godavari and Cauvery Basins.

FASTags

- FASTag is a radio frequency identification device that enables cashless transaction at toll plazas without stopping the vehicle at the toll plazas.
- It employs RFID technology for making toll payments directly from the pre-paid account linked to it.
- This system aims to remove logistic inefficiencies at toll plazas and has the potential of saving Rs 60,000 crore in terms of time and fuel bills.
- The tag is fixed to the windscreen of a vehicle and an RFID antenna in the canopy of the toll gate scans the QR code and the tag identification number, following which the boom barrier lifts to allow a vehicle to pass through.
- The tag, which is valid for five years, comes in seven different colours — violet, orange, yellow, green, pink, blue, black. Each colour is assigned to a particular category of vehicles.

BRICS 10th summit: Johannesburg Declaration

BRICS 10th Summit:

- The 10th summit, framed its deliberations against U.S. President Donald Trump's unconventional

approach on world affairs, particularly the looming trade wars.

- BRICS leaders, stressed “**the centrality of the rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading**”, based on the World Trade Organisation.
- This stemmed from their broader commitment to cooperate for strengthening multilateralism, the rule of law and an equitable international order.
- That one of the BRICS members (China) does not follow in word and spirit this high-sounding prescription in regard to Asian affairs may have escaped attention.
- The other big idea emanating from the summit is to help nations to prepare for the **Fourth Industrial Revolution**.
- South Africa, as the host, stepped in on it and managed to create sufficient enthusiasm for it.
- Articulated the need for :
 - New strategy on employment.
 - Education
 - Skill development as the digital revolution unfolds.

Africa, BRICS Plus

- The BRICS outreach to Africa began at the last summit hosted by South Africa, in 2013; it has picked up momentum now. But African leaders want more.
- They need big loans from the New Development Bank (NDB) for their infrastructure projects. So far, the NDB has dispersed loans totalling \$5.1 billion — all to its members only.
- China introduced the “BRICS Plus” format at the Xiamen summit last year

by inviting a few countries from different regions.

- South Africa emulated it, arranging the attendance of top-level representation of five nations of its choice: Argentina, Jamaica, Turkey, Indonesia and Egypt.

Payment Banks

- Payment banks are non-full service banks, whose main objective is to accelerate financial inclusion.
- Payment Banks concept allows mobile firms, supermarket chains and others to cater to banking requirements of individuals and small businesses to further enhance financial inclusion.
- Payments banks will mainly deal in transfer and remittance services and accept deposits of **up to Rs 1 lakh**.
- They **will not lend** to customers and will have to deploy their funds in government papers and bank deposits.
- They can accept demand deposit, issue ATM/debit cards but **not credit cards**.
- They also can distribute non-risk sharing simple financial products like mutual funds and insurance products.

Hepatitis

- Hepatitis is a medical condition in which there occurs inflammation of liver cells and its complications vary with type of infection.
- There are 5 types of hepatitis viz. A, B, C, D and E. Each type is caused by a different hepatitis virus.
- Hepatitis viruses are one of the common causes of liver damage.
- Hepatitis B and C are the most deadly. These two types are mostly responsible

for liver damage.

- Hepatitis viruses B, C and D spread by contact with contaminated blood or body fluids.
- Hepatitis A and E spreads through unsafe food and drink.
- Symptoms include yellowing of the skin and eyes, abdominal pain and swelling, yellow urine, pale or dark stools, chronic fatigue, nausea and loss of appetite.
- **Why in news?** WHO has appointed Amitabh Bachchan as its goodwill Ambassador for Hepatitis in South East Asia Region?

Gaofen 11

- It is an optical remote sensing satellite launched by China.
- It will become part of China High-resolution Earth Observation System (CHEOS) initiated in 2010 to provide all-weather, all-day coverage by 2020.
- It will be used for land survey, urban planning, road network design, agriculture, and disaster relief.

Solar Energy: Solar Cell Industry

- India's domestic industry has around half-a-dozen makers of solar cells and modules, with total capacity of around 3,000 MW.
- This is hardly enough to meet country's burgeoning demand.
- Union Government has imposed safeguard duty of 25% on import of solar cells (whether or not assembled in modules or panels) from China and Malaysia.
- The move is aimed at helping domestic solar cell manufacturing sector.
- The safeguard duty now puts locally-

made panels on par with imported ones in terms of cost.

- Solar Power projects now will have to revive their supply chain and make input components locally instead of importing them and put modules together here.
- Domestic sector is not being fully exploited because of obsolete technology.
- Moreover price of solar equipment produced in the country is not competitive as compared to that of foreign manufacturers, especially Chinese manufacturers.
- Domestic sector needs to do lot more to be effective meet required standards as compared to imported solar cells.

Xingkong-2

It is cutting-edge hypersonic “waverider” flight vehicle being developed by China.

Waverider is flight vehicle that flies in atmosphere and uses shockwaves generated by its own hypersonic flight with air to glide at high speed.

It can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads.

It has capability to penetrate any current generation anti-missile defence systems due to its high speed and unpredictable trajectory.

As compared to it, current generation of anti-missile defence systems is mainly designed to intercept cruise and ballistic missiles which are either slower or easier to predict, making them possible to intercept.

Ring of Fire

- Pacific Ring of Fire is a geologically and volcanically active region that stretches

from one side of the Pacific to the other.

- In a 40,000 km (25,000 mi) horseshoe shape, it is associated with a nearly continuous series of oceanic trenches, volcanic arcs, and volcanic belts and/or plate movements.
- It has 452 volcanoes (more than 75% of the world’s active and dormant volcanoes).
- The Ring of Fire is sometimes called the circum-Pacific belt.
- About 90% of the world’s earthquakes and 81% of the world’s largest earthquakes occur along the Ring of Fire.
- The next most seismically active region (5–6% of earthquakes and 17% of the world’s largest earthquakes) is the Alpide belt, which extends from Java to the northern Atlantic Ocean via the Himalayas and southern Europe.

Quit India Movement

- Quit India Movement (Bharat Chhodo Andolan or August Movement or August Kranti) was an important milestone in the Indian freedom struggle.
- It was **civil disobedience movement** launched at **Bombay session** of the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) by Mahatma Gandhi on 8 August 1942 **demanding an end to British Rule** of India.
- It was launched after Mahatma Gandhi had made a call to Do or Die in his Quit India speech delivered in Bombay at the **Gowalia Tank Maidan on 7 August 1942**.
- The movement called for India’s immediate independence and aimed to force British Government to negotiating

table by holding Allied war effort hostage.

- By launching this movement, Gandhiji hoped to bring British government to negotiating table as **Cripps Mission had failed** and give strong footing against sending Indians to fight on behalf of Britain in World War II.
- **Quit India Resolution drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru** and was moved by him on 8th August 1942 in AICCC session and Sardar Patel seconded it.
- Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, people across India came together to uproot imperialism.

Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve

- It is one of the highest ecosystems in the world, reaching elevations of 1, 220 metres above sea-level.
- It includes *range of ecotones*, varying from sub-tropic to Arctic (tundra), as well as natural forests in different biomes, that support an immensely rich diversity of forest types and habitats.
- Its core area is major transboundary Wildlife Protected Area.
- Its southern and central landscape which makes up 86% of core area is situated in Greater Himalayas.
- Its northern part accounting for 14% of area is characterized by trans-Himalayan features.
- The core zone of Khangchendzonga National Park already has been designated World Heritage Site in 2016 under 'mixed' category (first from India in this category).
- Many of mountains, peaks, lakes, caves, rocks, Stupas (shrines) and hot springs in this biosphere reserve function as

pilgrimage sites.

- The core zone of this biosphere reserve alone has over 150 glaciers and 73 glacial lakes, the prominent is famous 26-km-long **Zemu glacier**.
- It is also home to number of globally threatened fauna including musk deer, snow leopard, red panda and Himalayan Tahr and many ethnic communities including Lepcha, Bhutia and Nepalese.
- Over 118 species of large number of medicinal plants are found in **Dzongu Valley** of this reserve which are of ethno-medical utility.

Right to Information Act 2005

- This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 12 October 2005.
- It mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information by various public authorities under Central Government as well as the State Governments.
- The law imposes penalty for wilful default by government officials.
- Citizens can ask for anything that government can disclose to Parliament.
- Objectives of RTI are to empower citizens (as right to information is fundamental right of the citizens under Article 19), promote transparency and accountability in working of Government, check corruption and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.
- Public authorities defined under this law are required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days of the request.
- The law also mandates every public authority to computerise their records for

wide dissemination and proactively certain categories of information so that citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

Ethanol blending

- Ethanol blending is the practice of blending petrol with ethanol.
- Many countries, including India, have adopted ethanol blending in petrol in order to reduce vehicle exhaust emissions and also to reduce the import burden on account of crude petroleum from which petrol is produced.
- The renewable ethanol content, which is a byproduct of the sugar industry, is expected to result in a net reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons (HC).
- Ethanol itself burns cleaner and burns more completely than petrol it is blended into.
- In India, ethanol is mainly derived by sugarcane molasses, which is a by-product in the conversion of sugar cane juice to sugar.

India-SAARC Relations

Facts:

- India's financial assistance to SAARC neighbours declined considerably in the past five years.
- The one exception was the Maldives, to which Indian assistance has been consistently increasing year on year since 2013, despite the dip in bilateral ties.

Reason for decline in financial assistance:

- In Afghanistan, India has shifted to work on small development projects (SDPs) rather than the ambitious highways,

dams and big building projects that were started in 2008-09.

- In Bangladesh, the main grant for land acquisition for the Akhaura-Agartala rail "last link" project has now been completed.
- In Bhutan, which has always received the largest share of Indian assistance, the assistance required for major hydroelectric power plants like Punatsangchu 1 and 2 and Mangdechu has been disbursed 75-90% while Indian assistance to Bhutan's 11th five-year plan (2013-2017) has been handed over nearly fully.
- In Sri Lanka, the decline was explained by delays in land acquisition for 15,000 homes to be built by India in the plantation areas, though the work on 45,000 homes in the north and east of the island has been completed.
- India is still completing three main projects in Maldives: a police academy, a coastal radar project, and the refit of MNDF ship Huravee.
- An offer to build a new Defence Ministry building is pending, which explains why the Maldives alone is the outlier to an otherwise declining trend in neighbourhood aid.

Important development:

- India will not take part in SAARC summit in Islamabad due to continuous cross border terrorism.
- Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan also declared their reluctance to attend the meeting.
- Nepal blockage (Due to new constitution; By Madhesis) is not in the spirit of regional cooperation.

Comparison of SAARC vis-a-vis

NAFTA

- Level of development in both the regional groupings are very different.
 - In 1990 – Per capita GDP of US was 10 times that of Mexico.
 - In South Asia difference is not that much.
- NAFTA was created by Mexico looking to use USA as an anchor economy, India is not seen as that anchor.
- In NAFTA, Mexico got certainty of access to the US markets in return of liberalising economy considerably. Situation in south Asia is different.
- There was no competition for USA in NAFTA to act as anchor. In South Asia China is seen as an alternative.

Two Problems in South Asian economic Integration:

1. External Politics.
2. Domestic political ramifications of opening markets to neighbours.

SAARC without Pakistan

- Ever since it was launched in Dhaka with its first meeting in 1985, the platform has been hijacked by the India-Pakistan rivalry.
- It was a multilateral platform with a bilateral agenda.
- Given Pakistan's opposition of any Indian initiative, the grouping never really achieved more than rhetoric.
- Examples:
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered to build a SAARC Satellite, a gift from India which would serve all the countries of the group. Pakistan was the only country that declined. Eventually, India

decided to go ahead with the project and declared it as a South Asia satellite instead.

- Attempts were made to sign a treaty which would ease train and road transshipment among member nations in 2014. Pakistan opposed it and BBIN was signed instead.
- **Positives of SAARC – Pakistan**
- Pakistan anyways didn't cooperate in SAARC. It only created obstacles.
- Discussions can now become more multilateral rather than being focused on Indo-Pak rivalry
- **Negatives of SAARC – Pakistan**
- Victim card will be played by Pakistan. It will say that India is using its economic power and size to isolate Pakistan in the region.
- Afghanistan will be at a loss as all routes go through Pakistan.
- SAARC may become defunct altogether as BIMSTEC will become more relevant. Work done for decades in SAARC will become futile.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all **retail payments system** in India.
- It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- It was incorporated as a Section 25 company under **Companies Act 1956** (now Section 8 of Companies Act 2013) and is aimed to operate for the benefit of all the.

-
- Founded in **2008**
- It has successfully played pioneering role in development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

Unified Payment Interface (UPI)

What is UPI?

- It is a common platform through which a person can transfer money from his bank account to any other bank account in the country instantly using nothing but his/her UPI ID.
- It is developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** under the guidelines of the RBI.
- The interface will be based on the **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)** platform.

How will it work?

- A customer can transfer money to another person through a **unique virtual address, or mobile number, or Aadhaar**. Therefore, customers do not need to know the payee's IFSC code, bank account details, etc. and this will make the process simpler.
- A customer can have multiple virtual addresses for multiple accounts in various banks. There is no account number mapper anywhere other than the customer's own bank. This allows the customer to freely share the financial address with others.

Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO)

- LIGO is a large-scale physics experiment and observatory to detect gravitational waves.

- A new gravitational wave detector to measure ripples in the fabric of space and time is set to be built in India by 2025.
- World's third LIGO detector.
- It will be built in collaboration with universities from across the globe
- It will significantly improve the ability of scientists to pinpoint the sources of gravitational waves and analyse the signals.
- Other 2 LIGOs are in USA.

Bhitarkanika National Park

- National Park since **1998**.
- Ramsar Convention site since **2002**.
- Surrounded by the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Cahirmatha Beach and Marine Sanctuary lies to the east.
- It is home to Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*), White Crocodile, Indian python, King Cobra, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna.
- The sanctuary is the second largest mangrove ecosystem in India.
- The national park and wildlife sanctuary is inundated by a number of rivers – Brahmani, Baitarni, Dhamra, Pathsala
- The park is famous for its green mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles and countless creeks.
- It is said to house 70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.

Keoladeo Bird Sanctuary

- Keoladeo National Park or Keoladeo Ghana National Park formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary in **Bharatpur, Rajasthan**, is a famous avifauna sanctuary that hosts thousands of birds, especially during the winter season.
- Over 230 species of birds are known to be resident.
- It is also a major tourist centre.
- It was declared a protected sanctuary in 1971.
- It is also a **World Heritage Site**.
- It is a man-made and man-managed wetland.
- It was designated as a **Ramsar site** under the Wetland Convention in 1981.

Barak

- Barak is a Hebrew word for **lightening**.
- It is an Indian-Israeli Long Range surface-to-air missile.
- It is nuclear capable ballistic missile.
- It is designed to defend against any type of airborne threat including aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs as well as cruise missiles and combat jets out to a maximum range of 70 km.
- It has maximum speed of Mach 2 with maximum operational range of 70 km (which has been increased to 100 km).
- Both **maritime** and **land-based versions** of the system exist.
- Jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and DRDO.

HELINA

- HELINA is helicopter launched version

known of NAG ATGM, designed and developed indigenously for Indian Army under integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP).

- It is manufactured by India's sole missile producer, state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- HELINA is one of the most advanced Anti-Tank Weapons in the world.
- It works on "fire and forget" principle and operates in Lock on Before Launch mode.
- It has operational range of 7-10km (after air-launched).
- It is equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IIR) seeker along with integrated avionics.
- It also possesses advanced passive homing guidance system.
- It has been designed mainly to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets.

Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW).

- Developed by DRDO.
- SAAW is long-range lightweight high precision-guided anti-airfield weapon.
- SAAW is an indigenously designed and developed 120 kilogram class smart weapon.
- It is designed for deep penetration with high degree of precision and is armed with high-explosive warhead, which is usually very difficult to achieve operationally with simple gravity bombs.
- It is a light weight high precision guided bomb.
- It can be used to destroy runways,

aircraft hangers, bunkers and other reinforced structures.

Reang or Bru Tribes

- Riang or Bru are one of the 21 scheduled tribes of the Indian state of Tripura.
- The Bru are the second most populous tribe of Tripura after the Tripuris.
- The correct nomenclature for this ethnic group is actually Bru although the name Reang was accidentally incorporated by the Indian government during a census count.
- The Bru can be found all over the Tripura state in India.
- However, they may also be found in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur and Bangladesh.
- **Culture and religion**
- The marriage system is similar to other Tripuri tribes of Tripura.
- There is no dowry system.
- Dance is an integral part of Reang life.
- The Hojagiri folk dance of Riang sub tribe is rather well known all over the world.
- 'Buisu', not 'bihu' is the most popular festival of reang tribes.
- The majority of the Reang belong to the Vaishnav school of Hinduism and claim Kshatriya status.
- They are polytheists and believe in multiple Gods and Goddesses.
- **Language**
- They speak the Reang dialect of Kokborok language which is of Tibeto-Burmese origin and is locally referred to as Kau Bru.
- **Why in news?** More than 30,000 people

belonging to the Bru community, who fled from Mizoram to Tripura in 1997 in the wake of inter-community violence, are set to be repatriated to Mizoram.

Oxytocin

What is Oxytocin?

- It is a female hormone.
- It has also been dubbed the love hormone, hug hormone, cuddle chemical, moral molecule, and the bliss hormone due to its effects on behavior, including its role in love and in female reproductive biological functions in reproduction.
- Oxytocin is a hormone that is made in the brain, in the **hypothalamus**.
- It is transported to, and secreted by, the **pituitary gland**, which is located at the base of the brain.
- It acts both as a hormone and as a brain neurotransmitter.
- The release of oxytocin by the pituitary gland acts to regulate two female reproductive functions: **Childbirth** and **Breast-feeding**.

Why its sale is being limited?

The drug is used by dairy owners and farmers to boost milk production and make vegetables look bigger and fresher. But, it was found that indiscriminate use of Oxytocin in milch animals and by farmers was causing irreversible hormone damage.

Why in news?

The Union government has banned imports of hormone oxytocin to stop its misuse in livestock industry, where it causes hormonal imbalances and shortens the lives of milch animals.

Kolleru Bird Sanctuary

- Kolleru Bird Sanctuary is a sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh, India.
- It covers 673 square kilometers.
- It was established in November 1999, under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.
- The sanctuary protects part of the Kolleru Lake wetland, which gained Ramsar Convention for International importance in 2002.
- The main flora of the sanctuary is Phragmites karka, a weed that grows up to 10 feet in height and that offers shelter for some species of birds.

What is Current Account Deficit?

- It means the value of imports of goods/services/investment incomes is greater than the value of exports.
- It is sometimes informally referred to as a trade deficit.
- The major contributor to India's Current Account Deficit (CAD) has been imports of Gold and Crude Oil.

MPLAD Scheme Ministry: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

About MPLAD scheme:

- Launched in December, 1993
- It provides a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.

Salient features:

- MPLADS is a centrally-sponsored

plan scheme fully funded by the government of India under which funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.

- Works, developmental in nature, based on locally felt needs and always available for the use of the public at large, are eligible under the scheme.
- Preference under the scheme is given to works relating to national priorities, such as provision of drinking water, public health, education, sanitation, roads, etc.
- The funds released under the scheme are **non-lapsable**. Funds not released in a particular year are carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.
- The MPs have a **recommendatory** role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government.

UDAN – Regional Connectivity Scheme

Ministry/Department: Ministry of Civil Aviation.

UDAN stands for Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik.

Objective: To get more people to fly in the smaller towns. To boost regional air connectivity and provide various incentives to airlines. Aims that at least half the seats on every flight should have a fare cap of Rs.2,500 per seat per hour of flying.

Scheme:

- The UDAN scheme seeks to provide connectivity to un-served and under-served airports of the country through

revival of existing air-strips and airports.

- This first-of-its-kind scheme will ensure affordability, connectivity, growth and development.
- It aims to increase ticketing volume from 80 million to 300 million by 2022.
- Under it regional connectivity will be developed on market-based mechanism under which Airlines will bid for seat subsidies.
- It will create affordable yet economically viable and profitable flights on regional routes so that flying becomes affordable to the common man even in small towns.
- Under it, airlines will have complete freedom to enter into code sharing with larger airlines for connectivity and they will be exempted from various airport charges.
- Airlines will have exclusive rights for three years to fly on a particular regional route.
- On these routes for regional flights Airfares will be capped at 2500 rupees for an hour's flight.
- Central and State governments and airport operators will provide a financial stimulus in the form of concessions to airlines.

Sanjay Gandhi National Park

- It is a protected area near **Mumbai** in Maharashtra.
- It was formerly known as Borivali National Park (renamed to present name in 1996, after Sanjay Gandhi, eldest son of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.).
- It is notable as one of the major national parks existing within metropolis limit

and is one of the most visited parks in the world.

- It is spread over an area of 103 sq.km in heart of Mumbai city and surrounded by population of 20 million people.
- It is part of Western Ghats biodiversity and forms roughly 20.5% of Mumbai's geographical area.
- **Kanheri Caves**, 2000 year old complex of some 160 rock-cut caves (was important Buddhist learning centre) is situated within national park and is protected archaeological site.

CERT-In

- CERT-In stands for Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).
- CERT-In is a nodal government agency that deals with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing in India.
- It comes under the aegis of Union Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.
- Established in **2004**
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Objective:**
 - Protect Indian cyberspace and software infrastructure against destructive and hacking activities.
 - Strengthen security-related defence of the Indian Internet domain. Issue guidelines, vulnerability notes, advisories, and whitepapers regarding to information security practices, prevention, procedures, response and reporting of cyber security incidents.

5g

- 5G is wireless communication technology based on third-generation partnership project (3GPP).

- It is next generation mobile networks technology after 4G LTE networks.
- It is expected to offer enhanced mobile broadband.
- The 5G technology will offer far greater upload and download speed available at present.
- High data speed offered by 5G network will help cloud systems to stream software updates, music, and navigation data to driverless cars.
- Moreover, it holds the key to growth of artificial intelligence (AI) systems and enhances IoT.
- As per the OECD Committee on Digital Economic Policy, 5G technologies rollout will help in increasing GDP, creating employment and digitizing the economy.
- **Why in news?** 5G technology was tested by Airtel and Huawei in Gurugram.

International Labor Organization (ILO)

- Established in **1919**
- It is a **UN agency**
- **HQ : Geneva, Switzerland**
- It deals with labor issues, particularly international labor standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- India is a **founder member** of ILO.
- The ILO registers complaints against entities that are violating international rules; however, it **does not impose sanctions** on governments.
- The ILO has 187 member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO.

- In 1969, the organisation received the Nobel Peace Prize for improving peace among classes, pursuing decent work and justice for workers, and providing technical assistance to other developing nations.

UIDAI

- UIDAI is nodal **statutory organization** behind the Aadhaar, a 12 digit unique number.
- It was granted statutory status by Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016.
- It comes under **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**
- Prior to its establishment as a statutory authority, UIDAI was functioning as an attached office of the then Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog)
- UIDAI was created with the objective to issue Unique Identification numbers (UID), named as “Aadhaar”, to all residents of India that is
 1. Robust enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities, and
 2. Can be verified and authenticated in an easy, cost-effective way.

Facts:

- The first UID number was issued on 29 September **2010** to a resident of Nan durbar, Maharashtra.
- UIDAI has announced facial recognition for authentication apart from finger prints and eye scans.

Venezuela: Hyperinflation Context

- Hyperinflation, power cuts, and food and medicine shortages are driving millions of Venezuelans out of the country. The

country is facing the worst inflations.

Concerns

- The biggest problem facing Venezuelans **in their day-to-day lives is hyperinflation.**
- \$1 US = 248,000 Venezuelan Bolivars, at the official exchange rate.
- Prices have been **doubling every 26 days on average.** This has resulted in many Venezuelans struggling to afford basic items such as food and toiletries.
- With small items like a **cup of coffee costing a whopping 2.5m bolivars.**

Major Cause

- Venezuela is rich in oil, and has the **largest proven reserves in the world.** But it's this exact wealth that underpins many of its economic problems.
- Its oil revenues account for about 95% of its export earnings.
- Venezuela's economy depends mostly on oil. That was great when a barrel of oil was worth \$100 a barrel in 2013 and 2014. Now oil prices have fallen to as low as \$28.36 — the lowest point in 12 years. As long as oil prices stay historically low, Venezuela will struggle to grow.
- Because it has so much oil, **Venezuela has never bothered to produce much else.** It sells oil to other countries, and with the dollars it earns, **imports the goods Venezuelans want** and need from abroad.
- But when the oil price plummeted in 2014, Venezuela was faced with a shortfall of foreign currency.
- This in turn made it difficult to import goods at the same level as before, and

imported items became scarcer.

- The result: businesses increased prices and inflation rose.

INS Vikramaditya

- INS Vikramaditya is the country's most powerful aircraft carrier.
- It was built in 1987 and had served the Soviet navy (named as Baku). It was later renamed Admiral Gorshkov under the Russian navy.
- The Indian navy purchased the vessel in 2004 and commissioned it in November 2013 at Severodvinsk in Russia.
- It can carry over 30 aircraft comprising MiG-29Ks, Kamov-28s, Kamov-31s, ALH-Dhruv and Chetak helicopters.
- It was retrofitted with a Barak missile system under joint development with Israel.
- It is based at its home port at Karwar in Karnataka.

Chilika Lake

- It is Asia's **largest brackish water lagoon.**
- It is the **largest coastal lagoon in India** and the second largest coastal lagoon in the world
- It lies in Odisha state on the eastern coast of India, at the mouth of the Daya River flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
- Because of its rich bio-diversity and socio-economic importance, Chilika was designated as a **Ramsar site** in 1981 to afford better protection.
- It was first waterbody in Indian to be designated as wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian sub-continent.
- It was put under Montreux Record (record for such sites where there has been or likely to be adverse ecological change due to manmade activities), but was later removed from it due to conservation efforts.

G20

- It is an international forum for the **governments** and **central bank governors** from 20 major economies.
- Founded in 1999.
- Its aim was to review policy decisions to enhance international financial stability.
- It now deliberates on global economic issues and other important development challenges.
- First Head of State Summit was held in **2008** (Due to Economic Crisis).
- 20 Members (EU + 19 Countries) :
 - Argentina,
 - Australia,
 - Brazil,
 - Canada,
 - China,
 - France,
 - Germany,
 - India,
 - Indonesia,
 - Italy,
 - Japan,
 - South Korea,
 - Mexico,

- Russia,
- Saudi Arabia,
- South Africa,
- Turkey,
- United Kingdom and
- United States

- G20 economies account for around 85% of the gross world product (GWP), 80% of world trade (or, if excluding EU intra-trade, 75%), and two-thirds of the world population.
- G20 **replaced G8** as the main economic council of wealthy nations.

Latest Summit:

- In 2017, held in **Hamburg, Germany**.
- In 2018, it will be held in **Buenos Aires**.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

- It is an intergovernmental organisation and international tribunal.
- It sits in **The Hague, The Netherlands**.
- The ICC has the jurisdiction to **prosecute individuals** for the international crimes of **genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes**.
- It was created by the '**Rome Statute**'.
- It began its functioning on 1 July 2002, the date that Rome Statute entered into force.
- The Rome Statute is multilateral treaty which serves as ICC's foundational and governing document.
- It has 123 member countries, **India is not one of them** (neither are China and the USA).
- The ICC has jurisdiction to prosecute individuals and is independent of United

Nations (UN).

- But it may receive case referrals from UN Security Council and can initiate prosecutions without UN action or referral.
- The ICC is intended to **complement existing national judicial systems** and it may therefore only exercise its jurisdiction when certain conditions are met, such as when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals or when the United Nations Security Council or individual states refer investigations to the Court
- So far, nine investigations have been opened, and 36 individuals have been indicted. All of the official investigations have been in **Africa**, and hence the ICC has been accused of selective enforcement of western imperialism towards African countries
- **Why India is not a member of the ICC?** The issue of State sovereignty and national interests versus the powers of the ICC, the difficulty of collecting evidence, the problem of finding impartial prosecutors acceptable to the entire international community and the definition of crimes that would come within the ICC's jurisdiction emerged are some of the challenges that India cites for not accepting ICC's jurisdiction.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

- NCPCR is a **statutory body** set up in **2007** under Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
- Its objective is to protect, promote and defend child rights in India including rights adopted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children,

1989, ratified by India in 1992. (This convention defines child as a human being below 18 years of age).

- It falls under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**
- The Child is defined as a person in the **0 to 18 years age group**.

Rajiv Gauba Committee (Mob Lynching)

Committee is created to suggest measures and legal framework to effectively deal with incidents of mob violence and lynching.

Why committee was formed?

- The move came after recent Supreme Court direction to central government on the issue of mob violence and lynching.
- The apex court had denounced sweeping incidents of lynching as an affront to the rule of law and called for law to deal with such horrendous acts of mobocracy.
- It had passed a series of “preventive, remedial and punitive” measures to deal with lynching and mob vigilantism.
- It had made Centre and state governments accountable for mob violence and lynching and had asked them to take steps to curb and stop dissemination of irresponsible and explosive fake messages and videos on social media platforms which incite such incidents.

Key Recommendations:

- **FIR against officials** : A senior government official said social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter etc. would be made accountable for not blocking malicious posts and videos when

brought to their notice and an “FIR could be lodged against their country heads” for not complying with government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

- **Objectionable content:**
 - Timely compliance of objectionable content removal requests should be ensured.
 - Some countries employ non-governmental organisations and volunteers who proactively surf the Internet.
- **Special task force:** Appoint an officer in each district at the level of Superintendent of Police, set up a special task force to gather intelligence, and closely monitor social media contents to prevent mob attacks on people on the suspicion of being child-lifters or cattle smugglers.

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- Established in **1966**
- **HQ : Manila, Philippines**
- It is a multi-lateral lending agency
- It is modeled on the World Bank
- It has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed based on member’s capital subscriptions.
- ADB borrows from international capital markets with its capital as guarantee.
- Japan and USA are its major donors.
- There has been criticism that ADB’s large scale projects cause social and environmental damage due to lack of oversight.
- India has about **6% voting rights** (4th highest; Japan highest, USA 2nd highest).

- It is owned by **67** members – 48 from the region including India.
- It is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- It provides finance to both **sovereign countries** as well as to the **private parties**.
- It provides hard loans to middle-income countries and soft loans to poorer countries.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

- AFSPA was enacted in **1958** to bring ‘disturbed’ areas declared under control.
- It empowers both state and central government to declare areas as ‘disturbed’ due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
- **Declaration of Disturbed area:** The section (3) of the Act empowers governor of State/UT to issue an official notification in Gazette of India, following which Centre has authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid. Once declared ‘disturbed’, the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months.
- **Special powers to armed forces:** The Act gives special powers to army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property used by insurgents in disturbed areas. It also provides army personnel with safeguards against malicious, vindictive and frivolous prosecution.
- At present, the AFSA has been enforced

in 6 states viz. Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh (only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus 20-km belt bordering Assam), Manipur (except Imphal municipal area), Meghalaya (confined to 20-km belt bordering Assam) and Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Why in news?** Governor of Assam has extended application of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in the entire state for six more months with immediate effect. This decision was taken as precautionary measure to maintain law and order during ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) update process during the ongoing National Register of Citizens (NRC) update process. The final draft NRC is likely to be published by end of 2018.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

- Located in **Paris**
- Autonomous intergovernmental organization
- Established in **1974** in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis
- The IEA was initially dedicated to responding to physical disruptions in the supply of oil, as well as serving as an information source on statistics about the international oil market and other energy sectors.
- The IEA acts as a **policy adviser** to its member states, but also works with non-member countries, especially China, India, and Russia.
- India has become an **associate member** of IEA.
- Presently it has 30 member countries including India.

- The Agency's mandate has broadened to focus on the "3Es" of effectual energy policy:
 - energy security,
 - economic development, and
 - environmental protection
- The IEA has a broad role in **promoting alternate energy sources** (including renewable energy), rational energy policies, and multinational energy technology co-operation.

BIMSTEC

- **BIMSTEC** stands for Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.
- It is an international organisation involving a group of countries in **South Asia and South East Asia**.
- 7 members :
 - Bangladesh
 - India
 - Myanmar
 - Sri Lanka
 - Thailand
 - Bhutan
 - Nepal
- Established in **1997 in Bangkok**
- Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand were founding members
- HQ : **Dhaka**, Bangladesh
- The main objective of BIMSTEC is technological and economic cooperation among south Asian and south east Asian countries along the coast of the bay of Bengal. Commerce, investment, technology, tourism, human resource development, agriculture, fisheries,

transport and communication, textiles, leather etc. have been included in it.

- BIMSTEC uses the **alphabetical order** for the Chairmanship.
- Bhutan has never been chairman (Skipped itself).
- Current chairmanship : **Sri Lanka**

India-USA: 2+2 Dialogue.

Context:

- India and US have established new two-by-two (2 by 2) ministerial dialogue to enhance strategic coordination between them and maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The new dialogue format will replace the earlier India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue.
- It will be similar to the India-Japan 2+2 dialogue format between foreign and defence secretaries of the two countries.

GDP Vs GNP

- GDP: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the total money value of final goods and services produced in the economic territories of a country in a given year.
- GDP stands for total value of goods and services produced inside the territory of India irrespective of whom produced it – whether by Indians or foreigners.
- GNP: Gross National Product (GNP) is the total value of goods and services produced by the people of a country in a given year. It is not territory specific.
- If we consider the GNP of India, it can be seen that GNP is lesser than GDP.

DMH-11 (GM Mustard)

- It is a Genetically Modified Mustard
- DMH = Dhara Mustard Hybrid

- It is herbicide tolerant mustard.
- Developed by the Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants of Delhi University.
- It was created by using “barnase/barstar” technology for genetic modification by adding genes from soil bacterium that makes mustard self-pollinating plant.
- DMH -11 contains three genes viz. Bar gene, Barnase and Barstar sourced from soil bacterium.

Competition Commission of India

- Competition Commission of India is a body of the Government of India responsible for enforcing The Competition Act, 2002 throughout India and to prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.
- It was established on 14 October **2003**.
- It became fully functional in May 2009.
- CCI is **quasi-judicial statutory body** established under The Competition Act, 2002.
- The objectives of the Act are sought to be achieved through the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
- CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government. **Government has now approved reduction of members from 6 to 3.**
- The duty of the Commission is to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
- The Commission is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a

reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

- The Competition Act, 2002 prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and Merger and acquisition), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition.

Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM)

- LRSAM has long-range engagement capability to penetrate deep water and land to intercept all types of aerial targets like subsonic and supersonic missiles, fighter aircraft, maritime patrolling aircraft (MPA), helicopter and sea skimming missiles.
- It is capable of countering newest generation anti-ship missiles.
- Indian Navy has decided to equip its all naval ships such as INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, and INS Chennai guided missile destroyers with Barak 8 LRSAM for air and missile defence.
- Barak 8 LRSAM has been jointly developed by DRDO and IAI, Israel to be launched from ship.
- It possesses high degree of manoeuvrability at target interception range.
- It has *maximum speed of Mach 2* with *maximum operational range of 70 km* (which has been increased to 100 km).

International Chemical Weapons Convention

- CWC is an arms control treaty which outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons and their precursors and entered into force in 1997
- It entered into force on **1997**.
- The full name of the treaty is the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.
- The CWC is implemented by the **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**, which is headquartered in **The Hague**.
- The OPCW receives states-parties' declarations detailing chemical weapons-related activities or materials and relevant industrial activities. After receiving declarations, the OPCW inspects and monitors states-parties' facilities and activities that are relevant to the convention, to ensure compliance.
- The CWC is open to all nations and currently has **193** states-parties.
- Israel has signed but has yet to ratify the convention.
- A key non-signatory includes North Korea.
- Most recently, **Palestine** deposited its instrument of accession to the CWC.
- As of October 2016, about 93% of the world's declared stockpile of chemical weapons had been destroyed.

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

- Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
- The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.

- Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
- Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
- The use of riot control agents “as a method of warfare.”

NOTA

- NOTA is ballot option designed to allow voter to indicate disapproval of all of the candidates in a voting system.
- It was introduced in 2013 after Supreme Court of India directed Election Commission to provide NOTA button in the electronic voting machines.
- NOTA option was first used in 2013 assembly elections held in four States — Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- 2014 Lok Sabha election was first general election to see its nationwide use of NOTA, where it polled 1.1% of the votes.
- NOTA is not right to reject i.e. candidate with maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.
- Election Commission also has clarified that even though votes cast as NOTA are counted, they are considered as invalid votes so they will not change outcome of election process.

Ethics Committee of Lok Sabha

- It formulates Code of Conduct for members and suggests amendments to it from time to time.
- It also oversees moral and ethical conduct of Members.
- It examines complaints related to any

unethical conduct by members of Lower House of Parliament.

- It can also initiate suo motu investigation into matters related to unethical conduct of a member and make recommendations, as it may deem fit.

Non Communicable Disease

- A non-communicable disease is a non-infectious health condition that cannot be spread from person to person. It also lasts for a long period of time. This is also known as a chronic disease.
- A combination of genetic, physiological, lifestyle and environmental factors can cause these diseases. Some risk factors include:
 1. unhealthy diets
 2. lack of physical activity
 3. smoking and second hand smoke
 4. excessive use of alcohol
- Noncommunicable diseases kill around 40 million people each year. This is about 70 percent of all deaths worldwide.
- Noncommunicable diseases affect people belonging to all age groups, religions, and countries.
- Noncommunicable diseases are often associated with older people. However, 15 million annual deaths from noncommunicable diseases occur among people aged 30 to 69.

Brihadisvara Temple

- Rajarajesvaram or Peruvudaiyar Koyil, is a Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva located in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.
- It follows Dravidian architecture.
- It is called as **Dhakshina Meru (Meru**

of south).

- Built by Raja Raja Chola I between 1003 and 1010 AD, the temple is a part of the **UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the “Great Living Chola Temples”**, along with the Chola dynasty era Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple and Airavatesvara temple that are about 70 kilometres.
- Built out of granite, the vimana tower above the sanctum is one of the tallest in South India.

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 ion-lithium batteries on board train.
- 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 are that they are more expensive than fossil fuel-based trains.

United Nations World Tourism

Organization (UNWTO)

- UNWTO is United Nations agency responsible for promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- It is leading international organization in field of tourism.
- It promotes tourism as driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability.
- It offers leadership and support to sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
- It is headquartered in **Madrid, Spain**.
- Its membership includes 156 countries, 6 territories and over 500 affiliate members.

Akash Missile System

- Indigenously developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided-Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).
- Mid-range surface-to-air anti-aircraft missile
- Supersonic speeds ranging from Mach 2.8 to 3.5.
- Nuclear capable.
- It is multi target, multi directional, all weather air-defence system consisting of surveillance and tracking radars.
- Akash is powered by Ramjet-rocket propulsion system.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

- It is a UN body.
- It leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

- Established : **1945**.
- **HQ : Rome, Italy**.
- In theory, acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy.
- FAO is also a source of knowledge and information, and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.
- **India** is a member of FAO.

World Bank

- World Bank is one of five institutions created at Breton Woods Conference in 1944.
- The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans to developing countries for capital programs.
- It comprises of two institutions:
 - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
 - International Development Association (IDA).
- **Formation:** July 1944.
- **Headquarters:** Washington DC, United States.
- **Motto:** Working for a World Free of Poverty.
- **Membership:** 189 countries (IBRD), 173 countries (IDA).
- The World Bank is one of the five components of the World Bank Group, which is part of the United Nations system.

- World Bank Group also includes three more subsidiary organisations viz.
 - International Finance Corporation (IFC),
 - Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and
 - International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- Established in **1957**
- **HQ : Vienna, Austria**
- It seeks to promote peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to prohibit its use for any military purpose, including manufacturing of nuclear weapons
- It reports to the UNGA and the UNSC (although it is an independent body)
- IAEA :
 - Promotes development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology,
 - provide international safeguards against misuse of nuclear technology and nuclear materials, and
 - promote nuclear safety (including radiation protection) and nuclear security standards and their implementation
- Three main areas of work that underpin the IAEA's mission are:
 - Safety and Security;
 - Science and Technology; and
 - Safeguards and Verification
- The IAEA executes this mission with three main functions:
 - the inspection of existing nuclear

facilities to ensure their peaceful use,

- providing information and developing standards to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities, and
- as a hub for the various fields of science involved in the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

Prahaar Missile

- It is a surface-to-surface short-range tactical ballistic missile.
- Solid-fuelled
- Developed by DRDO
- It has operational range of 150 km and flight altitude of 35 km.
- It is 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 wide variety of targets.

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 manufacturing hub by 2030.
- CPEC will 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.
- **Why in news?** Pakistan has invited Saudi Arabia to join \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the third strategic partner.

Masala Bonds

- The Masala bond refers to a rupee-denominated bond through which Indian entities can raise money from foreign markets in rupee, and not in foreign currency.
- Bonds are instruments of debt that are typically used by corporates to raise money from investors.
- By issuing bonds in rupees, an Indian entity is protected against the risk of currency fluctuation, typically associated with borrowing in foreign currency.
- Masala bonds also help in internationalization of the rupee and in expansion of the Indian bond markets. These bonds are usually traded on a foreign exchange like the LSE and not in India.

Stem cell

Stem cell is undifferentiated cell of multicellular organism which is capable of giving rise to indefinitely more cells (through mitosis) of same type and from which certain other kinds of cell may be formed by the cellular differentiation. There are two types of stem cells widely

used

- **Embryonic stem cells:**
- They come from human embryos that are three to five days old.
- They are harvested during 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.

Zonal Councils

What are Zonal Councils?

- Zonal councils have been established by the Parliament to promote interstate cooperation and coordination.
- They are **statutory bodies** established under the States Reorganization Act 1956 and not constitutional bodies.
- They are only deliberative and advisory bodies.

How many Zonal Councils are there?

There are 5 five Zonal councils namely:

- The Northern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, National Capital Territory of Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.
- The Central Zonal Council, comprising the States of Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

- The Eastern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and West Bengal.
- The Western Zonal Council, comprising the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.
- The Southern Zonal Council, comprising the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Money Bill

What is a Money Bill?

- A Bill is said to be a Money Bill if it only contains provisions related to
 1. taxation,
 2. borrowing of money by the government,
 3. Expenditure from or receipt to the Consolidated Fund of India. Bills that only contain provisions that are incidental to these matters would also be regarded as Money Bills.
- A Money Bill may only be introduced in Lok Sabha. This is done so on the recommendation of the President.
- It must be passed in Lok Sabha by a simple majority of all members present and voting. Following this, it may be sent to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations, which Lok Sabha may reject if it chooses to.
- If such recommendations are not given within 14 days, it will deemed to be passed by Parliament.

G4 Countries

- **Members** : India, Brazil, Germany and Japan
- All members support each other's bids

for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council.

- Formed in **2004**.
- Each of these four countries have figured among the elected non-permanent members of the council since the UN's establishment.
- Their economic and political influence has grown significantly in the last decades, reaching a scope comparable to the permanent members (P5).
- G4 campaigns for U.N. Reforms, including more representation for developing countries, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories, in the UNSC.
- France supports inclusion of G4 and an African representative as permanent member with no objection to the veto power being extended to new permanent members. UK supports G4 as new members but without veto power.
- G4's bids are often opposed by Uniting for Consensus movement or Coffee Club (ground 12 countries including Pakistan led by Italy) and particularly their economic competitors or political rivals.

Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)

- It is a **not for profit**, non-Government, private limited company incorporated in 2013.
- The **Government of India holds 24.5% equity** in GSTN
- **All States including NCT of Delhi and Puducherry**, and the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers (EC), together **holds another 24.5%**.
- **Balance 51% equity is with non Government financial institutions.**

- The Company has been set up **primarily to provide IT infrastructure and services** to the Central and State Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- After rolling out of GST, the Revenue Model of GSTN shall consist of **User Charge to be paid by stakeholders** who will use the system and thus it will be a self-sustaining organization.

Astra Missile

- It is a beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM)
- Astra is capable of engaging targets at varying range and altitudes allowing for engagement of both **short-range targets** (up to 20 km) and **long-range targets** (up to 80 km) using alternative propulsion modes.
- It is indigenously developed by **DRDO**.
- It is a **single stage solid fuelled** missile.
- It is radar homing supersonic missile having maximum speed of Mach 4 (four times speed of sound).
- It has advance on-board electronic counter-measures that jam radar signals from enemy radar, making tracking of the missile difficult.

International Maritime Organisation

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating shipping.
- Established in **1948 (Came into force in 1959; First meeting)**
- **HQ : London, UK**
- **India** was one of the earliest members of

the IMO and had joined it as a member-state in 1959.

- The IMO's primary purpose is to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit today includes safety, environmental concerns, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.
- IMO is governed by an assembly of members and is financially administered by a council of members elected from the assembly. IMO Council consists of 40 member countries who are elected by IMO Assembly. It plays a crucial role in deciding various matters related to global shipping industry.
- **Why in news?** India was re-elected to Council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

Sabarimala Temple Entry Case

Context:

- Restricted entry of women of a certain age in Sabarimala Temple.
- The temple prohibits women aged between 10 and 50 from undertaking pilgrimage to Sabarimala — which means women are banned from even making the arduous trek to the shrine.

What is happening?

- The Supreme Court referred to a five-judge Constitution Bench the question whether the fundamental right of women to pray at the place of their choice can be discriminated against solely based “on a biological factor exclusive to the female gender.”
- **Prime issues to be dealt by the constitution bench:**
- Whether the multitude of worshippers of

Swami Ayyappa visiting the famous shrine located in Kerala form a separate religious “denomination.”

- If so, should their privilege to manage their religious affairs yield to the fundamental right of women to practice religion freely?
- Included whether the restriction is a “permissible practice”
- Who is the competent authority to decide on whether the restriction comes within the ambit of ‘custom’; and, finally, whether such a ‘custom’ comes under the constitutional principles.
- **Reasons for the restriction:** The restriction finds its source in the legend that the Sabarimala temple deity, Swami Ayyappa, is a ‘Naishtika Brahmachari’ and should not be disturbed.

1991 Kerala High Court judgement:

- Supports the restriction imposed on women devotees.
- It had found that the restriction was in place since time immemorial and not discriminatory under the Constitution.

SC view:

- Tagging a woman's right to enter the famous Sabarimala temple with her menstrual cycle is unreasonable.
- There is no concept of private mandirs (temples). Once a temple is opened, everybody can go and offer prayers there. Nobody, man or woman, can be excluded.
- Sabarimala temple drew funds from the Consolidated Fund, had people coming from all over the world, and thus, qualified to be called a public place of worship.

- Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not god, of nature. Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?
- Any religion which excludes women on the basis of their age, sex or menarche is irrelevant.

SC Final Verdict:

- The exclusionary practice of women in the 10-50 age groups from the Sabarimala temple in Kerala violates the rights of women devotees.
- Verdict establishes the legal principle that individual freedom prevails over purported group rights, even in matters of religion.
- State of Kerala had supported the entry of women into the temple, arguing that the “custom” of excluding women violated their rights.

What are the issues involved in the case?

- **Gender Discrimination** – When everyone is equal in the eyes of God and the Constitution, why are only women banned from entering certain temples?
- **Religion is a personal choice** – Our Constitution guarantees an individual the freedom to choose his/her religion. Therefore, praying in a temple/mosque/church or at home must be the choice of the individual.
- **Custom Vs Liberty** – The Constitution has provisions to protect the customs and religious practices of the people. At the same time, it guarantees liberty and religious freedom to the individual.
- **Temple as public place Vs religion as private choice** – Temple, managed by trusts, are public places. The

representatives of the Sabarimala trust say that it has its own customs and traditions which have to be respected. Just like there are rules for other public places.

Rabies

- Rabies is viral disease that causes inflammation of brain (acute encephalitis) in warm-blooded animals.
- It is zoonotic disease i.e. transmitted from one species to another, commonly by bite or scratch from infected animal such as dogs to humans.
- The rabies virus infects central nervous system (CNS) and ultimately causes disease in brain and death.
- Domestic dogs are most common reservoir of rabies virus.
- Dog-mediated rabies accounts for more than 95% of human deaths.
- Its symptoms include neurological problems and a fear of light and water.
- Vaccination of pets helps to prevent and control rabies.

Hepatitis E

- Hepatitis E is a liver disease caused by infection with a virus known as hepatitis E virus (HEV).
- Every year, there are an estimated 20 million HEV infections worldwide, leading to an estimated 3.3 million symptomatic cases of hepatitis E.
- WHO estimates that hepatitis E caused approximately 44 000 deaths in 2015 (accounting for 3.3% of the mortality due to viral hepatitis).
- The virus is transmitted via the faecal-oral route, principally via contaminated water.

- Hepatitis E is found worldwide, but the prevalence is highest in East and South Asia.
 - Two different patterns are observed, where hepatitis E is found in: resource-poor areas with frequent water contamination; and areas with safe drinking water supplies.
 - A vaccine to prevent hepatitis E virus infection has been developed and is licensed in China, but is not yet available elsewhere.
 - Prevention is the most effective approach against the disease. At the population level, transmission of HEV and hepatitis E disease can be reduced by:
 1. maintaining quality standards for public water supplies;
 2. Establishing proper disposal systems for human faeces.
 - On an individual level, infection risk can be reduced by:
 1. maintaining hygienic practices such as hand-washing with safe water, particularly before handling food;
 2. avoiding consumption of water and/or ice of unknown purity; and
 3. adhering to WHO safe food practices
- Champions of Earth Award**
- It is UN's highest environmental recognition celebrating exceptional figures from public and private sectors and from civil society, whose actions have had transformative positive impact on the environment.
 - It was established in 2005 by United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment).
- This award programme is successor to UNEP's Global 500 Roll of Honour.
 - The award is presented in five categories
 - Lifetime Achievement,
 - Policy Leadership,
 - Entrepreneurial Vision,
 - Action and Inspiration and
 - Science & Innovation.
 - **Why in news?**
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with United Nation's Champions of the Earth Award 2018. PM Modi is *third Indian to receive this award* after Tulsi Tanti, Chairman of the Suzlon Group, and Afroz Alam, a lawyer who led clean-up at Mumbai's Versova beach.
 - Cochin International Airport also received Champions of Earth Award 2018 for 'Entrepreneurial Vision' and for its leadership in the use of sustainable energy. *It is world's first fully solar-powered airport.*
- IORA**
- IORA stands for Indian Ocean Rim Association
 - It consists of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean
 - The IORA is a regional forum which bring together representatives of Government, Business and Academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them
 - **21 member states**: South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, Iran, Oman, UAE, Yemen,

India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Australia and Somalia.

- Maldives, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar are **not members**
- Secretariat of IORA is located at **Ebene, Mauritius**.
- The organisation was first established as Indian Ocean Rim Initiative in Mauritius on March **1995** and formally launched in **1997** by the conclusion of a multilateral treaty known as the Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation
- Current chairmanship : **Indonesia**

Konark Sun Temple

- Konark Sun Temple is a 13th-century sun temple at Konark on the coastline of Odisha.
- The name Konark derives from the combination of the Sanskrit words Kona (corner or angle) and Arka (the sun).
- The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty
- Dedicated to the Hindu god Surya, what remains of the temple complex has the appearance of a 100-foot (30 m) high chariot with immense wheels and horses, all carved from stone?
- Also called the Surya Devalaya, it is a classic illustration of the Odisha style of Hindu temple architecture.
- This temple was called the “Black Pagoda” in European sailor accounts as early as 1676 because its great tower appeared black.
- Similarly, the Jagannath Temple in Puri was called the “White Pagoda”. Both temples served as important landmarks

for sailors in the Bay of Bengal.

- Declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1984, it remains a major pilgrimage site for Hindus, who gather here every year for the Chandrabhaga Mela around the month of February.

UN Conference on Disarmament

- UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) is not a formal United Nations (UN) organization.
- It is linked to UN through personal representative of UN Secretary-General.
- It is multilateral forum established in **1979** by international community to negotiate **multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements**.
- It is headquartered in Palais des Nations, **Geneva**, Switzerland.
- The conference has 65 members represent all areas of the world, including all known nuclear-weapon states (including India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea)
- Resolutions adopted by UN General Assembly often request conference to consider specific disarmament matters.
- In turn, conference annually reports its activities to UNGA.
- In the 1990s, the Conference had held intensive efforts to draft CTBT text and its two annexes, but it did not succeed in reaching consensus on the adoption of the text.
- Currently UNCD conducts discussion on Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), a pact to prevent an arms race in outer space, nuclear disarmament and negative security assurances (NSA).

Gangetic River Dolphin

- National Aquatic Animal of India
- They are freshwater dolphins.
- It is one of the four freshwater dolphin species in the world. The other three are found in Yangtze River, Indus River in Pakistan and Amazon River.
- It is found in **India, Nepal and Bangladesh.**
- IUCN Status : **Endangered**
- It is also placed in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Major threats:
 - Fishing nets
 - Hunting for their oil and meat
 - Water pollution
- MoEFCC had launched Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Programme in 1997 to build a scientific database of their population status and also study their habitat quality of the dolphins' distribution range.
- Fresh water dolphin species are practically blind. They rely on bio-sonar method to move around and catch their prey.
- Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary located in Bihar's Bhagalpur district of Bihar is India's only dolphin sanctuary is spread over 50 km along the Ganges.
- National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC) will be set up on the banks of the Ganga River in Patna University campus in Patna.

