

OFFICERS' Pulse

Coverage.

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2019

CURRENT AFFAIRS
MONTHLY

THE **PULSE** OF UPSC AT
YOUR FINGER TIPS.



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SCHEMES

1. Atal Bhujal Yojana

About Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)

- ATAL JAL is an initiative for ensuring **long term sustainability of groundwater resources** in the country.
- It is implemented by the **Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation** under the Ministry of Jal Shakti which is adopting a mix of 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches in **identified ground water stressed blocks in seven states**, representing a range of geomorphic, climatic and hydrogeologic and cultural settings.
- ATAL JAL has been designed with the principal objective of strengthening the institutional framework for **participatory groundwater management** and bringing about **behavioural changes at the community level** for sustainable groundwater resource management.

Coverage

- The scheme covers identified priority areas in seven States, viz. **Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.**

Funding pattern

- Out of the total outlay of Rs. 6000 crores to be implemented over a period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25), **50% shall be in the form of World Bank loan.**
- The remaining 50% shall be through **Central Assistance** from regular budgetary support.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister launched the **Atal Bhujal Yojana** on the Birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee (25th December 2019).

2. PM-AASHA

About PM-AASHA

- In 2018, the government launched the new crop procurement policy- Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) to **ensure that farmers growing oilseeds, pulses and copra actually get the MSP they are promised for their crops every year.**
- The new scheme is envisaged to be a mix of sub-schemes and has three major components.
 - **Price Support Scheme (PSS)**
 - **Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS)**
 - **Pilot of Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPPS)**
- PSS involves direct procurement from farmers which will kick in when prices of pulses, oilseeds and copra fall below MSP, up to a maximum limit of 25% of the total harvest.
- PDPS, which had been framed on the lines of Madhya Pradesh government's **Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana**, will be available only for oilseeds with farmers directly receiving payments in their bank accounts when they sell at prices lower than MSP. The government will not undertake physical procurement of crops under this scheme.
- Under PPPS, participation of the private sector in procurement operations is to be piloted.

Why in News?

- As per the latest data from the Agriculture Ministry, only less than 3% of this season's sanctioned amount of pulses and oilseeds have actually been procured so far under the PM-AASHA scheme.

INITIATIVES

1. Centre for Science and Environment study

About CSE

- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) is a public interest research and advocacy organisation based in New Delhi.
- Established in 1980, CSE works as a think tank on environment-development issues in India and advocates for policy changes and better implementation of the already existing policies.

Why in News?

- In a recent analysis done by the Centre for Science and Environment on 33 popular junk food items, there is a breach in safe limits of salt and fat content.

How are safe limits calculated?

- The limits are based on the concept of the **Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)** — a daily ceiling on the amount of salt, fat, carbohydrates and trans fats.
- The RDA is based on scientific consensus and has been agreed upon by expert bodies such as the World Health Organisation, and the National Institute of Nutrition in India.

What are the limits?

- As per RDA, ideally, **no more than 5 gm of salt, 60 gm of fat, 300 gm carbohydrate and 2.2 gm of trans fat** should be consumed by an adult every day.
- Further, the RDA from each breakfast, lunch and dinner should be no more than 25%, and that from snacks no more than 10%.

What are the findings?

- The CSE found that packaged snacks and fast foods have these salts and fats well over the recommended limits.
- The study pointed at the delay in notifying draft Food Safety Standards,

(Labelling and Display) Regulations released by FSSAI in 2019.

Draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations

- According to the proposed regulations, packaged food companies will need to declare **nutritional information** such as calories, saturated fat, trans-fat, added sugar and sodium **per serve on the front of the pack**.
- The food labels are also required to declare, **per serve percentage contribution to RDA** on the front of the pack. As per the existing law, a consumer is expected to be informed only about the quantity of ingredients but not their contribution to the RDA.
- Though under discussions since 2015 and several drafts these rules have yet to become law, and to be operationalised.

Red Octogen

- The CSE also recommended that all the snacks and fast foods which exceed RDA limits ought to be displaying a 'Red Octagon', a **warning symbol employed in packaged foods in Chile and Peru**.
- The Red Octagon, which should be printed on the front of the pack, has a number and the name of the food component within that indicates how widely off the RDA a particular ingredient is.
- For example, a Red "3.1, Salt" on a pack of Lays India's Magic Masala by PepsiCo indicates that the salt it contains is 3.1 times the RDA for snacks.

2. Agri Export Zone

What is an Agri Export Zone?

- The concept of Agri Export Zone (AEZ) was introduced in 2001, to take a comprehensive look at a particular produce/product located in a contiguous area for the purpose of developing and

sourcing the raw materials, their processing/packaging, leading to final exports.

- The entire effort is centered around the **cluster approach** of identifying the potential products, the geographical region in which these products are grown and adopting an end-to-end approach of integrating the entire process right from the stage of production till it reaches the market.

Why in News?

- **APEDA** is setting up Agri Export Zones in 5 Districts of **Uttar Pradesh**.

About APEDA

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is an export promotion organization under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industries**.
- Established in 1986, it is a **statutory body** mandated with the responsibility of promotion and development of the export of its scheduled products.

3. EChO Network

What is it?

- It is a national program **to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India** with the specific focus of increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment.
- The purpose of the network is to bring all those together to share knowledge and synergize efforts under the umbrella of science.
- The initiative has drawn in partners from Government, industry and academia.

What's in the news?

- The government has launched the EChO Network.

4. National Broadband Mission (NBM)

What is it for?

- The vision of the NBM with a strong emphasis on the three principles of **universality, affordability and quality** is to fast track growth of digital communications infrastructure, bridge the digital divide, facilitate digital empowerment and inclusion and provide affordable and universal access to broadband for all.

Main objectives of the mission

- **Broadband access to all villages by 2022.**
- Facilitate universal and equitable access to broadband services for across the country and especially in rural and remote areas.
- Develop a **Broadband Readiness Index (BRI)** to measure the availability of digital communications infrastructure and conducive policy ecosystem within a State/UT.
- Address policy and regulatory changes required to accelerate the expansion and creation of digital infrastructure and services
- NBM also involves laying of incremental 30 lakh route km of Optical Fiber Cable and increase in tower density from 0.42 to 1 tower per thousand of population by 2024.
- The mission envisages investment of \$100 billion (Rs 7 lakh crore), including Rs 70,000 crore from **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** in coming years.

Why in News?

- The government has launched its ambitious National Broadband Mission in December 2019.

About Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- USOF, established in 2002, provides effective subsidies to ensure telegraph services are provided to everyone across

India, especially in the rural and remote areas.

- The Indian Telegraph (Amendment Act), 2003 gave **statutory status** to USOF.
- It is headed by the USOF Administrator who reports to the Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- USOF is funded through a **Universal Service Levy (USL)**, which is 5% of the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) of all Telecom Service Providers.

5. North East Rural Livelihood Project

About North East Rural Livelihood Project:

- It is a **World Bank** aided project launched in 2012.
- It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)**.
- The objective of the project is to improve rural livelihoods, especially that of women, unemployed youths and the most disadvantaged, in four North Eastern States of **Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura**.
- There are four components to the project.
 - Social Empowerment
 - Economic Empowerment
 - Partnership Development
 - Project Management.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Development of North-East Region has published the report on institutions formed under the North East Rural Livelihood Project.

6. India's first maritime museum

What's in the news?

- The government has decided to establish a National Maritime Heritage Museum at **Lothal**.

- The museum, which will be India's first maritime museum, will also be an independent research centre of underwater archaeology for reconstruction of maritime history, archaeology of boat building and materials traded.
- The museum will be set up with technical help from the **Portuguese Maritime Heritage Museum**.

About Lothal

- Lothal is an ancient city of Indus Valley Civilization.
- The city stood beside a tributary of the **Sabarmati** in Gujarat, close to the **Gulf of Khambhat**.
- It was situated near areas where raw materials such as semi-precious stones were easily available. This was an important centre for making objects out of stone, shell and metal.
- There was also a **storehouse** in the city. Many seals and sealings (the impression of seals on clay) were found in this storehouse.
- A **dockyard** was also found at Lothal.

7. Accessible India Campaign

About the initiative

- Accessible India Campaign (or **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan**) is a nation-wide campaign launched in 2015 by the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**.
- The campaign aims at achieving **universal accessibility** that will enable persons with disabilities to gain access for equal opportunity and live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life in an inclusive society.

Components of Accessible India Campaign

- **Built Environment Accessibility**
- **Transportation System Accessibility**

- **Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility**

Progress

- The original deadlines under the campaign were March 2017 by when 50% of state and central government websites were to be made fully accessible. However, till date, only 36% of state government websites have been made accessible.
- The campaign also aimed to conduct an accessibility audit of all domestic airports and convert them into fully accessible airports by March 2018. However, so far, only 55 of 104 domestic airports have been provided accessible features.

Why in News?

- Government has extended the deadline to achieve its targets under the Accessible India campaign due to its slow progress.
- The government has now set a final deadline of **March 2020** to complete all works under the initiative.

8. Sarvatra Kawach

About Sarvatra Kawach

- Sarvatra Kawach is an **indigenously developed bulletproof jacket** that can provide protection against various ammunition including that of sniper rifles.
- The project was sanctioned in 2017 and initially the design and development of a Level IIIA soft body armour suit was sanctioned and was subsequently revised to include a **Level IV hard armour panel inserts**. The suit provides protection from neck to ankle and upper arms.

Why in News?

- Maj. Anoop Mishra was felicitated with the Army Design Bureau (ADB) excellence award for indigenously developing Sarvatra Kawach.

About Army Design Bureau

- The Army Design Bureau (ADB) acts as a central repository of technical know-how for the Indian Army.
- It spearheads the **Make in India** initiative by acting as the facilitator for Research & Development efforts and initiates procurements of weapons and equipment required by the Indian Army.

9. Jal Jeevan Mission

About Jal Jeevan Mission:

- In his Independence Day speech in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that half of the country's households did not have access to piped water. Earmarking Rs 3.5 trillion for Jal Jeevan Mission, he said the Centre and states would work towards it in coming years.
- The chief objective of the Mission is to provide **Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) to every rural household by 2024**.
- This Mission is under the **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- The mission will focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local level, including creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse in agriculture.
- The fund sharing pattern is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States; 50:50 for other States and 100% for UTs.

Why in News?

- Prime Minister has released the operational guidelines of Jal Jeevan Mission.

10. Nari Shakti Puraskar 2019

About Nari Shakti Puraskar

- To acknowledge women's achievements, the **Ministry of Women and Child**

Development confers Nari Shakti Puraskar on women and institutions in recognition of their exceptional work towards the cause of women empowerment, especially for vulnerable and marginalized women.

- Considered as **the highest civilian honour for women in India**, the Nari Shakti Puraskar is conferred by the President of India every year on 8th March, the International Women's Day.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has invited applications for Nari Shakti Puraskar for the year 2019.

11. Atal Tunnel

About Rohtang Tunnel:

- Rohtang Tunnel is being built under the **Rohtang Pass** in the **Pir Panjal** range of the Himalayas.
- The tunnel will connect Manali in Himachal Pradesh with Leh, Ladakh.
- Upon completion, the 8.8 km-long tunnel will be the **world's longest highway tunnel** at an altitude of above 10,000 feet. It will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 kilometres.
- The tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, which otherwise remained cut off from the rest of India for about six months.
- The construction is being carried out by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has decided to name the Rohtang Tunnel after former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

About Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

- It functions under the administrative control of **Defence Ministry**.
- It is engaged in road construction to provide connectivity to difficult and

inaccessible regions in the border areas of the country.

- Currently, the organisation maintains operations in twenty-one states, one UT (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), and **neighbouring countries** such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.

12. Dada Saheb Phalke Award

About Dada Saheb Phalke Award

- It is an annual award given by the Indian government for **lifetime contribution to Indian cinema**.
- It was instituted in 1969, the birth centenary year of Dadasaheb Phalke who is considered the **Father of Indian cinema**. Phalke directed the first Indian film 'Raja Harischandra' (a silent film released in 1913).
- The award is given along with the National Film Awards every year.

Why in news?

- President of India presented the Dada Saheb Phalke Awards to actor Amitabh Bachchan.

13. eBkry Portal

About the portal

- It is an e-auction platform to **enable online auction of attached assets by banks**.
- It has been launched to enable online auction of attached assets transparently and cleanly for improved realisation of value.

Why in News?

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman launched the eBkry portal in December 2019.

14. Mullaperiyar Dam

Mullaperiyar dam

- It was built in 1895 on the **Periyar River** in Idukki District of Kerala.

- Although the dam is located in Kerala, it is operated by **Tamil Nadu** following an 1886 lease indenture for 999 years that was signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and the Secretary of State for India for the Periyar Irrigation works.
- After India's independence, this contract was renegotiated in 1970 formally, wherein Kerala allowed Tamil Nadu to use the water for the reservoir in exchange of a revised rent, while also allowing it to generate power.

About Periyar River

- The **west-flowing** Periyar River originates from **Sivagiri hills** of Western Ghats and flows through the Periyar National Park and finally to the Arabian Sea.
- It is the **longest river in Kerala**.

SC Judgement

- In 2014, the Supreme Court **ordered to appoint a three-member committee** with chairman of the Central Water Commission as the chairperson and representatives from the States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to supervise and ensure that the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam was **raised from 136 feet to 142 feet**.

Why in News?

- As per directions of the Supreme Court in a 2014 judgement, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has constituted a three-member Supervisory Committee to supervise the restoration of Full Reservoir Level (FRL) in the Mullaperiyar Dam to the elevation of 142 ft.

About Central Water Commission

- The CWC is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.
- It was established in 1945.

- The organisation currently functions as an office attached to the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.
- The Commission has the responsibility of initiation and coordination of schemes introduced by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

15. National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management

About NCSCM

- The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) was established under the provisions of the **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) 2011** to undertake studies and research in the area of Coastal Zone Management including coastal resources and environment.
- *(CRZ 2011 has been formulated by government under the provision of Environment Protection Act, 1986)*
- NCSCM is under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.

Objectives of the Centre

- To promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in India for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities.
- Advise the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholders on policy, and scientific matters related to **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)**.

Why in News?

- The Minister of State for Environment, Forest & Climate Change provided the information about NCSCM in Lok Sabha.

16. Jaga Mission

About the Mission

- Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission (OLHM)-JAGA is a society under Housing & Urban

Development Department, Government of Odisha.

- The mission aims at **transforming the slums into liveable habitat** with all necessary civic infrastructure and services at par with the better off areas within the same urban local body.
- It also aims to continuously improve the standard of the infrastructure and services and access to livelihood opportunities.

Why in news?

- Odisha won the 'World Habitat Award' for its **Jaga Mission**.

'World Habitat Award'

- The award is given by **World Habitat** (a UK-based organization not-for-profit

organisation) in partnership with **UN-Habitat**, in recognition of innovative, outstanding, and revolutionary ideas, projects, and programmes from across the world in the field of housing.

About UN-Habitat

- UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, was mandated by the UN General Assembly in 1978 to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.
- It is headquartered at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Fight against pollution

What's in the news?

- Recently, a High-Level Committee (HLC) consisting of members from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), professors from IIT-Delhi, IIT-Kanpur has suggested ways to the Supreme Court to control air pollution in Delhi and NCR.

The following are the pilot projects which were suggested by the HLC

Painting roads

- Paint on a range of surfaces, such as roofing tiles or even on the surface of roads with **photocatalytic paints** can remove pollutants from the air in the presence of sunlight and ultraviolet (UV) rays. Such products have been used by Dubai municipality in parks and also in Mexico.
- Photocatalytic paints contain **titanium dioxide [TiO₂]** which acts as a catalyst when exposed to UV rays and removes atmospheric pollutants. The catalyst converts the pollutants into other substance.
- **Risk:** There is a risk that nanomaterials may result in production of other undesirable compounds such as **nitrous acid and formaldehyde**, which will have adverse health impacts.

Smog tower

- The HLC has also proposed a 20-metre-high smog tower.
- The proposal had stated that **65% reduction in pollution** can be achieved on an average up to 700 metres from the tower.
- It is expected to influence air quality of more than 1 km in the downwind direction.



- A pilot tower is expected to come up at Connaught Place, in New Delhi.

Anti-smog gun

- Anti-smog gun is a device that sprays **nebulised (gaseous form) water droplets into the air** through high pressure propellers, which help particles to settle down.



- Anti-smog guns have the potential to **control localised dust** and they are more suitable to high dust emission zones such as large construction sites.
- In tests conducted in Delhi and Gurugram, it has been found that there is reduction in PM 2.5 and PM10 levels in areas where the anti-smog guns were used.

Oxy furnace

- Oxy furnace uses **only oxygen as fuel instead of atmospheric air** (which contains nitrogen), thus reducing the production of NO_x by about 90% in industries.

- The committee has also recommended the use of chemical methods, including dust suppressants, to control air pollution.

Wireless Sensor Network

- Wireless Sensor Network (WSN) technology to monitor air pollution is still in the developmental stage and the HLC is reviewing its performance.
- The WSN may be used as an **indicative monitoring tool** for a few activities like mining, large construction sites, to supplement air quality data and report to regulators for conducting further investigation.

LiDAR

- LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a high-end application of LASER-based technology for monitoring pollution.
- The HLC has recommended that this technology may be adopted for **vertical monitoring** at a few places to track transport of pollutants at higher altitude.

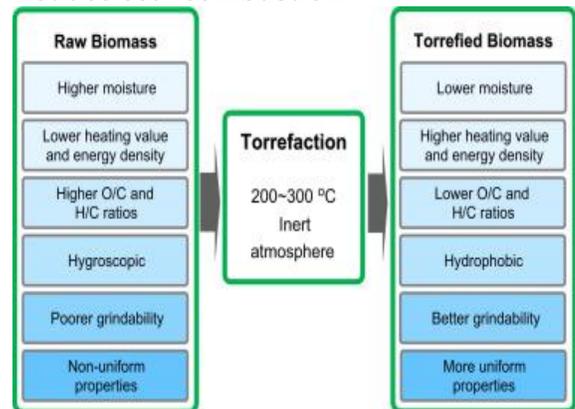
2. Torrefaction

What is torrefaction?

- Torrefaction is a **thermal process to convert biomass into a coal-like material**, which has better fuel characteristics than the original biomass.
- Torrefied biomass is more brittle, making grinding easier and less energy intensive.
- Torrefaction involves the **heating of biomass in the absence of oxygen** to a temperature of typically **200 to 400°C**.
- During the torrefaction process a combustible gas is released, which is utilised to provide heat to the process.
- The structure of the biomass changes in such a way, that the material becomes brittle, and more hydrophobic (water resistant).
- Although the weight loss is about 30%, the energy loss is only 10%. Main product is the solid, torrefied biomass.

Possible Advantages

- The process converts the biomass into 'coal-like' pellets. These pellets can be used for combustion along with coal for industrial applications like steel and cement production.
- If a plant is established, it can treat 30,000 tons of residue per annum.
- About 65% of the biomass could be converted to energy
- Alternative Income for farmers
- Reduce coal combustion



Why in News?

- India is partnering with a Swedish company to employ torrefaction in order to find a solution for stubble burning.
- The government is planning to set up a pilot plant at the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute in Mohali, Punjab.

3. Operation 'Clean Art'

What is it?

- It is an initiative to combat the smuggling of mongoose hair in the country implemented by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB).

Mongoose

- There are six species of mongoose found in India- Indian grey mongoose, Small Indian mongoose, Ruddy mongoose, Crab-eating mongoose, Stripe-necked mongoose and Brown mongoose.

- Out of six species of mongoose found in India, hairs of the **grey mongoose** are largely smuggled in the country.
- Brushes made of mongoose hair are preferred because they are superior and hold colour better.

Indian grey mongoose

- The Indian grey mongoose is the most commonly found species and also the most hunted.
- Indian Grey Mongoose (*herpestes edwardsii*) is listed in **Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- It restricts any smuggling or possession of its body part is a non-bailable offence.
- It is listed in the IUCN Red List's status as **Least Concerned**.

About WCCB

- WCCB is a **statutory multi-disciplinary body** established under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, to combat organized wildlife crime in the country.
- The Bureau has its headquarter in New Delhi.
- It assists and advises the Customs authorities in inspection of the consignments of flora & fauna as per the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act, 1972, CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and EXIM Policy governing such an item.

4. Papikonda National Park

Papikonda National Park (PNP)

- Declared as a national park in 2018, PNP spreads over 1012.86 square kilometres in East and West Godavari districts of **Andhra Pradesh**.
- The floral variety of the Park is mainly Eastern Ghats vegetation. The area consists of **dry deciduous tropical forests**.

Why in News?

- As many as 129 butterfly species have been recorded by direct sighting during the maiden scientific survey carried out by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department in Papikonda National Park.
- The findings and report of the survey will be presented at the **'Conference of Parties to Convention on Migratory Species'** at **Gandhinagar** in February 2020.

About Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species

- The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known as the **Bonn Convention**, is an environmental treaty under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme**.
- It aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- The convention has 130 Parties (including **India**).

5. Heavy metals contaminating India's rivers

What's in the news?

- A recent exercise conducted by the Central Water Commission has found that two-thirds of the water quality stations spanning India's major rivers showed **contamination by one or more heavy metals**, exceeding safe limits set by the **Bureau of Indian Standards**.
- Samples from only one-third of water quality stations were safe.
- **Iron** emerged as the most common contaminant.
- The other major contaminants found in the samples were **lead, nickel, chromium, cadmium and copper**.
- Long-term exposure to these heavy metals may result in slowly progressing physical, muscular, and neurological degenerative processes that mimic Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease,

muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

- The study, which was limited to surface water, spanned 67 rivers in 20 river basins.

Main sources of metal pollution

- The report cited population growth and rise in agricultural and industrial activities as major reasons for contamination.
- The main sources of heavy metal pollution are **mining, milling, plating and surface finishing industries** that discharge a variety of toxic metals into the environment.

Bureau of Indian Standards

- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the **National Standard Body** of India.
- Established under the **BIS Act 2016**, it is responsible for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.

6. Wular Lake

About Wular Lake

- It is the **largest freshwater lake in India** and lies in the **Kashmir Valley**.
- The lake basin was formed as a result of tectonic activity and the main source of water is **River Jhelum**.
- The lake plays a significant role in water security in the Kashmir valley by regulating the release of floodwaters from glaciers in the surrounding Himalayas.
- The lake with its associated wetlands is an important habitat for migratory water birds within the Central Asian Flyway and supports rich biodiversity.
- It was designated as a **Wetland of International Importance** under the Ramsar Convention in 1990.
- *(Refer Pulse November edition for details on Ramsar convention)*

Rising pollution

- Industrial and residential effluents from the neighbouring cities that discharge into the Wular lake have deteriorated it to a great extent.
- In addition to this, the spread of the **invasive alligator weed** slowly destroys the beneficial vegetation in the lake.

Why in News?

- A short film titled 'Saving the Saviour' was released by an independent filmmaker to raise awareness about the growing pollution of Wular Lake.

7. Tyre pyrolysis

What is tyre pyrolysis?

- Tyre pyrolysis process refers to turning waste tires into useful resources, such as fuel oil, carbon black, steel wire, etc.
- The process involves breaking down used tyres in the **absence of oxygen** at temperatures between 250 °C and 500 °C.
- While the process is considered a safer technique than burning tyres, pyrolysis leaves fine carbon matter, pyro-gas, oil as residue and the inadequate management of these by-products poses **health risks**.

Why in news?

- CPCB has ordered to close down 270 tyre pyrolysis units in 19 States for employing technology that is polluting and harmful to the health of workers employed.

About CPCB:

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is a **statutory organisation** under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It was constituted in 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. It also provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and

Forests of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

- The mandate of the CPCB is to set environmental standards in India, lay down ambient standards and coordinate the activities of State Pollution Control Boards.

8. Pretilachlor

Pretilachlor

- Pretilachlor is a commonly used **herbicide** (also commonly known as weedkillers, herbicides are substances used to control unwanted plants) to control several grasses, broad-leaved weeds and sedges in rice.
- Herbicides are one of the major components of water pollution.

Why in News?

- Scientists from Assam have formed **Carbon dots** using water hyacinth to identify the presence of Pretilachlor in water bodies.

Carbon dots

- Carbon dots (CDs) are zero-dimensional carbon-based materials in the size range of a few tens of nanometres.
- They are chemically modifiable to enhance and render some additional functional properties.
- These carbon dots can detect even a small amount of Pretilachlor, by showing fluorescence when they react with it.
- This is a good move to utilise a waste product like water hyacinth, which is readily available, to conserve nature.

What is Water Hyacinth?

- Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is one of the most prominent **aquatic weed plants** found throughout the tropical and subtropical areas of the world.
- Decades ago, water hyacinth spread from its native ecosystem in Amazonia, Brazil, and became an **invasive species in water bodies** across the globe.

- It also reached India and has ever since eaten into a number of lakes in India, such as the Katraj lake in Pune, the Pichhola lake in Udaipur and Ulsooru lake in Bangalore.



9. Locust invasion

What are locusts?

- Locusts are the oldest **migratory pest** in the world. They differ from ordinary grasshoppers in their ability to change behaviour and form swarms that can migrate over large distances.
- Locust swarms devastate crops and cause major agricultural damage and attendant human misery—famine and starvation.



Why in news?

- Gigantic swarms of locusts have descended on parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan, destroying crops and triggering panic.
- The locusts have wreaked havoc on standing crops of castor, cumin, jatropha,

cotton, and potato, and fodder grass in around 20 talukas.

- Each locust can eat its weight in plants each day, so a swarm of such size would eat 19 crore kilograms of plants every day.
- The **Locust Warning Organization (LWO)** predicted their trajectory across the international border.

Locust Warning Organisation

- In order to keep the menace of locust at bay Locust Warning Organization was established in 1946 as a division of Directorate of plant protection, quarantine and storage under the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.
- LWO is responsible for monitoring, survey and control of Desert Locust in Scheduled Desert Areas mainly in the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat.

10. Pulicat lake

About pulicat Lake

- It is a **brackish water lake** on the border of **Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu**.
- It is the **second largest lagoon** in India.
- Pulicat Lake is fed by River Kalangi and River Arani.
- The lagoon is separated from the Bay of Bengal by a barrier island which is the **Sriharikota**.
- The lake supports a rich biodiversity and high biomass of fishes, prawns, crustaceans, coelenterates and planktons.

Why in News?

- The annual flamingo festival is to be celebrated in the first week of January in Pulicat Lake sanctuary.
- About 75 bird species visit the sanctuary every year, of which 30 bird species are migratory.

11. Recycling of ships bill 2019

About the bill

- The bill provides for the regulated recycling of ships in accordance with the **Hong Kong Convention**.
- The legislation lays out rules for existing facilities and is applicable to all ships registered in India or entering Indian waters, apart from warships and other government ships.
- The ships should not have hazardous material, for which a national authority would be created to carry out checks.

About the Hong Kong Convention

- The **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** adopted the **Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships** in 2009.
- This is aimed at ensuring that ships being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and the environment.
- The Convention covers the design, construction, operation and maintenance of ships to ensure they can be recycled safely and in an environment-friendly way at the end of their lives.
- The convention is **not yet in force**.

Ship recycling industry in India

- India handles around five million gross tonnage (MnGT) annually, which is around **30% share of the world's ship recycling industry** (99% of recycling happens in **Gujarat's Alang** ship-breaking yard). The government plans to nearly double this by 2024, at around nine MnGT.
- The industry being largely concentrated in South Asia, India remains the leading market for ship-wrecking globally.

India and the Convention

- In November 2019, the cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) **approved India's accession** to the Hong

Kong Convention on Hong Kong International Convention for Ship Recycling.

Why in News?

- Parliament has passed the **Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019**.

12. CoP 25

What are UNFCCC and COP?

- The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was signed at the **1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**.
- In the treaty, nations agreed to **stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere** to prevent dangerous interference from human activity on the climate system.
- Today, 198 countries (including **India**) are parties to the treaty.
- Every year since the treaty entered into force in 1994, a “conference of the parties”, or COP, has been held to discuss how to move forward.

Why in News?

- Recently, the 25th COP was organised in Madrid, Spain.

Takeaways of COP25

- The latest COP, which is the longest meet in the UNFCCC’s history, concluded without a consensus to decide on any enhanced ambition to tackle the looming threat.
- The main item on the meet’s agenda — **framing rules for setting up a new carbon market** under the Paris Agreement — has been deferred to next year.
- The framing of rules would have completed the **Paris Agreement rulebook** that was finalized in **Katowice (COP24)** in 2018.

Difference of opinions

- The Madrid talks were expected to nudge all countries to scale up their commitments under the Paris Pact — **Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs** — in view of recent studies which show that the world is not doing enough to prevent the extreme impacts of climate change.
- Countries such as India, China, and many others strongly resisted this.
- They have been arguing that it was more important to start delivering on the commitments already made in the past than make fresh commitments.
- Under the **1997 Kyoto Protocol**, the predecessor to the Paris Agreement, developed countries were mandated to make targeted cuts in their emissions, and also provide money and technology to the developing countries to help them fight climate change. But the developed countries have been way short of meeting these obligations.
- *(Refer Pulse November edition for details on Paris deal & India’s NDCs for the deal)*

Green Deal

- The **European Union (EU)** introduced its ambitious **European Green Deal** in the CoP25 which consists of additional measures it would take on climate change.
- EU’s member countries are together the **third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases** in the world after China and the United States.
- The European Green Deal outlines that the EU will become **carbon neutral** *(achieved when a country’s emissions are balanced by absorptions and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere)* **by 2050** and increase its **2030 emission reduction target** to at least 50 per cent compared to 1990 levels and work towards 55 per cent.

Related information

What are Carbon markets?

- Carbon markets aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions cost effectively by **setting limits on emissions and enabling the trading of emission units**, which are instruments representing emission reductions.
- The main international carbon market scheme existing today was set up under the **1997 Kyoto protocol on climate change**.
- Under that agreement, developed countries had targets to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, but developing countries did not.
- So, if a developing country reduced its emissions by building a solar panel plant or planting trees for example, they could sell a “credit” to a developed country, which could count that emission reduction in its own target.

ORGANISATIONS

1. Global Refugee Forum

About Global Refugee Forum

- It is a forum for galvanised political support and solidarity and broadened the base of commitments from states, international organisations, private sectors and civil society to deal with the growing number of refugee situations across the world.
- The forum is a **key element of the Global Compact on Refugees**, which the international community signed in 2018.

About Global Compact on Refugees

- The Global Compact is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the **United Nations**, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.
- It emerged from the **2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**.
- The global compact on refugees aims to strengthen the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations.
- Its four key objectives are to:
 - Ease the pressures on host countries;
 - Enhance refugee self-reliance;
 - Expand access to third-country solutions;
 - Support conditions in countries of origin for return to safety and dignity.

Why in News?

- **UNHCR and the government of Switzerland** jointly hosted the first ever Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.
- The event, which took place at Geneva, is considered as a milestone in the advancement of the international refugee regime.

About United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- UNHCR is the UN's Refugee Agency and a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting the rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people.
- Created in 1950, it is headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland.

2. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

About OIC

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest inter-governmental organization** after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states.
- The majority of its member states are Muslim-majority countries, while others have significant Muslim populations, including several African and South American countries.
- **India is not a member of the OIC.**
- The OIC is the collective voice of the Muslim world to ensure and safeguard their interest on economic socio and political areas.
- Its Headquarters is in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Why in News?

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation criticised the Indian government over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the Babri Masjid verdict of the Supreme Court.

3. Eurasian Economic Union

About EAEU

- The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an international economic union

comprising countries located in **northern Eurasia**.

- *(An economic union is a common market with provisions for the harmonisation of certain economic policies, particularly macroeconomic and regulatory)*
- The founding member states, **Belarus, Kazakhstan** and **Russia** established the union by treaty and entered into force in 2015.
- The member states include **Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan** and **Russia**.



- Key objectives of the EAEU include increasing cooperation and economic competitiveness for the member states, and the promotion of stable development in order to raise the standard of living in member states.

Why in News?

- India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union.

4. World Anti-Doping Agency

About WADA

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in 1999 as an international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world.

- Since 2002, the organization's headquarters have been located in Montreal, Canada.
- It is the supreme international authority with respect to both doping test procedures and the determination of what substances will be the subject of athletic sanction when detected.
- Its key activities include monitoring of the **World Anti-Doping Code** – the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.

Why in News?

- WADA has banned Russia from the world's top sporting events for four years for tampering with doping tests.
- The sanctions also include a four-year ban on Russia hosting major sporting events.

5. ASSOCHAM

About ASSOCHAM

- The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) is **one of the apex trade associations of India**. The organisation represents the interests of trade and commerce in India, and acts as an interface between issues and initiatives.
- It was established as the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India and Ceylon in 1920 by a group of chambers of commerce led by the Calcutta Traders Association.
- Its headquarters are in New Delhi.
- It has been represented on several advisory and policy-making committees of the government of India.

Why in News?

- Recently, Prime Minister addressed the inaugural session of 100 Years of ASSOCHAM.

ECONOMY

1. Operation Twist

What is it?

- 'Operation Twist' is RBI's simultaneous selling of short-term securities and buying of long-term securities through **open market operations (OMO)**.
- Under this mechanism, the short-term securities are transitioned into long-term securities.

Rationale behind operation Twist

- Whenever there is a long-term investment deficit in the country and the investors are hesitant to make long-term investments in the economy, the government jumps in to revive growth by lowering the interest rate for long-term investment ventures.
- This operation involves buying and selling government securities simultaneously in order to bring down long-term interest rates and bolster short-term rates.

What are Open Market Operations (OMOs)?

- Open Market Operations are conducted by the RBI which involves sale or purchase of **G-Secs** to or from the market. The objective is to control the **money supply conditions**.
- If there is excess money supply (i.e. excess liquidity) in the market, the RBI resorts to sale of securities which reduces the volume of money. Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, it buys securities from the market, thereby releasing money into the market.

What are Government Securities (G-Secs)?

- G-Secs are tradable instruments like bonds issued by the Central Government or the State Governments with a promise of repayment upon maturity.
- The Central Government can issue both treasury bills and bonds while the State

Governments can issue **only bonds**, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs).

- These securities are considered low-risk, since they involve the government and hence, are called **risk-free gilt-edged instruments**.

Why in News?

- The RBI conducted 'Operation Twist' in December 2019.
- It involved simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities worth Rs 10,000 crore and Rs 6,825 crore respectively under OMOs.

2. India's forex reserves

Components of India's foreign exchange reserves

- *(Refer Pulse June edition- "Current account deficit & Foreign exchange reserve" topic)*

Background

- During the **taper tantrums of 2013**, India's foreign exchange reserves fell to \$274.8 billion in September of 2013.
- It prompted the Centre and RBI to unleash measures to attract inflows.
- There has been a steady rise for the reserves since then, with \$175 billion added in the last six years.

What is taper tantrum?

- In reaction to the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing recession, the U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) executed a policy known as **quantitative easing (QE)**, which involved large purchases of bonds and other securities to boost the economy.
- Investors had come to depend on ongoing massive Fed support for asset prices through its ongoing purchases.
- In 2013, the U.S. Federal Reserve announced that the Fed would, at some future date, reduce the volume of its bond purchases.

- This prospective policy of reducing the rate of Fed asset purchases represented a massive negative shock to investor expectations, as the Fed had become one of the world's biggest buyers.
- Bond investors responded immediately to the prospect of future decline in bond prices by selling bonds, depressing the price of bonds as a result.

Why in News?

- India's foreign exchange reserves have crossed the **\$450-billion mark** for the first time ever.
- At \$451.7 billion, the country's **import cover is now over 11 months**.
- Import cover is the number of months of imports that could be covered for by a country's international reserves. Import cover is an important indicator of the stability of a currency.
- The surge is mainly due to strong inflows of foreign currencies into India which enabled the RBI to buy dollars from the market, thus checking any sharp appreciation of the rupee.

3. Small Finance Banks

About Small Finance Banks:

- The small finance bank (SFB) primarily undertakes basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to **unserved and underserved sections** including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganised sector entities.
- There are **no restrictions in the area of operations** of small finance banks.
- The small finance banks are **subject to all prudential norms and regulations of RBI** as applicable to existing commercial banks including requirement of maintenance of Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR).

- The small finance banks will be required to extend **75 per cent of its Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC)** to the sectors eligible for classification as priority sector lending (PSL) by the Reserve Bank.
- At least 50 per cent of its loan portfolio should constitute loans and advances of upto Rs. 25 lakh.
- They are eligible to provide **credit** card and **debit** card facilities and associational services.

Why in News?

- The RBI has issued the final guidelines for 'on-tap' licensing of small finance banks.

Key guidelines

- SFBs shall be registered as a **public limited company** under the Companies Act, 2013. It will be given **scheduled bank status** once they commence their operations.
- The minimum capital for setting up an SFB has been mandated at **Rs. 200 crore**.
- **Payments banks** which have completed **five years of operations** are also eligible for conversion to small finance banks after complying with regulatory requirements.
- Companies and societies in the private sector which are owned and controlled by residents, and having a successful track record of running their businesses for at least a period of five years, will also be eligible to promote SFBs.

About Payment Banks:

- Payment banks are the new age banks with limited facilities. These banks mostly operate through the small vendors and shopkeepers. It exists in between the mobile wallet and regular banks.
- A payment bank provides following services to its customers.
 - Accept demand deposits (currently restricted upto Rs.1 lakh)
 - Remittance services

- Mobile payments
- Fund transfers
- Debit card and associated services (Payment banks are **not allowed to provide credit card facilities**)
- Net Banking services
- Sell third-party financial products like insurance and mutual funds
- **They can't offer loans.**
- The RBI expects payment banks to target India's migrant labourers, low-income households and small businesses, offering savings accounts and remittance services with a low transaction cost.

4. Central Repository of Information on Large Credits

About Central Repository of Information on Large Credits (CRILC)

- In 2014, the Reserve Bank of India created the CRILC of commercial banks, all India financial institutions and certain non-banking financial companies to collect, store, and disseminate credit data to lenders.
- Banks will have to furnish credit information to CRILC on all their borrowers having aggregate fund-based and non-fund-based exposure of Rs.5 crores and above.
- The major objective of CRILC is **strengthening offsite supervision and early recognition of financial distress.**

Why in News?

- The RBI has issued a notification to bring all urban cooperative banks (UCBs) with an asset base of Rs 500 crore and more under the ambit of the CRILC reporting framework.

5. Peer-to-Peer lending (P2P) platform

About P2P

- P2P lending is a form of crowd-funding used to raise loans which are paid back with interest.
- It is an **online platform that matches lenders with borrowers** in order to provide **unsecured loans**. The interest rate may be set by the platform or mutual agreement between the borrower and the lender.
- Fees are paid to the platform by both the lender as well as the borrower.
- In 2017, P2P platforms were **notified as non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)** and are since **regulated by the RBI.**

Why in News?

- To protect consumers interest, the RBI has announced that on a peer-to-peer lending platform the permissible exposure of a lender to all borrowers **should not exceed ₹50 lakhs** at any given point of time.

6. Bharat Net

About Bharat Net

- BharatNet is a project of national importance to establish a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis, to provide on demand, **affordable broadband connectivity for all households.**
- The project is implemented by **Bharat Broadband Network Ltd (BBNL)**, a special purpose vehicle set up under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in 2012.
- The entire project is being funded by **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).**
- With the BharatNet initiative, the Centre aims to **connect all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats through optical fibre.**
- The project is a **Centre-State collaborative project**, with the States

contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network.

Why in News?

- DoT data revealed that of the total of 2.5 lakh village blocks across India, only 1,42,678 of them were connected with optic fibre cable deployed as of November 2019.

7. NEFT, RTGS and IMPS

About NEFT

- National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) is a nation-wide payment system facilitating one-to-one funds transfer.
- Under this Scheme, individuals, firms and corporates can electronically transfer funds from any bank branch to any individual, firm or corporate having an account with any other bank branch in the country participating in the Scheme.
- There is **no limit – either minimum or maximum** – on the amount of funds that could be transferred using NEFT.
- Settlements of fund transfer requests in the NEFT system are done **on a half-hourly basis**. It is **not a real time settlement**.
- NEFT payment system is operated for customers from 8:00AM to 7:00 PM on all working days.

About RTGS

- Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) is a payment system where there is **continuous and real-time settlement** of fund-transfers. Here, 'real-time' means that the instructions are processed at the very moment when they are received rather than any sort of delay.
- However, RTGS is not a 24x7 system. Customers can perform RTGS transactions from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- The RTGS system is primarily meant for large value transactions. The **minimum amount to be remitted through RTGS**

is ₹ 2,00,000/- with no upper or maximum ceiling.

- In July, 2019 the RBI had waived off all charges on fund transfer through NEFT and RTGS.

About IMPS

- Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) provides robust & real time fund transfer which offers an instant, **24x7**, interbank electronic fund transfer service that could be accessed on multiple channels like Mobile, Internet, ATM, SMS, Branch and USSD (*99#).
- Generally, the transaction limit for IMPS transfer is set to be **Rs.2 lakh**. However, banks may define their own upper limit for an IMPS transaction.
- The charges for remittance through IMPS are decided by the individual member banks.

Why in News?

- The RBI has announced that the NEFT facility should be made available by member banks on a **24x7 basis** on all days of the year, including holidays.

8. Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme for assets

What is it?

- In the Union Budget 2019-20, the government had announced that for purchase of high-rated pooled assets of NBFCs, amounting to a total of Rs 1 lakh crore during the current financial year, government will provide one time six months' partial credit guarantee to PSBs for first loss up to 10 per cent.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved a partial credit guarantee scheme for public sector banks (PSBs) to purchase high-rated pooled assets from financially sound NBFCs and HFCs.
- The scheme includes an overall guarantee provided by government till

the first loss of up to 10 per cent of fair value of assets being purchased by banks or Rs 10,000 crore, whichever is lower.

- The scheme was announced to **address temporary liquidity mismatch issues** of otherwise solvent NBFCs/HFCs without them having to resort to distress sale of their assets for meeting their commitments.

Criteria

- The scheme would cover NBFCs/HFCs that may have slipped into **SMA-0 category** during the one-year period prior to August 1, 2018, and asset pools rated "BBB+" or higher.
- SMA-0 accounts are the special mention accounts (SMA) against which the principal or interest or any other amount wholly or partially is **overdue between 1-30 days**.

What is a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)?

- An NBFC is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956** which provides banking services without meeting the legal definition of a bank.
- They engage in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, bonds, etc. issued by Government or local authority. They also deal in other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business.
- The working and operations of NBFCs are **regulated by the RBI**.

What is the difference between banks & NBFCs?

- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are similar to that of banks; however, there are a few differences:
 - NBFC cannot accept demand deposits;

- NBFCs cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
- Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in the case of banks.

Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)

- A Housing Finance Company is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956** which primarily transacts or has as one of its principal objects, the transacting of the business of providing finance for housing, whether directly or indirectly.
- An HFC requires registration with **National Housing Bank** for commencing or carrying on the business of housing finance.
- In 2019, the RBI announced that HFCs will be treated as **one of the categories of NBFCs** for regulatory purposes and it will come under its **direct oversight**.

9. India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd

About India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL)

- IIFCL is a **wholly-owned Government of India Company** set up in 2006 to provide **long term financial assistance for infrastructure projects**.
- Infrastructure projects are typically long gestation projects and require debt of longer maturity. The provision of long-term funds from commercial banks is restricted due to their asset-liability mismatch. IIFCL tries to address the above constraints in long term debt financing of infrastructure.
- The sectors eligible for financial assistance from IIFCL broadly include transportation, energy, water, and sanitation, and communication, social and commercial infrastructure.

- IIFCL has been registered as a **NBFC-ND-IFC (Non-deposit taking NBFC-Infrastructure Finance Company)** with RBI since 2013.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for providing additional equity support to India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited to the tune of Rs. 5,300 crores in financial year 2019-20 and Rs. 10,000 crores in financial year 2020-21.

10. National Financial Reporting Authority

About NFRA:

- National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) was constituted in 2018 under the **Companies Act, 2013**.
- NFRA is an **independent regulator overseeing the auditing profession** and is a part of the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)**.
- It has taken over all the powers of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) regarding regulation of auditors.

Functions and powers of NFRA

- Recommend **accounting and auditing policies and standards** to be adopted by companies;
- Monitor and enforce compliance with accounting standards and auditing standards. NFRA has also been given powers to **investigate professional misconduct** committed by members of the ICAI for prescribed class of body corporate or persons.
- NFRA is empowered to oversee the quality of audit service and undertake investigation of companies whose securities are listed on any stock exchange in India or abroad.
- Also, it can probe unlisted public companies having paid-up capital of no

less than Rs 500 crore or annual turnover of no less than Rs 1,000 crore.

Why in News?

- NFRA has issued Audit Quality Review (AQR) report of the statutory audit for the year 2017-18 of IL&FS Financial Services Limited (IFIN).

11. Infrastructure Investment Trust

What are Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)?

- InvITs are investment schemes similar to mutual funds that allow investment from individuals and institutional investors in infrastructure projects to earn a portion of the income as return.
- **Indian Trust Act, 1882** and **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014** has the provision to set up InvITs.
- Such a model is more attractive for investors as it provides greater flexibility and they don't have to build an infrastructure project from scratch and is averse to construction risk.
- Besides, mutual funds and institutes like Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) can also invest in infrastructure space through InvITs.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to NHAI to set up InvITs to monetize completed national highways that have a toll collection track record of at least one year.
- NHAI plans to raise more than Rs 85,000 crore by fiscal year 2025 through the **toll-operate-transfer (ToT) model** and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).
- In October 2017, Government of India launched **Bharatmala Pariyojana**, which is the flagship highway

development programme of Government of India for development of 24,800 km of roads for a total investment of Rs. 5,35,000 crores.

- Given the magnitude of the **Bharatmala program**, NHAI would need adequate funds to complete the Projects within the prescribed timelines.
- As a part of this exercise, a workable option is to monetize the completed and operational NH assets to unlock their value and offer attractive schemes to private players to invest in construction of National Highways.

(Refer Pulse November edition for details on ToT and other models of infrastructure)

About National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

- NHAI is a **statutory body** constituted under the **NHAI Act, 1988**.
- It is under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways**.
- It is the central authority to develop, maintain and manage the National Highways entrusted to it by the Government of India.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. OSIRIS Rex

About OSIRIS Rex

- It is a mission of **NASA** to retrieve a sample from **near-Earth asteroid Bennu**.
- The mission will help scientists to understand how primitive asteroids contributed to the origin of planets, and what role they may have played in the origin of life on Earth.
- OSIRIS-Rex is the **third mission in NASA's New Frontiers Program** (after New Horizons launched in 2006 and Juno launched in 2011).
- The spacecraft was launched in September, 2016 and is expected to return a sample to Earth in 2023.

Why Bennu?

- Asteroids are the leftover debris from the solar system formation process. Studying them can answer these questions and teach us about the history of the sun and planets.
- Unlike most other asteroids that circle the Sun in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, Bennu's orbit is **close in proximity** to Earth's, even crossing it. The asteroid makes its closest approach to Earth every 6 years.
- Bennu is a **carbonaceous asteroid** whose regolith may record the earliest history of our solar system.

Why in News?

- NASA recently selected a sample collection site on the asteroid Bennu for the OSIRIS-Rex mission.

Related information

About New Frontiers Program

- Missions in NASA's New Frontiers Program tackle specific solar system exploration goals identified as top priorities by the planetary science community.

- The following missions have been competitively selected under the New Frontiers Program: i) New Horizons ii) Juno iii) OSIRIS-Rex iv) Dragonfly

New Horizons

- NASA's New Horizons mission is the first scientific investigation to obtain a close look at **Pluto and its moons**.
- New Horizons is now venturing deeper into the distant, mysterious **Kuiper Belt** – a relic of solar system formation.

Juno

- NASA's Juno spacecraft has been orbiting **Jupiter** since 2016.
- Juno is studying the gas giant's gravitational and magnetic fields, vast magnetosphere, intense aurora and the swirling clouds that form Jupiter's colourful, trademark atmosphere.

Dragonfly

- Dragonfly is a unique spacecraft that will visit Saturn's richly organic moon **Titan**.
- It is slated for a 2026 launch and a 2034 arrival.

2. StrandHogg

About StrandHogg

- According to the **Threat Analytical Unit** of the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**, StrandHogg is a bug in Android that allows real-time malware applications to pose as genuine applications and access user data of all kinds.
- These malwares can then potentially listen to conversations, access photo albums, read/send messages, make calls, record conversations and get login credentials to various accounts.

About Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Home Affairs** to combat cybercrime in the

country, in a coordinated and effective manner.

Objectives of I4C

- To act as a nodal point in the fight against cybercrime
- Identify the research problems/needs of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and take up R&D activities in developing new technologies and forensic tools in collaboration with academia / research institutes within India and abroad
- To prevent misuse of cyberspace

What's in the news?

- The Union Home Ministry has sent an alert to all States warning them about the vulnerability of the Android operating system to a bug called 'StrandHogg'.

3. PSLV

About PSLV

- The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is a third-generation rocket launcher designed, manufactured and operated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with **liquid stages**.
- After its first successful launch in 1994, PSLV emerged as the reliable and versatile workhorse launch vehicle of India with 39 consecutively successful missions by June 2017.
- PSLV has been used to launch various satellites into **Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits**.
- Besides, the vehicle successfully launched two spacecraft – **Chandrayaan-1** in 2008 and **Mars Orbiter Spacecraft (Mangalyaan)** in 2013 – that later traveled to Moon and Mars respectively.
- Another notable feature was the launch of **PSLV C37** in 2017 successfully

deploying 104 satellites in sun-synchronous orbit.

Technical aspects



- PSLV has a **four-stage system** comprising a combination of solid and liquid-fuelled rocket stages.
- The first stage at the very bottom is **solid fuelled** having six strap-on solid rocket boosters wrapped around it.
- Second stage is **liquid fuelled (Vikas liquid engine)** whereas the third stage has a **solid fuelled** rocket motor.
- At the fourth stage, the launcher uses a **liquid propellant** to boost in the outer space.
- PSLV has a payload capacity of **1,050 kg** for launching into the GeoSynchronous Transfer Orbit and **1,600 kg** for the Polar Sun Synchronous Orbit.
- The PSLV is also capable of placing multiple payloads into orbit, thus multi-payload adaptors are used in the payload fairing.

Why in News?

- Recently, ISRO launched the 50th flight of the PSLV (**PSLV-C48**).

4. 2I/Borisov - Interstellar comet

What is an interstellar object?

- An interstellar object is an astronomical object that is located in **interstellar space** and is not gravitationally bound to a star.

- Scientists define the beginning of interstellar space as the place where the sun's constant flow of material and magnetic field stop affecting its surroundings. This place is called the **heliopause**.

11/'Oumuamua & Borisov

- **11/2017 U1 Oumuamua** is the first known interstellar object to visit our solar system which was discovered by the Pan-STARRS telescope in 2017.
- Panoramic Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System (Pan-STARRS) consists of telescopes and cameras for wide-field astronomical imaging and is located at the Haleakala Observatory in Hawaii, USA.
- **2I/Borisov** is the second-known interstellar object which was discovered in August 2019.

Why in News?



- The Borisov interstellar comet made its closest ever approach to the Earth towards the end of December, 2019.

5. RISAT-2BR1

About RISAT

- The RISAT (Radar Imaging Satellite) series are the **first all-weather earth observation satellites from ISRO**.
- Previous Indian observation satellites relied primarily on optical and spectral sensors which were hampered by cloud cover.

Why in News?

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its **50th flight (PSLV-C48)**, successfully launched RISAT-2BR1, along with nine commercial satellites of Israel, Italy, Japan and USA from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.

Other facts

- This is the 2nd flight of PSLV in '**QL' configuration** (a new variant of PSLV with four solid strap-on motors).
- The other nine commercial satellites were launched under commercial arrangement with **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**, the commercial arm of ISRO.

About RISAT-2BR1

- RISAT-2BR1 was injected into a **low earth orbit (LEO)** of 576 km.
- The satellite will provide services in the field of agriculture, forestry and disaster management and also for military purposes.

6. Typbar TCV

About Typbar TCV

- The Typbar TCV is typhoid conjugate vaccine.
- It was developed by **Bharat Biotech** (an Indian Biotechnology company) and recently, tested in Nepal.
- Conjugate vaccine is one in which the antigen (which is a polysaccharide in this case) is chemically linked to a carrier protein.
- Two other typhoid vaccines — **polysaccharide typhoid vaccine** and **live, weakened typhoid vaccine** — are already used commercially.
- But the efficacy of the vaccines to protect against typhoid is lower than the conjugate vaccine that was tested in Nepal.
- More importantly, the conjugate vaccine can be given to **babies as young as six**

months, while the other two vaccines cannot be given to children below two years of age. A large proportion of severe typhoid fever cases occur in children aged below two years.

- **Pakistan** is the first country to introduce the typhoid conjugate vaccine as part of its national immunisation programme.
- Bharat Biotech has been supplying the typhoid conjugate vaccine to Pakistan since 2017.

About Typhoid

- Typhoid fever is caused by the highly contagious **Salmonella Typhi** bacteria.
- The bacteria spread through **contaminated food or water**.
- While typhoid bacteria can be treated with antibiotics, the microbes have

developed resistance against multiple antibiotics. Multi-drug resistant typhoid bacteria are seen in south Asia including India.

Why in News?

- The **Typbar TCV** vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech has shown 81.6% efficacy in preventing typhoid during its clinical trial.
- The Typbar TCV vaccine was recommended by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (WHO-SAGE) in 2017. WHO prequalified the vaccine in 2018.

REPORTS & INDICES

1. Pollution and Health Metrics report

About the report

- It provides a ranking of pollution deaths on global, regional and country levels.
- It is published by **Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP)**.

Why in News?

- GAHP published its Pollution and Health Metrics report 2019.

What are the findings of the report?

- Pollution is the largest environmental cause of premature death on the planet, causing 15% of all deaths (8.3 million people) in 2017.
- Air pollution — both ambient and indoor — is one of the largest types of pollution affecting global health.
- In 2017, **India saw the most pollution deaths** — about 2.3 million — followed by China.

About GAHP

- GAHP is a collaborative body made up of more than 60 members that advocates for resources and solutions to pollution problems.
- GAHP's overall goal is to reduce death and illness caused by all forms of toxic pollution, including air, water, soil and chemical wastes especially in low and middle-income countries.

2. Global Gender Gap Index

About Global Gender Gap Index

- It is released by the **World Economic Forum**.
- The Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity in **four dimensions**:
 - Economic Participation and Opportunity,
 - Educational Attainment,

- Health and Survival and
- Political Empowerment.

Why in News?

- The World Economic Forum has released its Global Gender Gap Index 2020, which covered 153 economies.
- The report said it will take nearly 100 years to close the global gender gap across politics, economic, health and education.
- India has slipped to the **112th** spot from its 108th position in 2018.
- India has closed two-thirds of its overall gender gap. However, India is now ranked in the bottom-five in terms of women's health and survival and economic participation.

3. Global Climate Risk Index 2020

What's in the news?

- **Germanwatch** has released its Global Climate Risk Index 2020 which is an analysis based on data from the Munich Re NatCatSERVICE, one of the largest databases on natural catastrophes.
- Germanwatch is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Bonn, Germany.

Highlights of the report

- The Index assessed 181 countries and quantified impacts of climate change through economic losses, losses to GDP and fatalities to arrive at a ranking.
- India is the **fifth most vulnerable country** globally to climate change. India has also recorded the highest number of fatalities due to climate change and the second highest monetary losses from its impact (Rs 2.7 lakh crore) in 2018.
- **Since 2004, India has experienced 11 of its 15 warmest recorded years** since record-keeping began in 1901, and an estimated 25,000 Indians have died as a result of heatwaves since 1992.

- **Japan** remains the most vulnerable country according to the analysis.

Long-term Index

- Germanwatch also created a long-term index of climate change vulnerability, based on data on the impact of climate change over 20 years between 1999 and 2018.
- India ranked **17th** among the most vulnerable countries. Puerto Rico was the most vulnerable followed by Myanmar, Haiti, the Philippines and Pakistan.
- Of the 10 most affected countries and territories in the long-term index, seven are low income or lower-middle income.

4. Good Governance Index

About the Good Governance Index (GGI):

- It is a uniform tool across States to assess the **status of governance** and the impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

How is the GGI calculated?

- The GGI takes into consideration ten sectors, namely,
 - Agriculture and Allied Sectors
 - Commerce & Industries
 - Human Resource Development
 - Public Health
 - Public Infrastructure & Utilities
 - Economic Governance
 - Social Welfare & Development
 - Judicial & Public Security
 - Environment
 - Citizen-Centric Governance
- These ten Governance Sectors are measured on total 50 indicators.
- The states and UTs are divided into three groups: 1) Big States 2) North-East & Hill States 3) Union Territories.

Why in News?

- The **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions** launched the

‘Good Governance Index’ on the occasion of ‘Good Governance Day’ (25th December).

- **Tamil Nadu** has topped the Index among 18 big States in the country.
- **Pondicherry** and **Himachal Pradesh** topped the ranking in the Union Territories category and north-east & hill category respectively.

5. Financial Stability Report (FSR)

About FSR

- It is published by the **Reserve Bank of India** on a **half-yearly basis**.
- The FSR reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the **Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** on risks to financial stability, as also the resilience of the financial system.
- The Report also discusses issues relating to development and regulation of the financial sector.

About Financial Stability and Development Council

- The council was established in 2010 to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability and enhancing inter-regulatory coordination.
- The Chairman of the FSDC is the **Finance Minister** of India and its members include the **heads of the financial sector regulatory authorities** (i.e, SEBI, IRDA, RBI, PFRDA and FMC), Finance Secretary and/or Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (Ministry of Finance), Secretary, (Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance) and the Chief Economic Adviser.
- A sub-committee of FSDC has also been set up under the chairmanship of **Governor RBI**.

Why in News?

- The RBI released its Financial Stability Report in December, 2019.

Highlights of the Report

- India's financial system remains stable despite weakening domestic growth. But risks persist from global economic uncertainties and geopolitical developments.
- Credit growth of scheduled commercial banks has slowed to 8.7 percent in September 2019 from 13.2 percent in March 2019.
- Banks' net non-performing assets (NNPA) ratio declined in September 2019 to 3.7%.
- The aggregate **provision coverage ratio (PCR)** of all banks rose to 61.5% in September 2019 from 60.5% in March 2019.
- Following the recapitalisation of state-run banks by the government, all banks' **capital to risk-weighted assets ratio (CRAR)** improved to 15.1% in September 2019 from 14.3% in March 2019.

Terms used in the Report

- **Provision Coverage Ratio** gives an indication of the provision made against bad loans from the profit generated.
- **Capital to Risk-weighted Assets Ratio** also known as **Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR)** is the capital needed for a bank measured in terms of the assets or loans disbursed by the banks. It measures capital adequacy in terms of riskiness of the assets or loans given.
 - $CAR = (Tier\ I + Tier\ II + Tier\ III\ (Capital\ funds)) / Risk\ weighted\ assets$

6. Human Development report

About the report

- The Human Development Report (HDR) is an annual report published by the Human Development Report Office of

the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

- The first HDR was launched in 1990 by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq and Indian Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Since then reports have been released most years, and have explored different themes through the human development approach, which places people at the center of the development process.
- As part of the report three indices are released, viz
 - Human Development Index
 - Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index
 - Gender Inequality Index

About Human Development Index (HDI)

- HDI is a statistical tool used to measure a country's overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions.
- Calculation of the index combines four major indicators:
 - life expectancy for health,
 - expected years of schooling,
 - mean of years of schooling for education and
 - Gross National Income per capita for standard of living.
- The HDI is the **geometric mean** of normalized indices for each of these indicators.

About Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)

- The IHDI combines a country's average achievements in health, education and income with how those achievements are distributed among the country's population by "**discounting**" each dimension's average value **according to its level of inequality**.
- Under perfect equality the IHDI is equal to the HDI, but falls below the HDI when inequality rises.

- The difference between the IHDI and HDI is the human development cost of inequality, also termed – the **overall loss to human development due to inequality**.

About Gender Inequality Index (GII)

- GII measures the **human development costs of gender inequality**.
- Higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.
- It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—
 - **reproductive health**, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates;
 - **empowerment**, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and
 - **economic status**, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.

Why in News?

- UNDP has released its Human Development Report (HDR) 2019.

Key findings of HDR 2019

HDI

- India ranks **129 out of 189** countries on the 2019 Human Development Index— up one slot from the 130th position in 2018.
- Among India's neighbours, Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) are higher up the rank scale while Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.

- **India's HDI value increased by 50%** (from 0.431 to 0.647) over the 1990-2018 period.

IHDI

- For inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI), **India's position drops by one position to 130** out of 150 countries, losing nearly half the progress (.647 to .477) made in the past 30 years.
- The report notes that group-based inequalities persist, especially affecting women and girls.

GII

- In the Gender Inequality Index (GII), **India is at 122 out of 162 countries**.
- The report forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity — one of the three indicators of the GII.

7. SDG India Index 2019-20

About SDGs

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of **17 broad-based global goals** spread across **169 targets** adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, and intended to be achieved by **2030**.
- With one-sixth of the world's population, India is key to the achievement of the goals.

About the SDG India Index

- **NITI Aayog** launched the SDG Index in 2018.
- The 2019-20 edition ranked states based on **16 goals across 54 targets spread among 100 indicators** based on national identified indicators.
- The first report just had 13 goals and 39 indicators. The 2019-20 report also has a dedicated profile of all states and UTs.

Highlights of the 2019-20 edition

- India has improved its score from 57 points last year to 60 this year, slowly inching towards fulfilment of SDGs.

- Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are the better performing States, while Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh are the bottom most States.
- **Ending hunger and achieving gender equality** are the areas where most states fall far short, with the all-India scores for these goals at 35 and 42 points respectively.
- The overall score of 60 points was driven mostly by progress in **clean energy and sanitation** (88); **peace, justice and strong institutions** (72); and **affordable and clean energy** (70).

What's in the news?

- NITI Aayog has released its second edition of the SDG India Index.

8. State of Forest Report

About the Report

- India State of Forest Report (ISFR) is a **biennial** (once every 2 years) report published by the **Forest Survey of India (FSI)**.
- FSI uses satellite images to identify greenery as forest cover. The satellite imagery mapping is on a 1:50,000 scale, which means it can scan patches as small as 1 hectare (100 m x 100 m), and any unit that shows a 10% canopy density is considered 'forest'.

State of Forest Report 2019

- The 2019 report for the first time has assessed the **qualitative nature** of the forest cover, including listing its biodiversity and the type of plants and trees found.
- It also created a **national forest inventory** for the first time on produce from forests.

Highlights of the report

- The total forest and tree cover of the country is 80.73 million hectares which is **24.56 per cent** of the geographical area of the country. As compared to the assessment of 2017, **there is an increase** of 5,188 sq. km in the total forest and tree cover of the country.
- The National Forest Policy 1988 targets for achieving **one-third of the total land area** of the country under Forest or Tree Cover (FTC).
- For the second successive time since 2007, the 2019 report recorded a **gain in dense forest** (including Very Dense Forest with a canopy density of over 70%, and Moderately Dense Forest with a canopy density of 40-70%).

Top performers

- Top three states showing an increase in forest cover are **Karnataka** followed by Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.
- Area-wise **Madhya Pradesh** has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
- In terms of forest cover as a **percentage of total geographical area**, the top five States are **Mizoram** (85.41%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.63%), Meghalaya (76.33%), Manipur (75.46%) and Nagaland (75.31%).

Other indicators

- The total mangrove cover in the country is 4,975 sq km. An **increase of 54 sq Km in mangrove cover** has been observed as compared to the previous assessment of 2017.
- There is an **increase of 0.32 million hectare in bamboo bearing area** as compared to the last assessment.
- There are 62,466 **wetlands covering 3.8%** of the area within the Recorded Forest Area/ Green Wash (RFA/GW) of the country. **Gujarat** has the largest area

of wetlands (within the RFA) in the country followed by West Bengal.

- The **total carbon stock** of the country was estimated at 7124 million tons, which is an increase of 42.6 million tons from the last assessment.

Proneness to fire

- About **21.40% of forest cover** in India is **prone to fires**, with forests in the north-eastern region and central India being the most vulnerable.
- One of the major reasons for forest fires in the north-east is **slash-and-burn cultivation**, commonly called jhoom or jhum cultivation.

Decline in North East Forests

- Except Assam and Tripura, all states in the **North-Eastern region show**

decrease in forest cover. Total forest cover in the North-Eastern region is 1,70,541 sq km, which is 65.05% of its geographical area.

Additional information

About Forest Survey of India

- FSI is a premier national organization under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**
- Established in 1981, it is responsible for assessment and monitoring of the forest resources of the country regularly at state and district level and preparing forest cover maps on 1:50,000 scale.

POLITY

1. Reservations for Anglo-Indians

Who are Anglo Indians?

- The Anglo-Indian community in India traces its origins to an official policy of the British East India Company to encourage marriages of its officers with local women.
- The term Anglo-Indian first appeared in the **Government of India Act, 1935**.
- In the present context, **Article 366(2)** of the Constitution of India states:
 - “An Anglo-Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only...”

Under what provisions was reservation in the legislature granted?

- **Article 331** of the Constitution says: “Notwithstanding anything in Article 81, the **President** may, if he is of the opinion that the Anglo-Indian community is **not adequately represented** in the House of the people, **nominate not more than two members** of that community to the House of the People.”
- **Article 333** says: “Notwithstanding anything in Article 170, the **Governor** of a State may, if he is of the opinion that the Anglo-Indian community needs representation in the Legislative Assembly of the State and is **not adequately represented** therein, **nominate one member** of that community to the Assembly.”

10th schedule and Anglo-Indian Community

- According to the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, Anglo-Indian members of

Lok Sabha and state Assemblies can take the membership of any party **within six months of their nomination**.

- But, once they do so, they are bound by their party whip. The Anglo-Indian members enjoy the same powers as others, but they **cannot vote in the Presidential election** because they are nominated by the President.

Why in News?

- The Parliament has passed the **Constitution (126th Amendment) Bill**, extending reservation for SC/STs for the next 10 years up to January 25, 2030.
- The Act, however, did not mention the extension of reservation for the Anglo-Indian community whose reservation will cease on January 25, 2020.
- The decision not to renew this provision was based on the view that the community is doing well and does not need these political reservations.

2. SC/ST creamy layer

Creamy layer concept

- In the 1992 **Indra Sawhney judgment**, the supreme court upheld the government’s move, based on the Mandal Commission report, to give 27% reservation to Other Backward Classes.
- It also **introduced the concept of creamy layer** and held that the creamy layer (highly advanced socially as well as economically and educationally) must be excluded from backward classes for the purpose of reservation. The court asked the Central government to fix the norms for income, property and status for identifying the creamy layer.
- In 1993, the creamy layer income ceiling was fixed at ₹1 lakh. It was subsequently increased to ₹2.5 lakh in 2004, ₹4.5 lakh in 2008, ₹6 lakh in 2013, and at **₹8 lakh since 2017**.

- The court further held that creamy layer principle is **only confined to Other Backward Classes** and has no relevance in the case of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.
- The Supreme Court also held that reservations in appointments — under **Article 16(4)** of the Constitution — **do not apply to promotions.**

The amendments that followed

- Meanwhile, in order to change the effect of the judgment in the Indira Sawhney case, there were some amendments to enable the government to make laws regarding reservation in promotion for SCs and STs.
- The first of these amendments was when the Parliament enacted the **Constitution (77th Amendment) Act, 1995**, inserting **Article 16(4A)**, thereby enabling the government to make laws providing quota in promotion for SCs and STs.
- **Article 16(4B)** was also inserted, providing that reserved promotion posts for SCs and STs that remain unfilled can be carried forward to the subsequent year.
- Another instance was when **Article 335** of the Constitution was amended in 2001. While Article 335 specified that reservations have to be balanced with the “maintenance of efficiency”, the 2001 amendment stated that the Article will not apply to the government if it relaxes evaluation standards in matters of promotion.
- ‘Maintenance of efficiency’ is a constitutional limitation on the discretion of the government in making reservations in promotion for SCs and STs.

M. Nagaraj versus Union of India (2006)

- These amendments led to the 2006 Supreme Court judgment in M. Nagaraj vs Union of India, where a five-judge bench approved Parliament’s decision to extend

reservations for SCs and STs to include promotions with three conditions.

- It required the state to **provide proof for the backwardness of the class** benefitting from the reservation,
- Its **inadequate representation** in the position/service for which reservation in promotion is to be granted and
- To show how reservations in promotions would further **administrative efficiency**
- The judgment also held that the **creamy layer concept was applicable to SCs and STs.**

Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta (2018)

- The M. Nagaraj case judgment was challenged in the Jarnail Singh case.
- In this judgement, a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court **upheld the applicability of creamy layer to affluent SCs and STs.**
- However, the court **delinked the need to provide proof for the backwardness** (one of the three conditions mandated in M. Nagaraj judgement) in giving reservation to SC/ST communities.

Why in News?

- The Centre urged the Supreme Court to refer its verdict in 2018 which excluded the creamy layer within the SC/ST community from reservation benefits to a seven-judge bench for review.

Articles related to the news

- **Article 16(4A)** - State can make any provision for reservation in matters of promotion if SC/STs are not adequately represented in the services in the state.
- **Article 16(4B)** provides that reserved promotion posts for SCs and STs that remain unfilled can be carried forward to the subsequent year.
- **Article 335-** The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

3. Deemed Forest

Background

- The Supreme Court in 1996 (**Godavarman judgement**) broadened the definition of forest to include not just land classified as forest under forest or revenue departments, but also those that are forests according to the definition of a forest.
- The apex court asked states to form committees to identify forests, irrespective of the nature of land ownership or whether they are notified, recognised or classified in a time-bound manner.

What are “deemed forests”?

- There are forests that are notified either with the forest department or revenue department. Then there are those areas that are like **forests but are neither recorded, nor notified.**
- In the 1996 judgement, the Supreme Court had ordered that the states identify and classify these as **deemed forests.**
- They comprise about 1% of India’s forest land.

New classification

- In October 2019, the Uttarakhand government tightened the norms for classifying land as deemed forest.
- According to the new rules, a piece of land will be defined as deemed forest if it is spread over a **minimum 10 hectares** and has a **minimum canopy density of 60 per cent.**
- Any area, which does not fulfill these parameters, will not come in the

definition of forests and the **Forest Conservation Act 1980** will not be applicable there. And hence, no clearance will be required to hold any construction activity there.

- According to the Forest Survey of India, Uttarakhand has recorded forest area of 38,000 sq km, which is 71 per cent of the state’s geographical area.

Why in News?

- Environmental activists are raising concerns about the Uttarakhand government’s move which pose danger of depleting forest resources in the state.

4. Inner Line Permit

What is Inner Line Permit?

- The Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an official travel document that allows Indian citizens to stay in an area under the ILP system. The document is currently required by visitors to **Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram.**
- The ILP is issued by the **concerned state government.** The permits issued are mostly of different kinds, provided separately for tourists, tenants and for other purposes.
- The main objective of the ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in the notified states in order to **protect the indigenous population.** It also offers protection for the locals with regards to lands, jobs and other facilities.

History of ILP

- Under the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873**, the British framed regulations restricting the entry and regulating the stay of outsiders in designated areas.
- This was to protect the Crown’s own commercial interests by preventing

“British subjects” (Indians) from trading within these regions.

- In 1950, the Indian government replaced “British subjects” with “Citizen of India”. This was to address local concerns about protecting the interests of the indigenous people from outsiders belonging to other Indian states.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Home Affairs has extended the inner line permit system to **Manipur**. After Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram, Manipur has become the fourth state where an ILP is required.
- Dimapur in Nagaland, which was excluded from the ILP, has also been included into the ILP regime.

5. Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019

How is citizenship acquired in India?

- In India, citizenship is regulated by the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
- The Act specifies that citizenship may be acquired in India through **five methods** – by birth in India, by descent, through registration, by naturalisation (extended residence in India), and by incorporation of territory into India.

Can illegal migrants acquire citizenship?

- An illegal migrant is prohibited from acquiring Indian citizenship.
- An illegal migrant is a foreigner who: (i) enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, or (ii) enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.
- Illegal migrants may be imprisoned or deported under the **Foreigners Act, 1946** and the **Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**.

How does the 2019 Act seek to change the criteria for determining citizenship?

- The Act makes it clear that immigrants belonging to **Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Jain and Parsi communities** from the Muslim-majority nations (**Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan**) will not be treated as illegal.
- They will also be eligible to get naturalised citizenship.
- One of the requirements for citizenship by **naturalization** under the 1955 Act is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years.
- The amendment act **relaxes this 11-year requirement to five years** for persons belonging to these six religions from these three countries.
- They will also be no longer deported or jailed under the Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act of 1920.
- The cut-off date for citizenship is **December 31, 2014** which means the applicant should have entered India on or before that date.

Rationale of the Law

- The Statement of Objects and Reasons in the amendment Act (SoR) states that India has had historic migration of people with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and these countries have a state religion, which has resulted in **religious persecution** of minority groups.

Are the provisions of the Act applicable across the country?

- The Act clarifies that the amendments will not apply to certain areas. These are:
 - the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura, as included in the **Sixth Schedule to the Constitution**. These tribal areas include Karbi Anglong (in Assam), Garo Hills (in Meghalaya),

- Chakma District (in Mizoram), and Tripura Tribal Areas District.
- the **states regulated by the “Inner Line” permit** under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873.

How does the Act change the regulations for Overseas Citizens of India?

- The Act also amends the provisions on registration of Overseas Citizens of India (OCI).
- OCI cardholders are foreigners who are persons of Indian origin.

- At present, the government may cancel a person’s OCI registration on various grounds specified in the 1955 Act.
- The 2019 amendment **adds another ground for cancelling OCI registration** — violation of any law notified by the central government.

Why in News?

- The Citizenship Amendment Bill became law after receiving the President’s assent.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. First India-Japan 2+2 Meeting

About 2+2 dialogue

- It is a high-level bilateral meeting between **Defence Ministers** and **External/Foreign Ministers** of two countries.
- It was first proposed between India and the U.S. The inaugural India-U.S. 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi in 2018.
- Similar kind of mechanism was also extended to Japan recently.

Why in News?

- The first India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting was held in November 2019 in New Delhi.

Key notes in the joint statement

- The two sides committed to advancing bilateral security cooperation based on the **2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation** and the **2009 Action Plan to advance Security Cooperation**.
- The Ministers welcomed the progress made in deepening bilateral defence cooperation including “**Dharma Guardian-2019**” (annual military exercise between Indian and Japanese Army) and “**SHINYUU Maitri-2019**” (Indo-Japan Joint Air Force Exercise).
- The Ministers also expressed their satisfaction at trilateral cooperation with the U.S. represented by the “**MALABAR 2019**” (India - Japan - US Naval cooperation) and “**Cope India 2018**” (joint exercise between the air forces of the U.S. and India) in which Japan participated as an observer.
- The Ministers also exchanged views on the recent developments in the South China Sea.

2. 'Power of Siberia' gas pipeline

About Power of Siberia

- The Power of Siberia is the **first cross-border gas pipeline between Russia and China**.
- From Siberia to China's Yangtze River delta in Shanghai, the massive pipeline will cover 8,000 km, with 5,111 km inside China, passing through nine provinces and municipalities.

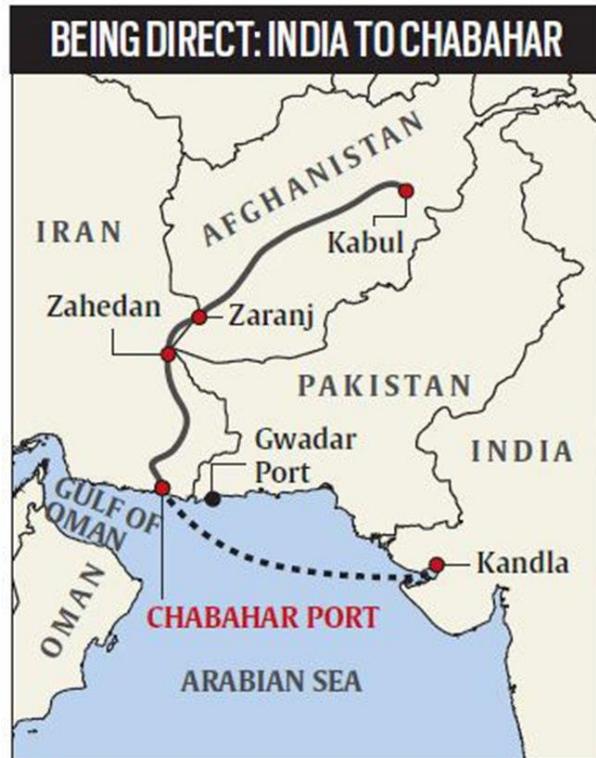


- The "Power of Siberia" pipeline was officially launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

3. Chabahar Port

About Chabahar Port

- Chabahar port, which is being jointly developed by **India, Iran and Afghanistan**, is located in south Iran on the **Gulf of Oman**.
- Pakistan's **Gwadar port** is about 70 kilometers to the west along the coast.
- Afghanistan is connected to the chabahar port through its land border with Iran, and India via the sea.
- Thus, the port is readily accessible for all three countries and acts to facilitate trade among them.



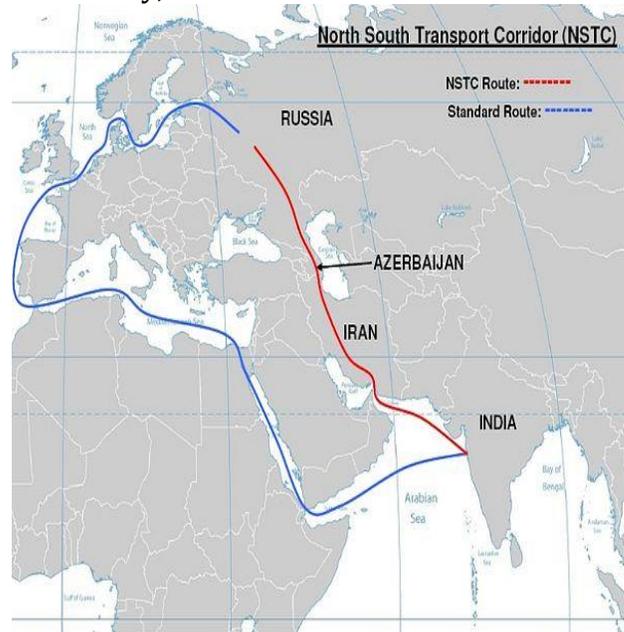
- In 2003, India, Afghanistan and Iran, under the **North-South Transport Corridor framework**, signed the Chabahar port agreement, allowing all three countries to utilize the Chabahar port as a trade hub.
- The first phase of Chabahar port was inaugurated in December 2017.

Strategic significance of the Chabahar port

- It is an important pillar of Indian foreign policy aimed at finding shorter routes for its exports and imports, countering China's influence in the Indian Ocean region, and circumventing Pakistan's Gwadar port.
- Chabahar is the only port outside of Pakistan that connects Afghanistan to the sea.
- The port will also connect India to Central Asian countries that are also major energy producers in the region.

About North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

- INSTC is a land-and sea-based 7,200-km long network comprising rail, road and water routes that are aimed at reducing costs and travel time for freight transport in a bid to **boost trade between Russia, Iran, Central Asia, India and Europe**.
- It is a **joint initiative taken by India, Russia and Iran**.
- The 'Inter-Governmental Agreement on International "North-South" Transport Corridor' was signed by the three countries in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2000.
- Since then, 11 more nations joined the project: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria (observer status), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Ukraine.



Why in News?

- In a recent meeting of the India-Iran joint commission, India and Iran agreed to accelerate Chabahar port development.

4. Delhi Dialogue and Indian Ocean Dialogue

About Delhi Dialogue

- Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual **track 1.5 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.

About Indian Ocean Dialogue

- The Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) is a flagship initiative of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**. The first IOD was held in Kerala in 2014.
- During the summit, member states hold high-level discussions on the IORA's role within the Indo-Pacific.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of External Affairs organised the **6th Indian Ocean Dialogue and Delhi Dialogue XI** in New Delhi in December, 2019.
- For the first time these two tracks 1.5 dialogues were held consecutively and on similar themes.
- The theme for the Indian Ocean Dialogue was "Indo-Pacific: Re-imagining the Indian Ocean through an Expanded Geography", while the theme for the Delhi Dialogue was "Advancing Partnership in Indo-Pacific".

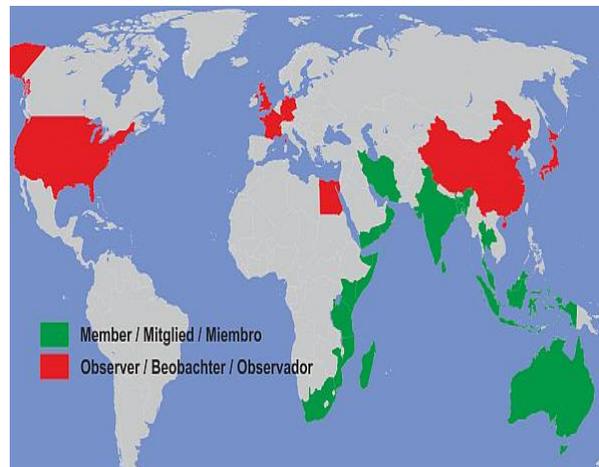
Related information

Diplomacy Tracks

- **Track 1 diplomacy** refers to communications between two or more official representatives of a state or state-like authorities: heads of state, state department or ministry of foreign affairs officials, and other governmental departments and ministries.
- **Track 1.5 dialogues** are conversations that include a mix of government officials—who participate in an unofficial capacity—and non-governmental experts, all sitting around the same table.

- On the other hand, **Track 2 diplomacy** brings together unofficial representatives on both sides, with no government participation.

About Indian Ocean Rim Association



- IORA is an inter-governmental organisation which was established in 1997 to strengthen regional cooperation and sustainable development within the Indian Ocean region.
- IORA consists of 22 Member States (including **India**) and 9 Dialogue Partners.

5. Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act

About Uyghur issue

- The Xinjiang province in China's far west has had a long history of discord between the authorities and the indigenous ethnic Uyghur population.
- Most Uyghurs are **Muslim**, their language is related to **Turkish**, and they regard themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.



RICH CLABAUGH/STAFF

- Some Uighurs living there refer to the region as **East Turkestan** and argue that it ought to be independent from China. There have been open calls for separation of Xinjiang from China since 1990s. Since then, China suppressed any dissent from Uyghur and began placing restrictions on them.
- Ethnic tensions caused by economic and cultural factors are considered the root cause of the recent violence. There are complaints of severe restrictions on Islam, with fewer mosques and strict control over religious schools.

Recent developments

- The Chinese government has reportedly detained more than a million Muslims in re-education camps.
- Most of the people who have been arbitrarily detained are Uighur.
- Human rights organizations, UN officials, and many foreign governments are urging China to stop the crackdown.
- But Chinese officials maintain that what they call vocational training centers do not infringe on Uighurs' human rights. They have refused to share information about the detention centers, and prevented journalists and foreign investigators from examining them.

Why in News?

- The **United States** Congress has passed the **Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act**, which proposes that America redirects resources to address the mass internment of over 1,000,000 Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in China.
- The bill directs various US government bodies to prepare reports on China's treatment of Uyghurs.

6. Bougainville

About Bougainville

- Bougainville is an **autonomous region in Papua New Guinea**, consisting of Bougainville Island, Buka Island, and a number of outlying islands and atolls.
- Bougainville, with a strong provincial identity, differs from the tribal factions of other regions of Papua New Guinea.
- Since **French explorer** Louis de Bougainville arrived on this **Melanesian archipelago** more than two hundred years ago, control of this isles has passed from Germany to Australia to Japan to the United Nations and to Papua New Guinea.



Economist.com

Why in News?

- The people of Bougainville voted overwhelmingly for **independence from Papua New Guinea** in a referendum — a major step toward the troubled isles becoming the world's newest nation.
- Around 98% of voters — had backed independence with just 3,043 supporting the option of remaining part of Papua New Guinea with more autonomy.

ART & CULTURE

1. Losar festival

About Losar festival

- It is one of the most important festivals for **Tibetan Buddhism** in **Ladakh**.
- It is celebrated on the first day of the lunisolar Tibetan calendar.



- It is celebrated with performances of traditional songs and folk dances of the region.

Why in News?

- Union Territory of Ladakh celebrated the Losar Festival on 27 December 2019, to mark the **Ladakhi** or **Tibetan New Year**.

2. Saptamatrikas

About Saptamatrikas:

- Saptamatrikas are a group of **seven female deities worshipped in Hinduism** as personifying the energy of their respective consorts.
- They are Brahmani (wife of Brahma), Maheshvari (wife of Shiva), Kaumari (wife of Kumara), Vaishnavi (wife of Vishnu), Varahi (wife of Varaha, an incarnation of Vishnu), Indrani (wife of Indra), and Chamunda, or Yami (wife of Yama).

Why in News?

- Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India has discovered the **earliest epigraphic evidence of the Saptamatrika cult** in **Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh**.

- It is also the **earliest Sanskrit inscription** to have been discovered in South India as on date.

Recent Findings:

- The inscription found is in **Sanskrit** and in **Brahmi** characters and was issued by **Satavahana king Vijaya** in **207 A.D.**
- There are references of Saptamatrika worship in the early Kadamba copper plates and the early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates. But the new discovery predates them by almost 200 years.
- So far, the **Nagarjunakonda inscription of Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula** issued in the 4th century A.D. was considered the earliest Sanskrit inscription in South India.
- The place also yielded another inscription in Prakrit language and of Brahmi characters and belongs to the 1st century A.D.

3. Paika rebellion

About Paika rebellion of Odisha

- Paikas had been recruited since the 16th century by kings in **Odisha** from a variety of social groups to render martial services in return for rent-free land (**nish-kar jagirs**) and titles.
- The **land revenue policy of the British** was the primary cause of the rebellion in 1817.
- After entering Odisha in 1803, the British introduced new revenue settlements, due to which the rent-free land tenures provided to the soldiers for their military service on a hereditary basis were taken away by **Major Fletcher** as their service were not required anymore.
- Another important cause for the rebellion was the **raise in salt price**.

Course of the rebellion

- As a result, in 1817, **Bakshi Jagabandhu** led the tribals of Banapur and Ghumsur and bravely marched towards Khurda to fight against colonial power.
- During the course of the rebellion, government buildings in Banapur were set on fire, policemen and British officials were killed, and the treasury was looted.
- The uprising lasted for a few months but was eventually crushed by the better-equipped and trained forces of the East India Company. Bakshi escaped to the jungles, and ultimately surrendered in 1825 under negotiated terms.

Why in News?

- Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind laid the foundation for a memorial for the Paika Rebellion, which is considered one of the oldest fights for freedom against the British in India.
- In July 2017, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Paika Rebellion, the Odisha government asked the Centre to declare the rebellion as the “first war of independence in Indian history”.

DEFENCE

1. SPIKE Missiles

About Spike

- Spike is an **Israeli fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile**.
- It was developed and designed by the Israeli company **Rafael Advanced Defence Systems**.
- It is available in man-portable, vehicle-launched, and helicopter-launched variants.
- The missile is equipped with an **imaging infrared seeker**.
- It is known for their precision targeting with an ability to pierce even bunkers.



Why in News?

- The Indian Army has successfully test-fired two newly-acquired Spike LR (long-range) anti-tank missiles at the Infantry School at Mhow, Madhya Pradesh.
- Spike LR is a fourth-generation missile that can engage a target with precision at ranges up to **four km**.

2. Exercise Hand- in – Hand

What's in the news?

- Exercise Hand-in-Hand is a joint training exercise between **India and China**.
- The 8th edition Exercise Hand-in-Hand was conducted in Meghalaya.

3. Exercise Surya Kiran – XIV

What's in the news?

- The 14th edition of the bilateral annual military exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIV between **Indian and Nepal Army** was conducted in Nepal.

4. Exercise INDRA:

What's in the news?

- Recently, Exercise INDRA 2019, a joint **tri services exercise between India and Russia**, was conducted in India.

5. Exercise 'Apharan'

What's in the news?

- The Indian Navy, in collaboration with Indian Coast Guard, Cochin Port Trust and all other concerned stakeholders, conducted a large-scale **Anti Hijacking Exercise 'Apharan'**.
- Conducted off the port of Kochi, the exercise was aimed at streamlining the response preparedness to thwart any attempt by Anti-National Elements to hijack a merchant vessel or attempt forced entry of a rogue/commandeered merchant vessel into Kochi harbor.

6. Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM)

About QRSAM

- Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile System is a **Short-Range Surface to Air Missile system indigenously developed by DRDO**.
- It is designed to protect moving armoured columns from aerial attacks.
- The entire weapon system is configured on highly mobile platforms and is capable of providing air defence on the move.
- The weapon system comprises fully automated command and control system, active array battery surveillance radar, active array battery multi-function radar and launcher.



Why in News?

- DRDO successfully flight-tested the Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile system from Chandipur off the Odisha coast.

7. Chief of Defence Staff

About the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

- CDS will be a four-star officer and act as **principal military adviser** to defence minister on **all tri services matters**.
- In addition to **heading the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA)**, the CDS will also be the **permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee**. The three service chiefs will be members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- However, CDS **will not exercise any military command** including over three service chiefs.
- Also, the three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister, as done so far, on matters exclusively concerning their respective services.

What is the current status?

- In the absence of a CDS, presently the senior most of the three Chiefs functions as the Chairman, **Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)**.
- But it is an additional role and the tenures have been very short.
- In 2015, then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had described the CoSC arrangement as “unsatisfactory” and he

added that the post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets.

Recommendations of various committees

- The first proposal for a CDS came from the 2000 **Kargil Review Committee (KRC)**, which called for a reorganization of the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters.
- A **group of ministers that was formed in 2001** to explore necessary reforms required to improve India's national security had also favoured creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff.
- In **2012 Naresh Chandra task force** recommended the appointment of a permanent chairman of chiefs of staff committee.
- The CDS is also one of the 99 recommendations made by the **Lt. General D.B. Shekatkar (retd.) committee (2016)**.

Role and responsibilities of CDS:

- As the head of the DMA, the CDS has to facilitate restructuring of military commands for **optimal utilisation of resources** by bringing about **jointness in operations**, including through establishment of joint/ theatre commands.
- The key focus of the CDS office will be involved in **procurement of military equipment** for all the three-armed forces.
- CDS will be **member of Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee**.
- Implement Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP), and Two-Year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP),

as a follow-up of Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP).

- Assign inter-Services prioritisation to capital acquisition proposals based on the anticipated budget.
- Prepare strategy papers on military matters for consideration of the competent authority.

Will the CDS be responsible for the defence of the country?

- **No.**
- As per the gazette notification issued by the government on December 30, 2019, the **Department of Defence** — headed by the Defence Secretary — will be responsible for the “defence of India and every part thereof, including defence policy and preparation for defence and all such acts as may be conducive in times of war to its prosecution and after its termination to effective demobilisation”.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved to create the post of CDS in the rank of a four-star General with salary and perquisites equivalent to a Service Chief.